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Publisher: [Eric Olsen](#)

REVIEW

Music review: Iggy Pop *Live In San Fran 1981*

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Published October 31, 2007



I love the guy, but the vast majority of Iggy Pop's studio CDs are rarely worth bothering with. Sure, he's made some stunning albums – his work with the Stooges, his David Bowie-produced classics *Lust For Life* and *The Idiot*, but the rest of his work can be all over the place, a few good tracks mired in with a bunch of dross. To get the *real* Iggy, to get that molten-metal heat that only Iggy Pop can summon up, you've got to go with the live albums.

Iggy Pop boasts some fantastic live albums to his credit – the 1977 *TV Eye Live*, the unofficial Stooges live bootleg *Metallic K.O.*, where you can actually hear the audience beginning to riot as Iggy struts, cusses and insults away at them. Now a show from 1981 joins the Iggy live parade, showing there's no Iggy quite like Iggy on stage.

Iggy Pop Live In San Fran 1981 isn't quite as essential as some of the other Iggy live discs, but it's a heck of a lot of fun, summoning up the chaos of Pop's best live shows.

The disc follows a DVD of the same show released a few years back. He's backed by an excellent band including Blondie's drummer Clem Burke and David Bowie guitarist Carlos Alomar. The band thrashes around building up a terrific head of steam, turning vintage tracks like "Dum Dum Boys" and "1969" into a post-punk frenzy. Lesser-known numbers like "Eggs On Plate" and "Houston Is Hot Tonight" also get a go. The sound mix is solid, although sometimes Iggy's vocals get lost in the band's roar.

The 1980s were a strange decade for Iggy. By 1981 his fame was fading, he was mired in a drug addiction and released underwhelming albums like *Party* and *Zombie Birdhouse*. Later in the decade, he cleaned up and stumbled into a kind of mainstream success with polished tunes like "Real Wild Child" and "Candy" but his work also took on rather lost quality. His finest songs seemed to be behind him, but whatever was going on offstage, he still had the spirit to put on a good show, as *Live In San Fran 1981* proves.

Also included on the disc are two rare "lost" studio tracks recorded with Cars frontman Ric Ocasek in 1983, "Fire Engine" and "Warrior Tribe."

They're interesting as curiosities, but neither of them are exactly essential – "Fire Engine" stands as one of the goofiest dumb songs Iggy Pop has ever recorded, and that's saying something. Live, though, I bet that track would set off the alarms.

An American journalist who recently moved to New Zealand, Nik Dirga writes whenever the mood strikes him about books, music, movies, pop culture and more.

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