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AC/DC – Back In Black (Under Review series/albums)

Picture: C+ Sound: C+
Extras: C+ Documentary: B

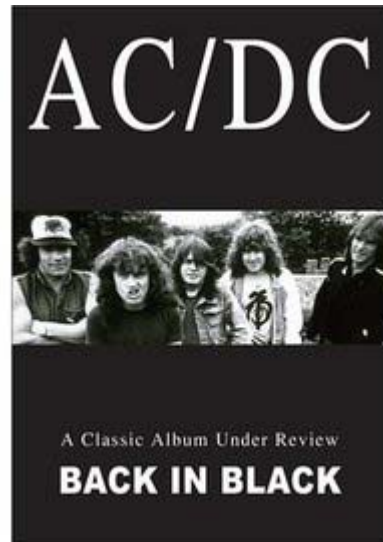
They could only play three-chords and had been around since 1974, but by 1980, the band AC/DC had finally made it commercially in a big way. Their 1979 album **Highway To Hell** was a breakthrough and though lead singer Bon Scott died February of the next

year that did not stop them from moving on. As a matter of fact, they would release three more albums in the next two years and the first would be the monster hit **Back In Black**. That 1980 album has sold well over 10 million copies since and Brian Johnson (of the band Geordie) took over vocals. The **Under Review** series has decided to focus on individual albums and just not entire or multi-part coverage of various music careers. This is one of their first entries in that direction.

The band was from Australia at a time when the only music we heard in the U.S. from that region came from The Bee Gees & Olivia Newton-John. This was around the time the original **Mad Max** was slowly making its way around the country and a sort of Australian Pop Culture invasion of an edgier kind was upon the world at large. Originally producing their music among themselves, the big change came when Atlantic set them up with then-unknown Jeff "Mutt" Lange, a future super producer (Bryan Adams, for instance, if you think that is super) who remains one of the hottest producers in the industry all these years later.

By changing the mode of production, then isolating and multi-tracking their good points and the points that would appeal to fans, he pushed their limited sound to a higher level and a monster hit album resulted. At the time, before Hip Hop, multi-media and a crude culture all around, the band's music about sex and more sex was much more of a novelty and had much populist appeal at the time. There were those at the time (including this critic) who thought this was funny, unintended in particular, but now there is something slightly quaint and maybe even charming about music fans thought was cutting edge. Just talking about sexuality and situations is not sufficient to dealing well with such matters in music or anywhere else, but that is what they did and any Satanism or bi-sexual buttons they pressed along the way only helped their bottom line.

Running 113 minutes, this could be subtitled "everything you wanted to



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know about AC/DC and had no one to ask” because it is pretty thorough. Even if you are not a fan of the band, their music, Rock or Hard Rock, it offers a look inside a music industry that still knew what to do with talent and shows how Atlantic Records still had very talented people at the helm at the time that made this band’s career ultimately possible. Now there is a Rock attitude we can all salute.

The 1.33 X 1 image was originated on analog PAL video and is a bit soft in its transition from PAL to NTSC, but color is good and the mix of old and new footage has its moments. There are some funny, dated CG graphics, but the rest holds up well enough. The PCM 16bit/44.1kHz Stereo is also fine, though nothing sonically spectacular. Extras include another Beyond DVD section, text bios on the contributors & Hardest Quiz Ever piece, plus this one adds Tony Platt in the studio with the band.

- Nicholas Sheffo



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