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**PAUL McCARTNEY
EXCLUSIVE!**



BAD RELIGION

By Richard Kilby

“...Greg’s vocals on the EP sounded like he was singing underwater”



Bad Religion were formed in 1980, during the emergence of Punk around Los Angeles. Hailing from the Burbank/Woodland Hills suburban areas of North Los Angeles, the first incarnation of the group comprised of Greg Graffin, on vocals, Brett Gurewitz, guitar, Jay Bentley, bass, and Jay ‘Z’ Lishrout on drums.

The group came up with the name **Bad Religion** simply because they did not like religion and what it stood for. Their music was hard edged ‘Punk’ rock, with many songs played very fast, but not straying into ‘Thrash’. By the summer of 1981 the group had released their first record. The *Bad Religion* EP was a six track 7-inch EP and was recorded at *Real Life Studios* in Agura. The record was produced by the band themselves and was released on their own *Epitaph Records* label, formed by their guitarist **Brett Gurewitz**. Despite the fact that the band weren’t too happy with the final mix of the EP, blaming the studio for its deficiencies, it sold well, with *Jem Records* buying 300 copies to distribute out of Los Angeles.

Bad Religion distributed the rest of the EP’s around the Los Angeles area themselves and in an interview in *Flipside* magazine **Brett** said **Greg’s** vocals on the EP sounded like he was singing

underwater. If you’ve heard the EP, you’ll know what he meant. Also in late summer of that year they played a show at Bard’s club and made a name for themselves, quickly becoming established as one of the better groups amongst a growing number of talented outfits. Later that year the group went into *Track Record* in Hollywood and recorded four tracks for compilation LP’s; 3 tracks, *Bad Religion*, *Slaves* and *Drastic Actions* were re-recorded from the first EP and the other track *In The Night* was a new song. The tracks were produced by the group and Jim Mankey. The 3 tracks from the first EP ended up on the *Public Service* compilation LP on *Smoke Seven Records* (1981) and *In The Night* was put on to the *B.Y.O. Records* compilation LP *Someone Got Their Head Kicked In!* (1982).

1982, and **Jay ‘Z’ Lishrout** had left and was replaced on drums by **Pete Finestone**. The group went into the *Track Record* studios in Hollywood once more, again with Jim Mankey, though this time he was the engineer and the group produced all the songs. 14 tracks were recorded and then mastered at *Gold Star* in Hollywood. The result of this excursion into the studio was the LP *How Could Hell Be Any Worse?*, which was unleashed onto an unsuspecting public in Los Angeles.

The LP was very successful for the group and sold well, it also established **Bad Religion** as one of the best Hardcore groups in L.A. Today it is regarded as a milestone in Punk history – a true classic considered by many as one of the best Punk LP's of the decade. The music was fast, honest and to the point. The group played regular gigs and were very popular. The track *We're Only Gonna Die* was taken from the LP and eventually featured on the *American Youth Report* compilation LP on *Invasion Records* (1982).

1983 – **Jay Bentley** and **Pete Finestone** left the group and were replaced by **Paul Dedona** (bass) and **Davy Goldman** (drums). The LP, *Into The Unknown* was recorded at *Perspective Sound*, Sun Valley, and was produced by **Greg Graffin** and **Brett Gurewitz** with **Jim Markey** engineering it again. Expectations of another classic LP, however, on the heels of the previous year's first album, were very high. However, when the LP was released it would prove to be one of the most disappointing Punk records of the decade and, as far as concerned, the biggest disappointment in the history of Hardcore.

It was slated out by practically everybody who reviewed it. No one could believe this was the **Bad Religion** of a year previous. The record was 70's M.O.R. nowhere rock, a hundred light years away from the chainsaw punk of the first LP; the following review by Jim Johanson of *Maximum Rock 'N' Roll* Fanzine probably summed up everybody's feelings: "This is the obligatory slag review. Basically, this new Bad Religion album totally sucks, unless you like slickly produced early '70's wimp rock. After playing it, I hurled it out the window, into the unknown!" Today the LP is something the group would rather not talk about, understandably so, and undoubtedly this resulted in them losing a lot of loyal followers in 1983.

1984 – **Brett Gurewitz**, **Paul Dedona** and **Davy Goldman** all left the group. **Brett**, unfortunately, had a big drug and alcohol problem and nearly killed himself with an overdose - only later cleansing himself of both addictions. The group

continued and recruited **Greg Hetson** from the **Circle Jerks** to play guitar whenever he wasn't playing or touring. They also recruited **Tom Gallegos**, ex *Wasted Youth*, on bass, and **Pete Finestone** rejoined on drums.

The group then went into *Faceted Studios*, Los Angeles and laid down five tracks for a new EP, including a re-recorded version of *Bad Religion*. The EP *Back To The Known* was produced by **Greg Graffin** and **Brett Gurewitz** though **Greg** no longer played on the EP, he remained good friends with them and concentrated on his label, *Epitaph Records*. He inspired the EP.

The EP (12") was recorded on one side of the disc, the other side was totally blank and was received with mostly negative reviews from the press. It was a return to fast punk rock, and after the second LP, it could really have expected to be a fold, but amazingly it was a double EP. *Back To The Known* was the only one with what their fans were capable of.

1984 – the summer also saw the re-release in 12" format of their debut 6-track EP, again on *Epitaph Records*, due to popular demand (I guess?). Their first LP was released in 1985. From 1985 to 1987 **Bad Religion** kept a low profile, with no new product in the field, though they played frequent shows on the east and west coasts. They only kept the band and their name going because people still knew they were together. **Tom Gallegos** left during this period and was replaced by their original bass player, **Greg Hetson** still played guitar for the group whenever he wasn't playing with the **Circle Jerks**.

1987 saw **Jay Bentley** and **Brett Gurewitz** bumping into each other again, as they both lived in Hollywood. **Jay** would often ask **Brett** to play with them again, as having him back in the group would be fun, but **Brett** would always say "He didn't know" or "Maybe he would".

Eventually, in 1987, **Bad Religion** had a show lined up but, unfortunately, **Greg Hetson** was out

playing guitar for the **Circle Jerks**. **Jay** asked **Brett** if he would play guitar for the show at the *Gilman Street Club* (run by **Maximum Rock 'N' Roll** magazine). **Brett** agreed and during the rehearsal before the show they started writing the new songs for the second LP.

Brett Gurewitz was back in the group again, sharing guitar duties with **Greg Hetson**, so the group now had both lead and rhythm guitars, giving them an even more powerful sound.

They agreed to record a new LP, so **Brett** obtained a tape of their first LP, *How Could Hell Be Any Worse?* and played it whenever he could; his desire was to produce a frame of mind similar to that which inspired the songs on the debut album. Surprisingly, the LP, *Suffer*, sounds like a continuation from where the first LP left off, **Brett** never intentionally set out to make an LP like their first, it was simply the way he wrote and it just happened to come out in a similar vein.

The group recorded the tracks at *Westbeach Recorders* in Hollywood, April 1988, 15 tracks in total, produced by the group themselves. The LP was called *Suffer* and was released to enthusiastic reviews by practically everyone. **Bad Religion** had returned to the hardcore scene in a blaze of glory. The record was released on their own *Epitaph Records* label and the group and LP went on to be voted "Best Band 1988" and "Best LP 1988" in both *Flipside* and *Maximum Rock 'N' Roll's* annual readers polls. The group were also playing to sell-out shows on their *Comeback* tour, promoting the *Suffer* LP.

In years to come, I think **Bad Religion** will be remembered as producing two of the best and most influential Hardcore albums of the decade plus, unfortunately, the worst. Never mind lads – welcome back!

Thanks to *Flipside* and *Maximum Rock 'N' Roll* fanzines for quotes and very short interpretations of parts of their **Bad Religion** interviews.

Compiled by Richard Kilby

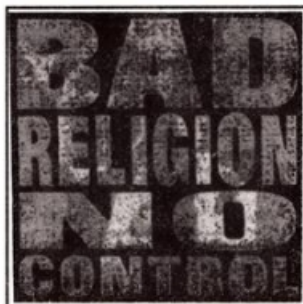
Use the box to tick off records as you add them to your collection. Remember to take this list with you when visiting fairs or record shops. All prices are for records in picture sleeves (where applicable).

7" SINGLES

- BAD RELIGION EP:**
Bad Religion/Politics/
Sensory Overload/Slaves/
Drastic Actions/
World War II EPITAPH EP 1 BREP 1 1961
Re-released in 12" format in 1984 with the same tracks and cat. no. as the original 7"

12" SINGLES

- THE ORIGINAL BAD RELIGION:**
Bad Religion/Politics/
Sensory Overload/Slaves/
Drastic Actions/
World War III EPITAPH EP 1 BREP 1 1984
Re-released on 12" on their original 7" EP from 1981
- BACK TO THE KNOWN EP**
Yesterday/Frogger/Bad
Religion/Along The Way/
New Leaf EPITAPH EP 1 BREP 2 1984
This was a one-sided 12" EP, that is to say all five tracks were on one side of the record, the other side was blank. The track *Bad Religion* was a new re-recorded version of *The Song* from the 7"/12" EP. It appears that the record and cover were both made in England



LP's

- HOW COULD HELL BE ANY WORSE?**
We're Only Gonna Die/
Latch Key Kids/Part III/
Faith In God/Fuck Armageddon...
This Is Hell/Pity/In The Night/
Damned To Be Free/White Trash
(2nd Generation)/
American Dream/Eat Your Dog/
Voice Of God Is Government/
Oligarchy/
Doin' Time EPITAPH EP 1 BRLP 1 1981
- INTO THE UNKNOWN**
It's Only Over When.../Chasing
The Wild Goose/Billy Gnosis/
Time And Disregard/The Dichot
omy/Million Days/Losing Generation/
You Give Up EPITAPH EP 1 BRLP 2 1983
Lyric/Photo Insert
- SUFFER**
You Are(The Government)/
1000 More Fools/How Much Is
Enough?/When?/Give You
Nothing/Land Of Competition/
Forbidden Beat/Best For You/
Suffer/Delirium Of Disorder
Part II(The Numbers Game)/
What Can You Do?/Do What
You Want/Part IV(The Index Fossil)/
Pessimistic Lines EPITAPH 86404 1988