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Iggy Pop: Live San Fran 1981

Contributed by Brent Simon

Tuesday, 31 May 2005




He's a scraggly figure of rock 'n' roll rebellion to this day, but it's still a bit weird to lay eyes upon footage of punk pioneer Iggy Pop from almost two and a half decades ago and see how little he's changed, both physically and emotionally. The same clipped, sardonic tones; the same finely calibrated punk chops; the same heroin chic physique. They're all there, along with the cathartic jolt of his music, in *Iggy Pop: Live San Fran 1981*, a slight and straightforward but valuable concert disc for those dedicated to punk's lineage.

From the chaos of the early Stooges shows to his recent work with the Trolls and even sneer progeny like Sum 41, Pop has remained a vital live performer. This DVD finds the godfather of punk fronting a band that includes Blondie drummer Clem Burke and future Bowie guitarist Carlos Alomar for a late November '81 show near the end of a tour in support of his album *Party*. The video is rough like the tunes, but cast in pink, purple and blue hues that seem to visually highlight the bruised, brutish rhythms on display. Twelve songs get a workout on the 50-minute set, including "Some Weird Sin," "Houston is Hot Tonight," "Rock & Roll Party," "Bang Bang," "Pumpin' for Jill," "I'm a Conservative," "1969," "I Need More" and "T.V. Eye."

Set highlights, however, are probably Iggy's garter belt-and-stockings get-up for "Eggs on Plate" and a surprisingly low-key version of the unfalteringly get-up-and-go "Lust for Life," the best growl-pop ditty Iggy ever penned. This performance, with its 90-second instrumental opening and disaffected, at times almost spoken-word delivery, stands in stark contrast to memories of Iggy flinging himself off stages in corporeal support for his music's anarchic undertones, but it serves as a powerful reminder that underneath the surface snarl there was an important bite to Iggy's songcraft as well.

The bummer for most of these vintage-era concert DVD releases is the shoddy sound, but *Iggy*



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- Episode II: Attack of the Clones
- Episode I: The Phantom Menace
- Episode VI: Return of the Jedi
- Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back
- Episode IV: A New Hope (of course!)

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Pop: Live San Fran 1981 luckily comes through crisp and clear in a nicely mixed 5.1 surround sound. If the camera operator's occasional zooms and shakes (really not too big of a problem) come off as amateurish, well, at least you know he was enjoying himself.

DVD extras unfortunately include only a trailer for *Iggy and the Stooges: Live in Detroit*, but Iggy fans and musicologists in general won't want to miss a second chance to see and enjoy such a rare performance from the punk legend. *Live San Fran 1981* is a solid aural time capsule and, in case you were wondering, shows where R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe copped those early, affected dance moves. B- (Movie) C+ (Disc)

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