

Scanner zine

BAD RELIGION - The Riot {L.A. Access/ *MVD Visual*} Let's be honest - BAD RELIGION peaked with the 'Suffer' album. As good as some of the band's other output is, nothing matched 'Suffer'. This DVD captures a raw live set from 1988 plus an infamous riot from a cancelled show in 1990. Recorded at Cal State Northridge Devonshire Downs in Oct '88, the live footage features 16 songs. It's filmed the way Punk shows should be filmed - on a single camera, hand-held, up close, no overdubs, no 24-track mixed surround sound - a warts 'n' all performance. This is BAD RELIGION though; the performance is tight and defiant - especially the tracks from the recently released (at the time) 'Suffer'. Highlights have to be clinical versions of 'You Are The Government', a set-closing 'When' and a blistering 'Bad Religion'. It's filmed on a moderately small stage when compared with some of the boards the band played in the future years and the band itself is pretty animated - Greg Hetson in particular is his usual stage-roving self, looking not unlike a Punk Rock version of AC/DC's Angus Young!

The Riot footage was filmed two years later at Hollywood's El Portal Theatre. It's a liberally infamous show that also featured PENNYWISE and NOFX. Due to the venue being an all-seater, Fire Chiefs shut the show down after PENNYWISE. And so the venue got trashed. It's not exactly spectacular footage but you see cops go in with helicopters, water cannons are employed, there are some bloodied heads and broken glass aplenty. All credit to cameraman Richard White - he wasn't filming this as a shocko documentary with the intention of skimming thousands in performance rights. He was just there, capturing a moment in Punk history.

The negative is the confusion raised on the DVD's sleeve about the relationship between the live footage and the riot that is at best misleading and at worst downright fictitious sensationalism. The sleeve clearly states, "...captures Bad Religion's infamous set (and the fracas which followed) in all its glory." Spot the error? The band never got to play this 'infamous set' as the show was shutdown prior to the band performing. There's a soundcheck of '21st Century Digital Boy' but that's it. Not 'the set' the sleeve suggests. The tense eruption of focused anarchy that IS the riot was recorded two years after the concert footage here. That's either a marketing scam or negligent graphic design! Admittedly, that quote is supplied by some hack from the All Movie Guide - guess he didn't watch the actual doco.

Of the extras, there are two re-mastered tracks from the '88 show with some flash video effects. You also get a long (and slightly tedious) piece of skateboarding footage, a 'meet-the-band' segment and a smoking 'I Want To Conquer The World' from the make-good show at the Hollywood Palladium for those who attended the cancelled El Portal show. There are some interesting Director's Comments and finally a bit of backstage footage from the Palladium show - presumably post-show - that makes a fun curio.

As a DVD it's a great package - fantastic live footage, a riot filmed on the spot and some neat asides and extras - totally satisfying. As a piece of marketing, it's rather disappointing.

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