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The English Beat In Concert At The Royal Festival Hall

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Picture: C+ Sound: C+ Extras: C+ Concert: B

In yet another reunion that works, The English Beat (known as simply The Beat back in the U.K.) are back together and as vibrant as ever with their 2004 concert at **The Royal Festival Hall**. Having spilt and formed two separate bands, General Public (with Ranking Roger (aka Roger Charley) and Dave Wakeling) and the bizarre Prince-inspired Fine Young Cannibals (with Dave Steele & Andy Cox), they did not quit making music. From 1980 to 1983, they had three studio albums (**I Just Can't Stop It, Wha'ppen?** and the immortal **Special Beat Service**) along with a massive farewell package (**What Is Beat?**) and they have remained important, influential, popular and held up remarkably well a quarter-century later. This concert features the following classics:

- 1) *Ranking Full Stop*
- 2) *Rough Rider*
- 3) *Noise In This World*
- 4) *Hands Off She's Mine*
- 5) *Doors Of Your Heart*
- 6) *Too Nice To Talk To*
- 7) *Tears Of A Clown*
- 8) *Twist & Crawl*
- 9) *Spar Wid Me*
- 10) *Two Swords*
- 11) *Big Shot*
- 12) *Get A Job*
- 13) *Stand Down Margaret*
- 14) *Mirror In The Bathroom*
- 15) *Stranger On The Shore*
- 16) *Save It For Later*
- 17) *Click Click*
- 18) *Can't Get Used To Losing You*
- 19) *Best Friend*
- 20) *Jackpot*

They too were from the amazing 2-Tone label, but I.R.S. released their work, but this is another fine DVD from Secret Records. Saxa (the saxophone player for those not in the know) is the third original member back, while Steele (bass) & Cox (guitarist) are succeeded by Andy Pierson on bass and Neil Deathridge on guitar. Wakeling also handles guitar as he always has. The songs mix so much world music and like no other band, including the joyously pervasive pre-Reggae genre Ska. The concert runs over 85 minutes.

The letterboxed 1.78 X 1 image is lacking a bit, with detail limits, but works well otherwise. The Dolby Digital 5.1 and 2.0 mixes are not that different, with the 5.1 a bit better, but not up to how good it could have sounded. Too bad this was not DTS, because this concert sounds like it has more punch than we are hearing. The extras include a long interview with the original

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members who returned and runs about 40 minutes, though the sound and image seem out of sync, plus you get a text biography of the band and a stills gallery. Though purists may miss the old members or want the original studio albums and concerts, **The English Beat In Concert At The Royal Festival Hall** delivers and is recommended.

- Nicholas Sheffo
