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## Dead Again

The Dead Boys issue their first DVD, *Live at CBGB 1977*

By Anastasia Pantsios

**O**N THE NEWLY RELEASED DVD, *Dead Boys Live at CBGB 1977*, the owner of that legendary New York new wave club, as well as briefly the band's manager, Hilly Kristal, talks in a new interview that's part of the DVD's bonus material. He recalls the band's arrival in New York and his first impression of it.

"I discovered them or they discovered me," he says. "Actually, it was Joey Ramone who was astounded by this band, and he said, 'I gave them your number.' Cleveland had been a city of a million people and at that time, young people were leaving the city. I think a lot of people left Cleveland because there was no future, and the Dead Boys typified what was going on in the UK — [the idea of] no future. There was no place for them."

He relates how the four band members — in those days, it was vocalist Stiv Bators, guitarists Cheetah Chrome and Jimmy Zero, and drummer Johnny Blitz (bassist Jeff Magnum joined later) — would drive up to play his club and drive back the same night. Then they got to know people whose floors they could sleep on, and soon they had their own crash pad on the New York's Lower East Side and became full-time residents of the city.

The Dead Boys' own future, despite Kristal's raves about their musicianship and energy, was limited in part by their own excesses, the drug and alcohol problems the members freely admit to, none more poignantly than Chrome in another recently filmed interview. "My life in 1977 was sleep 'til one o'clock, have breakfast, take whatever drugs were around," he says. "We didn't have much of a life in 1977. Either you were playing or you weren't."

His insightful contemporary deconstruction of the Dead Boys mystique is a contrast with late-'70s interview footage of the band, also found in the bonus section of the CD, in which a stoned Chrome slurs his words and

is barely coherent. Here it's the always-lucid Zero and to some degree Bators (although Bators was always playing to the audience or the camera, carefully tailoring his words to the impression he wanted to create) who give the best account of what the band was about.

But the final word on that is the live film footage, taped on a typical night at the funky little club on the Bowery. It catches the band playing a set that included material from its just-released Sire debut *Young, Loud and Snotty*, a tune that would appear on its 1978 follow-up and final album, *We Have Come for Your Children* and a cover of "Search and Destroy" by the Stooges, whom several of the band members cite in the interviews as a major influence. That Iggy Pop was a particular influence on the scrawny, nervy, fearless Bators is manifestly apparent in this footage, as Bators rolls around the stage, drooling and spitting and tipping over mics, or launching himself into the crowd, with seeming disregard for his own physical well-being.

The three-camera shoot, rare for the era, brings you right onto the tiny stage, into the midst of all the mayhem (there's even a Johnny Blitz cam, shooting over the drummer's shoulder) where he can almost feel like too is being spit on. The director of the shoot and the person behind the

release of the DVD is Rod Swenson, who went on to become the manager of the Plasmatics and its lead singer, the late Wendy O. Williams, and was also Williams' lifelong boyfriend. At the time he was directing videos for many New York new wave bands.

In his own commentary on the DVD, Swenson says, "Some things really are just too good to last. They are in a sense so intense they necessarily burn themselves out. The whole band was phenomenal, but they just couldn't hold together."

Nothing illustrates this intensity better than the live footage he's captured so intimately. ■

