

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

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DVD Review: THE DAMNED Tiki Nightmare: Live Live Live in London 2002

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Images from the Internet



THE DAMNED Tiki Nightmare: Live Live Live in London 2002

Directed by Robin Dexter
Weinerworld Productions.
86 minutes, 2012
Weinerworld.com
MVDvisual.com

In 1977, I saw the Damned a number of times at CBGB on two separate tours, usually with the Dead Boys opening. Each night was magical (it was also the first shows that I found you needed a reservation to get into the club). Hey, once I co-interviewed guitarist Capt. Sensible between sets, with Bernie Kugel for the Buffalo-based 'zine *Big Star*. Hell, vocalist Dave Vanian even smacked me on the back of the head in the dressing room for saying something obnoxious. Then, they were a group to be reckoned with, a forceful

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About Me

Robert Barry Francos
Currently living in Saskatoon (email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot) com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

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British punk band who would pioneer the Goth movement. Ironically, it was the Goth stuff that made me lose touch with their sound.

Gratefully, I have now had the chance to see this July 31, 2002 performance at the Shepherd's Bush Empire club in London, and catch up a bit.

Dave and Sensible still front the band, with the addition of others including the Gun Club / Sisters of Mercy's buxom bassist (and future Vanian spouse) Patricia Morrison.

Dave's voice in 2002 was still solid. He's gained some weight, but the slicked-back '50s-ish hair, wrap-around sunglasses and attitude remain. Damn (pun intended), he actually is a good singer. Better than many of the post-psychedelic sound (as it was called in the 1980s, for some reason). But I also see why I lost interest in the band. Their first few singles and LP (Damned Damned Damned) were fast and furious, with a tone of anger and angst that was refreshing. Over time, they became more and more theatric and, well, another well-played melodic rock band. While this DVD shows them at their finest post-beginning sound, it also left me a bit cold. It's sort of like a cover band. Take "Disco Man," for example. There is nothing wrong with the song, but it would fit perfectly on American Idol. I can't imagine anyone on that show doing "New Rose."

What I'm trying to say is that they sound kind of mainstream, with no sense of the scary. For example, no matter what stage you saw the Cramps, there was always an atmosphere of danger. While the Cramps' sound changed over time, they still stayed true to their beginnings (for example, compare "Garbage" with "Bikini Girls with Machine Guns"). The Damned changed markedly, becoming more flamboyant in sound and style. It's no surprise to me they retained a level of mass fame in Jolly Olde.

Of course, the banter between tunes is mostly by Vanian (mockingly calling Britney Spears the new disco, for example) and the ever jovial (but less noxious onstage) Capt., who openly promotes their then-new release, Grave Disorder. The Captain also shows beyond a doubt he knows his way around a fretboard, being the prog fan he admits to being.

Actually, my only real complaint about the DVD is the camerawork and direction. When the editing isn't annoyingly active, the cameras are in nearly constant physical motion. It's hard to enjoy, for example, any of the musicians' playing when you can't watch more than one or two bars at a time. Most of the camera is given to the Captain and Dave, with the rest of the band relegated to quick shots. Like many "found footage" film, I found myself having to turn away from the screen to keep from getting queasy.

I will fully admit I was living in the past watching this, and while I sat through the whole thing, I was waiting for their early material, like "Neat Neat Neat" (cut 13) and "New Rose" (cut 15). And these songs are covered strongly, but then again, as in the case of "Neat Neat Neat," Dave's doing it sort of like '77 Elvis singing "Blue Suede Shoes." And Sensible's behind-the-back-of-the-neck guitarplay during the song with extended wah-wah sound was like watching the prog version.

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There are some interesting touches here. One is a semi-raucous cover of Dylan's "She," and when the band leaves the stage for one-song break, the Captain stays and sings his bizarre British hit, "Happy Talk" (from South Pacific), complete with "island" dancers (personally, I'd rather have had him do "Wot"). I also found "New Rose" to be a pretty accurate to the original. Actually, from the point they return, they suddenly turn into a powerhouse group again (with drummer Pinch dressed in a full gorilla outfit for a few songs, and yet still drumming), including "Eloise," "Smash It Up" (and Vanian sounds especially Elvis-ish here) albeit more in a lite metal way than punk (or Goth), and "Feel Alright." I wish they had this energy throughout the whole concert. I would still be a convert. Makes me wonder what Stiv Bators would be like today.

Extras include lengthy and interesting interviews with the individual members of the band, lasting a total of 37 minutes. The rest is some small photos, DVD credits and songwriting acknowledgements.

Band:

Dave Vanian: Vocals

Captain Sensible: Guitar

Patricia Morrison: Bass

Monty Oxy Moron: Keyboards

Andy "Pinch" Pinching: Drums

Song List:

Street of Dreams

Amen

Democracy

Plan 9 Channel 7

Song.com

Wait for the Blackout

I Just Can't Be Happy Today

Would You Be So Hot

Disco Man

Under the Floor Again

Ignite

She

Neat Neat Neat

Happy Talk

New Rose

Eloise

Smash It Up

Feel Alright

It's a Long Song