

High Bias

Listening with extreme prejudice

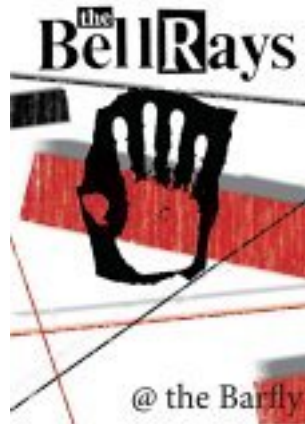
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Audio-Visuals

THE BELLRAYS @ THE BARFLY

Directed by Peter Wells
(Punkervision)

As hard as it is for me to contemplate, there are a bunch of you out there who haven't taken the time to go see the best live rock & roll band in the universe. No, I'm not talking about U2, dumbass. I'm talking about the mighty BellRays, the soul/punk/rock/whatever pride of Riverside, California.



Fortunately for your lazy asses, Punkervision offers **The BellRays @ the Barfly**, a typically scorching show recorded in London. (It probably goes without saying that this all-American band is more popular across the pond than at home.) The audio mix isn't quite as explosive as an actual face-to-face show delivers, and singer Lisa Kekaula's mike doesn't seem quite ready to handle her powerful pipes, but nonetheless the quartet blazes through a good chunk of its latest (and best) album **The Red, White & Black** in fine style. The quartet practically torches the stage with "Some Confusion City," "Remember" and "Sister Disaster." As good as the 'Rays are at creating a sturdy wall of rock & roll sound, they also know that variety is the proverbial spice, as they put some breathing space into the set with the meditative "Lost Disciples," the 70s-funky "Tell a Lie," the Middle Eastern infusions on "Beginning From the End" (all new songs) and the Motown pop of "Making Up For Lost Time." The band finds room for a couple of oldies as well, with the hard-driving "Fire on the Moon" and the masterful anthem "Gather Darkness." "Startime" ends the set with both a bit of levity and an undeniable ray of hope—because if you deny it, Kekaula will kick your ass.

Fans who've never seen a BellRays show will finally get to see the members in action: bassist Robert Venum's

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constant leaps, guitarist Tony Fate's furious head-nodding, drummer Craig Waters' unrestrained enthusiasm and, of course, the sheer force of Kekaula's personality. There's no more committed act anywhere on the planet, and even if the volume is blunted in the interests of a good mix, **The BellRays @ the Barfly** is still more impossibly intense bang for any amount of bucks you can imagine. *Michael Toland* [[buy it](#)]

IAN HUNTER AND THE RANT BAND: JUST ANOTHER NIGHT

Directed by Dave Meehan
(Secret Films/[MVD](#))

It's usually difficult for an aging rocker to keep any credibility (witness the Stones), but Ian Hunter makes it look easy. On **Ian Hunter and the Rant Band: Just Another Night**, the shades-adorned, still-blond songwriter maintains the energy of a man half his age (mid-60s, older than Jagger, McCartney and Dylan) while retaining the maturity that comes with advancing years. Backed on this 2004 London date not only by his crack regular band (featuring axeman extraordinaire Andy York), but also his former Mott the Hoople partner Mick Ralphs on guitar, Hunter eagerly, even passionately takes a trip through his Mott and solo catalogs.



Despite the band's name, there are only two songs from 2001's **Rant** here: the moving ballad "Dead Man Walkin'" and the joyful "Knees of My Heart," a tribute to Hunter's wife Trudi. ("If you're a songwriter, you have to write one for the wife now and again." Beat. "Keeps 'em happy for at least a fortnight.") But that's OK, as Hunter and band fill the space with other jewels from Hunter's vast repertoire, fiercely rocking on "Just Another Night," an intense "Standin' in My Light" and the perennial favorite "Once Bitten Twice Shy." A lovely take on "Michael Picasso," Hunter's gentle tribute to his friend the late Mick Ronson, is also a moving highlight. Hunter even debuts some new tunes, including the explicitly political "Rollerball," the 9/11 ponderance "Twisted Steel" and the autobiographical but unsentimental "23A Swan Hill." There's a special jolt running through the many Mott tunes. Whether it's due to Ralph's presence or not, "Roll Away the Stone," the **Brain Capers** epic "The Journey" and "I Wish I Was Your Mother" shiver with life, while the golden Hoople oldie "Rock 'n' Roll Queen" threatens to burn down the stage.

The proverbial "special guests" make appearances as well. Def Leppard singer and Mott fanatic Joe Elliott joins the group for "All the Young Dudes" and "All the Way From Memphis," sounding most unlike his usual screechy self. Brian May, looking like he's having the time of his life, adds ripping guitar to "Memphis." But the guests never detract from the star of the show, even when he's deliberately passing the spotlight. Though his voice is almost all rasp now and he qualifies for social security, Hunter still has more soul and charisma than a bushel of rockers 30, even 40 years younger; his commitment to his craft and undisguised passion for playing his music should set an example for rock & roll professionals young and old. Magnificent. *Michael Toland* [[buy it](#)]



Site design by [Georgina Toland](#)

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