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Big Audio Dynamite

Big Audio Dynamite Live: E=Mc2 [DVD]

(Cherry Red UK)

US release date: 13 March 2007

UK release date: 29 January 2007

by **Dan MacIntosh**

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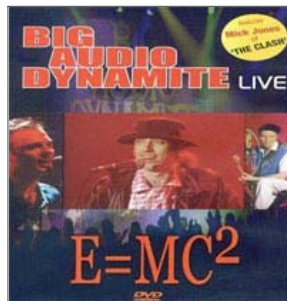
When bands breakup, it affects fans the way divorces impact small circles of friends. You continue to love the former bride and groom, but eventually you side with one partner or the other, whether you truly want to choose a side or not. After Mick Jones was fired from The Clash, Joe Strummer carried on with The Clash brand name by releasing the horrid *Cut The Crap*, which did not trim away any crap. It was, with the exception of "This Is England", an end-to-end pooh-pooh platter. Jones, however, went on to form Big Audio Dynamite, which oftentimes deeply explored dance music in ways only hinted at by his old punk band.

The Clash yelled "Cut!" like a frustrated movie director after its commercial and critical failure, *Cut The Crap*. But Big Audio Dynamite, in contrast, lasted about a decade longer. So it wasn't too hard to choose between these two parties; especially since one of them died a quick, ugly death.

This live DVD documentary was shot at London's Town and Country Club in '90, and spans a goodly sampling of the group's career. But it's hardly a career overview. At only eight songs long, it is strictly brief and to the point. Nevertheless, it includes plenty of highpoints. Big Audio Dynamite concerts were attempts to mix a love for dance music with ingrained rock instincts. And with this backwards look: sometimes it worked, sometimes it failed, with a success ratio of about 50/50 for this DVD release.

In some instances, this live set makes it difficult to differentiate Jones' new gig from his prior one. The song "Other 99" was written about Jones' new club (at the time). But instead of bouncing like a dance floor anthem, it's a strummy guitar rocker, instead. It finds Jones in that sensitive vocal mode he so often took with The Clash, exemplified by "All Lost In The Supermarket", as well as many other memorable tunes.

"Rush" is also an upbeat rocker, with strummed electric guitar its primary element. And all those who feared Jones would trade his six-string for BPMs worried needlessly. Rock will forever be in Jones' bones. The opener includes an Ennio Morricone musical sample, but there is far less sampling than you might have expected. Jones stands at the microphone wearing a black hat, sporting long black hair, and keeping an electric guitar permanently strapped on. Power chords introduce "The Bottom Line", this DVD's first encore selection, before it goes into a progressive groove that has a bit of a Pink Floyd mood to it. One of the DVD's noteworthy samples, oddly enough, comes from The Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go", and is heard in a few places during "The Globe".



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Don Letts, who also formerly worked with The Clash, brought many of these sampling ideas to the B.A.D.'s table. But his name is only credited three times in this set list. You're left with the overriding impression that Jones was in charge the whole way through.

Lyricaly, Jones didn't change his approach much between bands, either. "Medicine Show" takes a long, hard look at many of the false cures deceptively sold to society, whether these are political or social. The "Other 99" is a club song, but it's also a song to and for and about the underdog, which has always been a familiar perspective for Jones' songs.

This DVD closes with "1999", a Prince cover. The song not only fits in nicely with B.A.D.'s repertoire, but Prince is also just their kind of man. He is a guy who loves funk and knows his way around a dance club, but at the same time, he could just as easily morph into guitar hero whenever the mood moved him. Whenever he wants to, he can rock out Hendrix style—and legitimately, too.

The best part about watching this DVD today is that the messy Clash breakup has long since blown over. Back then, it was sometimes tempting to read too much into Jones' music. Was he taking shots at Strummer with it? Was he trying to prove that he was the true genius in The Clash? But now, it's all about the music. And thankfully, the music stands up well. Best of all, it rocks mightily.

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