



The Bugs - proof that early punk rock wasn't reserved for the U.K. and U.S.

I'd like to introduce you to the Bugs.

I first became aware of this early punk band in an email I received from the band's guitarist, Peter Sinnige. He simply stated that he had been in the band the Bugs, and was releasing a live album from the historic Paradiso.

While all this was true, he was too humble. As I looked into the band a bit more, I found out that, during those years, they were the house punk rock band for the legendary club, sharing the bills with countless contemporaries.

And upon hearing the record, which is (for the most part) well-recorded, it's quite obvious they never got the notice over here they deserved. Their sound was a great concoction of fast punk and slow dark rock, sort of like a cross between the Sex Pistols and Bauhaus.

During their time together, the Bugs only released one album, a five-song record. It's available online, if you search long enough through collector's sites that is. And are willing to pay upwards of \$100 for it. Fortunately, this live album makes the Bugs available to the common folk again.

Check out the full review of the Bugs Live in Paradiso 78-81. It's a bit of a review, and a bit of a history lesson, but not an overwhelming chunk of either.

Pioneers You Never Knew About

Guide Rating - ★★★★★

[Visit Their Web Site](#)

Although the time period is right, when you're thinking about punk bands coming out of Europe in the late '70s and early '80s, Amsterdam is not the locale that immediately leaps to mind. But that's where the Bugs were; specifically, they were at the Paradiso.

The Bugs + The Paradiso = Punk Rock In Amsterdam

The Paradiso has a long career as a musical venue. Opened in 1968, almost everyone has played there. Glen Matlock's last gig with the Sex Pistols (well, the first time around) was at the Paradiso. In the late '70s and early '80s, it was legendary for punk shows.

And the Bugs were the Paradiso house band. Between 1978 and 1981, they played 53 times at the Paradiso. They rehearsed in its basement, and opened for bands as they played through and covered cancelled shows, playing three or four nights in some weeks.

They only made one record, a five-song EP on Torso Records. If you can find it, get it. That is, if you can afford it. I found one copy online for \$144.

Like so many other punk bands, they were doomed to fade into obscurity, aside from resting in the collections of a few collectors. Unlike too many bands, Live In Paradiso 78-81 is bringing them back to the public.

Live In Paradiso 78-81 collects a dozen tracks from over the years, most of them recorded quite well. With an archival live recording like this, poor quality is inevitable at times. Only a few tracks suffer from bad sound, though. Three songs are muddy, sounding like they were taped on a tape recorder from the back of the room, which they may have been. Discounting those tracks, the remaining tracks are pristine, and sound better than a lot of studio records from the era, and probably are pretty close to the original studio recordings.

Historical lesson aside, the music is great. The Bugs play a brand of punk that is raw, stripped down and occasionally angry. They wander back and forth between two sounds, at times playing fast three-chord snot-nosed Sex Pistols-styled punk (especially on the two-minute punk anthem "Enemy" – a song too good to have toiled unknown in the States for so long!), and at times pouring out a sound that is slower, darker and noisier, a la Bauhaus.

It's the slower, noisy yet melodic songs that really lets you hear how talented and innovative they were. They have a sound that transcends language barriers - not that it really matters, as most of the songs are in English. Even when they're not, though, like on the stripped-down, thick trudger "Harvey und Brigitte Rot", where knowledge of the lyrics aren't necessary. You get the point.

As an added historical bonus, the CD comes with a bunch of jpg files of old show flyers from the era. There are some beautiful pieces there, deserving of being printed out and plastered all over.

I think all too often, we think that early punk happened in a vacuum that encompassed the U.K. and U.S. It's nice to actually get to hear the evidence that proves otherwise.

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