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## Dead End Drive-In: Now Showing - Big Audio Dynamite II

Written by Gaz E  
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### Big Audio Dynamite II - 'Live' (Wienerworld)

For a musical pioneer as well respected as Mick Jones relaunching Big Audio Dynamite II was possibly the most basic event in his lauded career.

But tag on a 'll' he did as he revamped BAD in 1990, half a dozen years after forming the music collective with Don Letts in the mid-eighties.

Only Jones remained of the original line-up: bass player Gary Stonadge was recruited, as was guitarist Nick Hawkins - the first time the band had featured two guitars - and drummer Chris Kavanagh, famous (and we're talking tabloid famous) for being in pop enfants terribles Sigue Sigue Sputnik.

Kavanagh had famously been recruited to SSS on pure looks and attitude alone, being taught how to play drums later, almost as an afterthought. Not that it shows on this live DVD, dug up from a dusty tape mausoleum - location unknown - by the re-animators at Wienerworld.

No, the drummer, at times, mutates into a human/cyborg chimera - surely what Messrs James and Degville would have wanted all along? - robotically keeping the beat behind a band that certainly was ahead of its time.

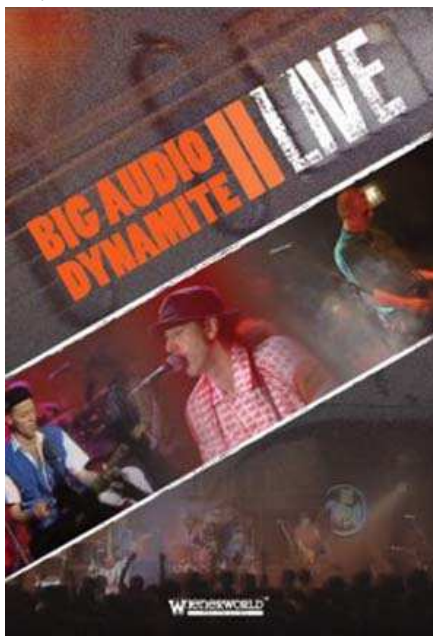
Incorporating samples and dance beats the old fashioned way before technology provided a gateway (and gateway mics) to an electronic futureworld where pitchshifters replaced singers, lip synching replaced organic band member synchronicity, Big Audio Dynamite II, as exhibited on this live recording from London's Town and Country Club in 1992, were doing the groundwork for all manner of drug-added pretenders and talentless hacks to sell millions of dance records.

The crowd at the Town and Country Club on that night twenty-one years ago knew the score though, the place packed wall to sweaty wall with an all-encompassing blend of music fans: Clash fans there to catch an idol mixing with fledgling acid house casualties and, obviously, fans, pure and simple, of BAD and their influential back catalogue.

The show was broadcast on UK television as part of a Central Television series of live shows and, unremarkably ripped from old videotape, watching the footage now on this region-free vanilla disc brings back all sorts of crazed late weekend television memories: I expect, at any given moment, James Whale to appear, or to wake up staring through my one half-open eye at some badly-dubbed Euro thriller starring Franco Nero.

The quality, then, of this DVD leaves a lot to be desired. It's not too bad (pun intended), but if you're expecting anything like a restoration job then you're going to be sorely disappointed. This is '90s television quality, swathed in red light, borderline breaking up at its weakest point...but, y'know what, that only adds to the charm; this is a time capsule cracked open to let us gasp a little two decade-old air for a short time, after all.

Opening with 'Medicine Show', the opening song of the band's 1985 debut, 'This Is Big Audio Dynamite', BAD II put on a show that has devotees of the band, and I mean full-on Dynamites, hanging over the barrier singing every word back at Jones and Co. Kavanagh, as expected, provides a startling example of how to play dance beats organically, not bad

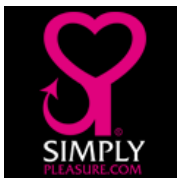


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as suggested, provides a starting example of how to play dance beats organically - not bad for someone who couldn't even play several short years previously - while Hawkins, who would die of a heart attack in 2005 aged just 40, fills out the guitar work giving Jones the opportunity to concentrate on his...umm...select vocals and dodgy line in shirts. In fact, the iconic musician's choice of outfit on display is the main reason why being spared better quality footage is a godsend.

'I Don't Know', taken from the previous year's 'The Globe' album, follows, 'Other 99' (from third album 'Tighten Up, Vol. 88') and hit single 'E=MC2', leading up to 'The Globe' itself. 'Rush', from that 1991 long player, is up next, the song oddly included as the B-side to the Levi ad-inspired re-release of The Clash's 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go'. Half a dozen songs in and we're already waiting for the band to reappear for the encore: the debut album's 'The Bottom Line' giving the fans what they want before Jones, now happily devoid of the tasteless shirt, introduces a cover of Prince's '1999', a curiously addictive and joyous version it is too.

...and that's it: eight songs, fifty whole minutes.

Without proper opening/introductory titles, and with the original end credits from Central Television still attached, this live disc leaves a helluva lot to be desired in the aesthetics stakes. The cover too, while only enhancing the almost bootleg feel to the release, simply features screen grabs from the disc itself, quality limited.

With zero extras, not even a disc menu, it would be easy to judge this disc, and judge it unfavourably, but I'm a collector, a music and video nerd, and this kind of release is aimed squarely at stunted geeks like me (and quite possibly you). With smart TVs streaming content of similar, oft better, quality straight from YouTube, it's hard to imagine releases like this surviving the latest technology cull. Going completely against the grain though, I say long live companies like Wienerworld, forever seeking out rare and seemingly lost audio and visual treasures and offering them for our perusal.

How many people will shell out full retail price for a 50 minute bonus-free disc of questionable quality? The answer's in the question, ladies and gentlemen. But, no matter how basic a release this is, it still looks way better resting alongside like-minded cousins on my shelf than it does as some random file on my computer.

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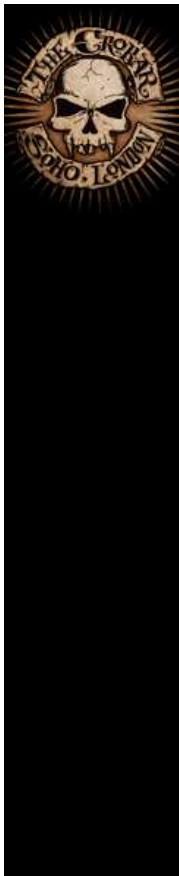


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