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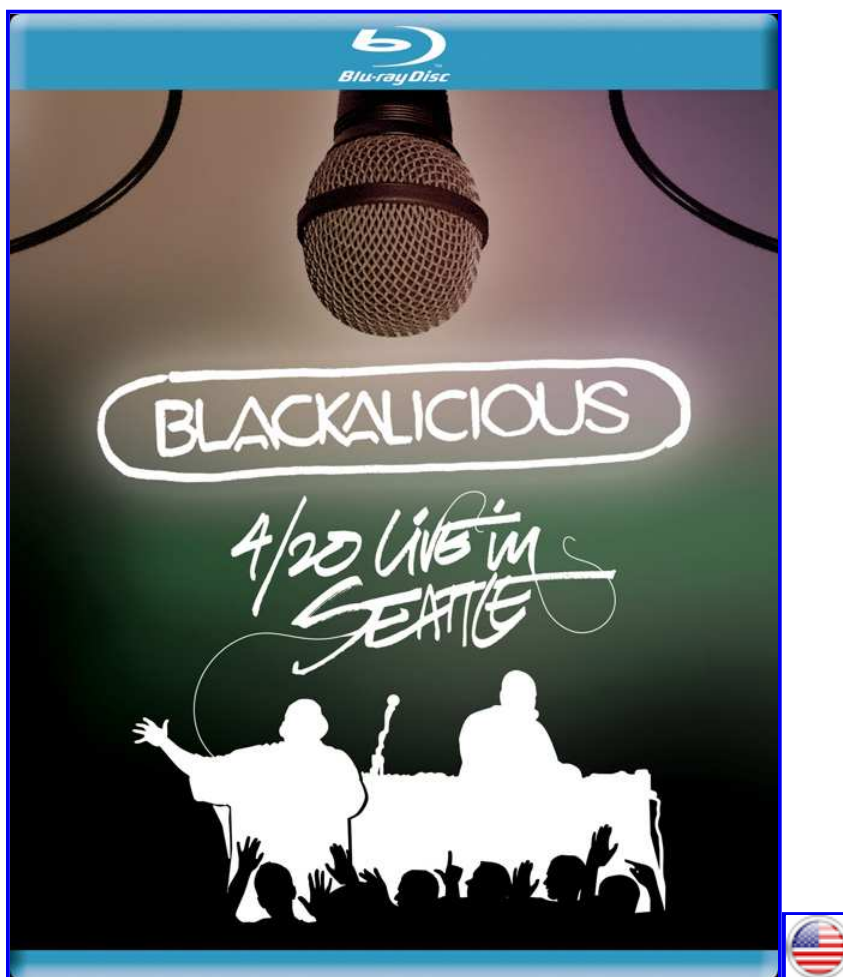
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Blackalicious: 4/20 — Live in Seattle Blu-ray Review

Posted September 28th, 2009 by Brandon DuHamel

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- **Video Codec:** VC-1
- **Resolution:** 1080i/60
- **Audio Codec:** Dolby Digital 5.1 (576kbps); Dolby Digital 2.0 (192kbps)
- **Region:** ABC (Region-Free)
- **Discs:** 1
- **Rating:** Not Rated
- **Studio:** Black Mine
- **Blu-ray Disc Release Date:** October 28, 2008
- **List Price:** \$19.95



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Overall



The Performance



Video Quality



Audio Quality



Supplemental Materials



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(Screen captures are lightly compressed with lossy JPEG and thus are meant as a general representation of the content and do not fully reveal the capabilities of the Blu-ray format)

The Performance



I cannot say that I was familiar with the music of Blackalicious at all before their Blu-ray Disc showed for me

to review. I was familiar with their name, but I'd never knowingly heard any of their music until now. Musically, the hip-hop group blends a style of 1970s soul and funk much like their name evokes. At the front is rapper Gift of Gab (Tim Parker) who spits out rhymes at a motor pace over the raw, funky, hypnotic beats of DJ/producer Chief Xcel (Xavier Mosley).



If one wants to get a feel for their style, the opening number on this release, “Alphabet Aerobics” will give you a pretty good idea. As the driving beat slowly speeds up, Gift of Gab rhymes through the entire alphabet, all the while the rhythms and backing arrangements getting slightly more intricate.

4/20 — *Live in Seattle* is filled with some enjoyable hip-hop unfortunately the way it is presented on this release is not very enjoyable at all. The songs are not played seamlessly. The disc is authored so that each song is played individually, so it doesn't feel like one continuous live show. The set is also quite dull — all black, poor lighting, and not much to look at. It doesn't help that the sound and video quality aren't so great either, as you will see below.

Video Quality





4/20 — *Live in Seattle* was originally captured in high definition and it arrives on Blu-ray in a 1.78:1 1080i/60 VC-1 encoding. The video quality on this release is well below average, suffering from high amounts of video noise, noticeable blocking, posterization, and a pervasive softness to the overall image. Blacks are deep, but they are filled with some harsh noise negating some of the benefit there.

Audio Quality



To go along with the disappointing image are two disappointing audio options. The release has been provided with Dolby Digital 5.1 (576kbps) and Dolby Digital 2.0 (192Kbps) audio options.

Let's start with the low bitrate Dolby Digital 5.1 option. The surround channels are barely used, low

frequencies, though solid, are hardly resonant for this sort of music, and the high frequencies are grungy and harsh. There is an overall shallowness to the sound and the whole mix becomes fatiguing very quickly.

The Dolby 2.0 option is just an aural abomination, plain and simple. It sounds like someone set up a couple of cheap microphones from about twenty-feet away in a crowded high school gymnasium and bootlegged the entire show to poorly encoded .mp3. I can't think of any other way to describe it. There is no distinct balance of vocals and instrumentation, ambient sounds are all over the place and crowd noise is completely intrusive — skip this version entirely.

Supplemental Materials



Well, the packaging claims a music video for the song “Deception,” but try as hard as I did, the only “bonus” I could find was an under two-minute clip entitled The Bus Tour (1.78:1; 1080i/60) that briefly shows some interviews with members of the group on their tour bus talking about their bus tour and coming to Seattle. It's hardly worth watching.

The Definitive Word

Overall:





Despite some rather promising music that is more than entertaining, I'm afraid that I have to recommend that people skip this release. The lack of continuity during playback, the poor audio and picture quality and basically non-existent bonus features drop this way down to the bottom of the pile of far more superior concert video releases available on Blu-ray Disc.



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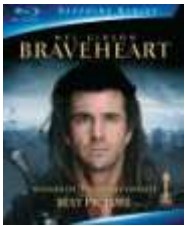
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