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**Free!**



# Bad Religion the history

To paraphrase an old Clash t-shirt, L.A.'s Bad Religion are the only punk/hardcore group that matters. With a career that spans 14 years (with their original lineup more or less intact), they've issued seven albums, two EPs and three singles, almost all until recently on their own label Epitaph Records.

Bad Religion is a numbing yet crisp and beautiful aural assault, a fierce juggernaut. Still working in the tempos of the early '80s Southern California hard-core scene they came out of, they nevertheless craft some of the catchiest and most supremely melodic, clean sounding guitar music around, with words that could have only come from two incredibly well read lyricists - for instance, singer Greg Graffin will soon earn his PhD in evolutionary biology at Cornell! They rely more on high-speed hooks and stunning, rapid-fire melodies than on wall-of-noise bashing to establish their soaring impact, a clean, over-driven power for truly catchy tunes. And along with Fugazi, their innovation is to take the integrity and passion and bring it to broader audiences, far beyond the constricting confines of later-day punks.

Bad Religion formed around 1980 in L.A., a group of high school teens in their first band, Graffin in vocals, Mr. Brett on guitar, Jay Bentley on bass, and Jay Ziskruot on drums, immediately replaced by Pete Finestone. Their first record was a self-titled 7" 6-song EP, released on Epitaph. Several gigs (including a memorable one supporting The Damned in 1982 at Godzillas in the Valley, and another with Bad Brains) led to the release of their debut LP, an acknowledged classic of the early '80s Southern California punk explosion, 1982's How Could Hell Be Any Worse, with a cover photo of Hollywood in case you couldn't figure out what they were getting at. The record sold shockingly well, up there with the already established Dead Kennedys, Black Flag, and Circle Jerks (whose guitarist Greg Heson had sat in on Bad Religion's recording sessions). Add to that tracks on the classic punk compilations Public Service and Someone Go: Their Head Kicked In, and Bad Religion were set to become a punk institution.

Singer Greg Graffin headed off to college in Wisconsin, and it seemed the band was kaput. But the title track of their 1985 comeback EP said it all. Recorded during a break in Graffin's studies (a pattern that still continues!), Back to the Known returned Bad Religion to the punk they played so well, led by Greg Hetson, still on loan from Circle Jerks but rapidly becoming a permanent member. "Yesterday" and "Frogger" set the tone of what was to come in more recent times, straight out adrenaline rushes, with great songwriting.

The band wasn't heard from again for two more years, as Graffin finished his undergraduate work, and Mr. Brett began a recovery from drug abuse - a topic he discusses

openly, as he's been free of substance abuse for years now.

Bad Religion reassembled for good in 1987, the original lineup intact seven years later, plus Hetson. They played regularly in L.A. until 1988's Suffer, with its startling array of speedy songs and unusual lyrics (many of them even the best educated person would have to look up), their fastest, most intense LP to date. It also spurred the band to do their first national U.S. tour, supported on some of the dates by a brand new band they had signed to Epitaph, L7, in their pre-Slash days.

1989 meant a triumphant Summer tour of Europe - documented by the colossal, multi-camera/action two-hour video Along the Way - where the band headlined large theaters. It also meant the recordings that produced the stunning No Control LP, released late in the year.

Each year thereafter produced a new LP and European/U.S. tour onslaught: 1990 meant Against the Grain, which sold over 100,000 upon release, followed by the nice change of direction on 1992's Generator, with slower, more even tempos. Two of Generator's songs were also harrowing, anti-Gulf War pieces, "Fertile Crescent," and "Heaven is Falling," which latter originally appeared on the heels of the overseas conflict on an anti-war benefit 7" single by Maximum Rock 'n' Roll, with political analyst Noam Chomsky on the other side. Generator also broke in new drummer Bobby Schayer. Also that year, How Could Hell Be any Worse, Back to the Known EP, the debut 7" and the early compilation tracks were reissued together as Bad Religion 1980-1985.

1993 saw the release of the penultimate work and Atlantic debut, Recipe For Hate, which has sold over 250,000 to date. Their hometown's riots inspired the gut-responses of "Recipe For Hate" and "Don't Pray on Me" ("everybody's equal, just don't measure it"), and from the epic, anti-military sneer of "All Good Soldiers" to the introspective nausea of "It Struck a Nerve" and "Looking In" ("our evolution is our demise"), Recipe For Hate issues several pertinent warnings about our unquestioned ways. Two U.S. tours proved the band's impact once again.

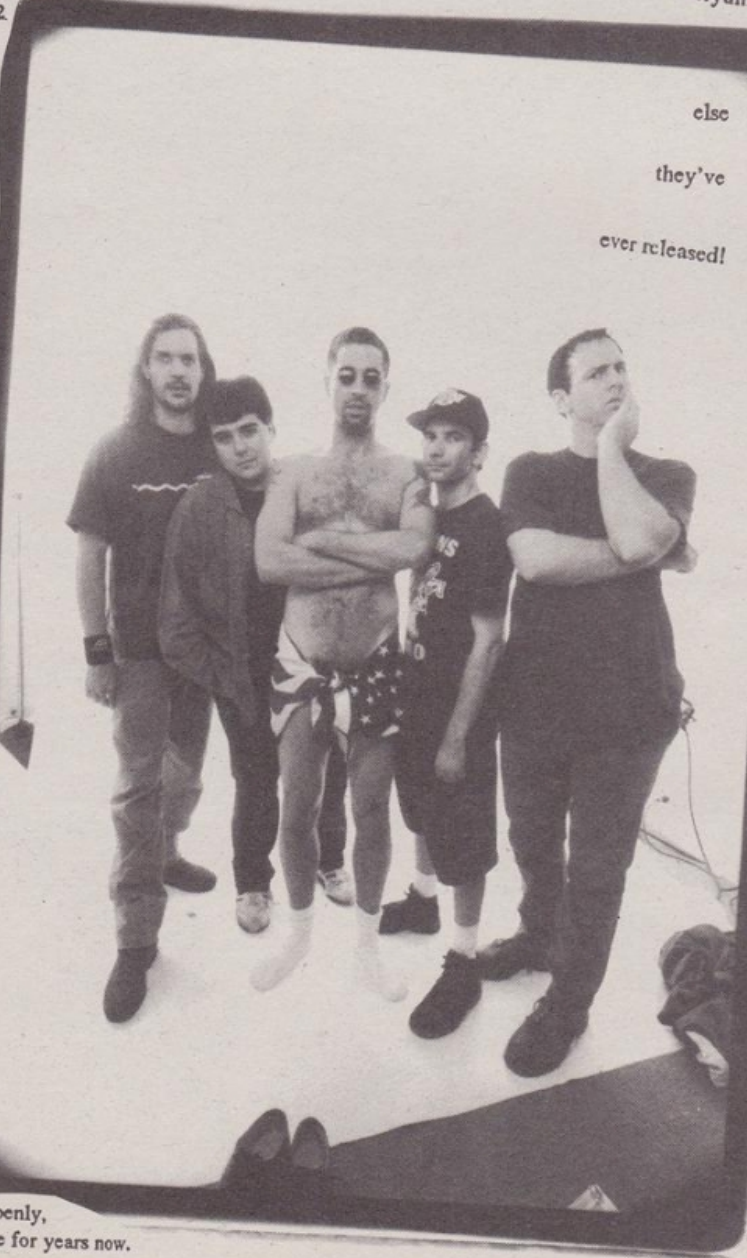
The band are currently recording their eighth LP in Los Angeles. Let us not be surprised if they continue to

blow the doors off of not only their contemporaries, but everything

else

they've

ever released!



# Bad Religion —Jack Rabid

## testament

Darker clouds a'brewin in the Testament camp. A few months in their Oakland rehearsal space has yielded the heaviest Testa-tunes to date. Want proof? You'll have to wait a few months, suffice to say, a track like "Low" is just as heavy as its title intones. "All I Can Bleed" and "Burial Grounds" simply crush while "Trail of Tears" sits like a grey cloud waiting for the storm to break.

Add to that cover artwork courtesy of none other than Pushhead and knob-twiddlin' chores by GGgarth (Rage Against the Machine) Richardson and Bill (Nine Inch Nails) Kennedy. —M.G.

