

JERSEY BEAT (online , punk)

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Punk Rock Karaoke - Birth of a New Religion?



Punk Rock Karaoke - DVD/CD (mvdvisual.com)

By Phil Rainone

"Music is a religion, Karaoke is a cult."- Little Steven

I've used that quote a few times over the last couple of years, sharing Steven's love of music and utter disdain for that lounge lizard, Neanderthalic, knuckle-dragging, watered-down muzak they try to pass off as music in karaoke bars. Phew! That was a mouthful! But it's all true! I've asked everyone from The Boss (Mr. Testa) on down to my friends Gary, Diane, and just about everyone I know at some point, if they've ever done Karaoke.- Their answers were all pretty much the same: "Only when I was drunk!"

Well, after listening to Punk Rock Karaoke, I have a newfound respect! What this DVD does is take everything bad about Karaoke and replace it with a real deal live band, consisting of some very cool punk rock musicians, including Eric Melvin on guitar (NOFX), Greg Hetson on guitar (Bad Religion/ Circle Jerks), Steve Soto on bass and backing vocals (Adolescents/ Agent Orange/22 Jacks), and Derek O'Brien on drums and backing vocals (Social Distortion/ Agent Orange/ Adolescents). This scenario was tried with other musicians on the first few years of the Warped Tour. There, they used musicians from the bands that were on break as a backing band, and had the fans come up and sing to some of their favorite punk rock tunes.

What makes this DVD/CD even better is how, in the extra features, the band mentions how psyched everyone gets playing because they get to be Black Flag ("Gimmie, Gimmie, Gimmie"), or The Buzzcocks ("What Do I Get"), or The Dead Kennedy's ("California Uber Alles"- which is one of my son Steve's and my faves, played over and over on many a road trip.) With 10 songs in all (they should make a whole DVD with more Karaoke punk rock tunes), the first disc here includes both the instrumental and vocal versions of the songs. But wait, there's more! They also include a second CD with the same ten songs as the DVD but with special guests doing the vocals. For example, you'd have the ace Karaoke backing band with Dickie from The Mighty Mighty Bosstones covering Stiff Little Fingers' "Suspect Device," or Dave King from Flogging Molly doing an amazing version of Bad Religion's "Fuck Armageddon... This is Hell."

And they just don't put the words up on a blank screen like in some bar. Behind the words, they've projected either homemade videos or 50's black & white B-movie clips, or wild WWII footage, which could be a little distracting, but very cool all the same. They cover all the bases, and then some, with on-the-money punk rock karaoke selections, a who's who of musicians, and an extra CD sung by some of the best voices in punk rock.

During the interview ("Meet the Band" in the extras), they mention that they've been doing this since New Years of '96 (I hope this will inspire a gazillion punk rock Karaoke bands to spring up), and they still sound energized doing it! They talk tongue-in-cheek about how "We play and you're the star, in three minutes," and about the kids getting up on stage with some of their favorite musicians.

Besides footage of the band, you see the singers and the crowd get into it, moshing, and crowd surfing, as the singers, both male and female, storm the stage, working off the crowd, and the crowd getting enveloped in the musical mojo being created on the stage.

So you're probably wondering if I tried it?! Well, like I always say, "They pay me not to sing... or dance!"

But, yeah I'm writing this up at work - not a soul around, except Otto (the seagull). So I put on "California Uber Alles," grabbed a wrench for a microphone, and tried to copy Jello Barfia's shrill vocals, leaping and hoppin around the room, doin' the electric boogaloo! I'm such a pathetic sight, but I'm enjoyin' the hell out of it!!

Dang! If they keep it, up they could turn this punk rock karaoke thing into a religion!

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