



The Stooges

STAFF

Raw Power Live: In the Hands of the Fans

[12-inch] (2011)

Music Video Distributors

Reviewer Rating:

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It's been a tumultuous few years for the Stooges. Suddenly reforming in 2003, they kicked off a world tour which showed that not only can reunion tours be good, sometimes they can trump the original. In 2007, on the verge of what was supposed to be their victorious return to the studio, they released *The Weirdness*, which was basically a swing and a miss.

Despite their gaffe on record, they destroyed stages across the globe in their most swinging lineup, which included both Asheton brothers as well as legendary Minuteman Mike Watt. Then, just when the Stooges had retaken their throne as one of the greatest live acts of all time (if not the *greatest* live act of all time), Ron Asheton suddenly passed away in 2009. But, although they had been destroying themselves for years when one of their key members *did* suddenly pass, they decided to reform in their second lineup, which included James Williamson. Their live performance of *Raw Power* in its entirety at All Tomorrow's Parties 2010 exemplifies that the Stooges thrive in a bad situation.

In retrospect, agreeing to play *Raw Power* in full live was quite a daunting task. The studio recording has achieved a mythic status, influencing punk rock and metal, as much as pretty much any other record. So, with the crushing weight of high expectation, how could the band hope to properly play an album that is revered for its wild, sloppy, drunken energy?

Quite simply, they just did it. On *Raw Power Live*, the band tears through the tracks of the album, switching the original playing order without paying much reverence to the past. While these types of shows tend to exhibit bands blowing up each of their songs, stringing out choruses and extending solos, the Stooges pay the ultimate respect to *Raw Power* by ignoring its legendary status.

From Williamson's opening lick, the band tears through track after track with sledgehammer energy. Specificity is sacrificed for speed. Shine is slain in lieu of spontaneity. Most striking, however, is how tight the band is, That's not to say that they are systematic in their playing or that they hit notes perfectly, but, at their core, they seem to communicate at the fundamental level of rock music—instead of acting as a collection of instruments, they slam as one solid swinging eight note, congealing for maximum impact.

Likewise, Iggy Pop has grown a little more jowly in his seventh decade, but strangely, it almost improves the music. On the disc, Pop asks "Do you want to hear some blues?" Like Robert Johnson and Leadbelly, Pop howls with a loose jaw, not so much annunciating words as forcing the wind from his gut and shaping the gale with slapping lips. In doing so, he casts off the studio

production of the original LP and forms the songs into expositions from that timeless well of soul music.

Thankfully, despite its long-winded title, *Raw Power Live: In the Hands of the Fans* isn't one of the dozens of semi-legit Stooges recordings that sound like they were taped from a Walkman located down the street. Although this release might be a soundboard recording, the sound quality is to the level where all instruments and Iggy are clearly audible, albeit not quite pristine. Unfortunately, for some strange reason, the audience fades in and out before and after each track, somewhat sapping the momentum of the recording. Still, because live Stooges recordings with decent sound quality are so rare, this LP is undeniably a boon to fans.

After ripping through the album proper, the Stooges close the set with their most famous, unreleased single, "I Got a Right". As Iggy howls "*I got a right to sing anytime I want!*", it becomes clear that if this is the intensity that the band is going to do it at, that right is well-deserved.

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