

Dead Boys Live at CBGB's 1977

Music Video Distributors

"It's either this, or something equally ridiculous."

- Dead Boys bass player Jeff Magnum, on why he chose rock n' roll for an occupation.

Honestly, doesn't a **Dead Boys** DVD seem too easy? These fuckin' kids these days, man, they don't gotta **WORK** for anything. You know how hard it would have been to dig up this footage back in 1986 or whenever it was that I first discovered the Dead Boys, via this hip, proto-Guitar Wolf Japanese kid that used to loiter outside my high school to mack on the white chicks? It would have been impossible. And if it wasn't impossible, it would have been a grainy, 6th generation bootleg bought from some greasy hippy fucker in a van for \$35.



Which would have been entirely ok, but you know what I mean. Discovering a life-altering rock n' roll band like the Dead Boys oughta involve ritual, and community, and I dunno, fire. But I guess buying a vintage 3-camera live shoot on DVD at the mall for a sawbuck is alright, too. Just not **AS** alright. But let us dispense with the cryptster laments and rejoice in all the Stivly rock n' roll madness.

The main attraction here is a 45 minute set at CB's in 1977. But you knew that already. The band is blazing and way more accomplished than you'd ever expect. A very baby-faced Stiv tosses his slimy, skinny, black leather carcass all over the tiny stage, the crowd screeches and dances and carries on like they're witnessing the newer, uglier Beatles, and all your faves are ripped right to bloody shreds – "**Sonic Reducer**", "**Ain't Nothin' to Do**", "**What Love Is**", "**All This and More**", and...well, all this and more. Besides a muddy sound mix (hey, it **WAS** 1977- maybe mixing boards weren't invented yet), it's a top

notch piece of long-lost punk rock history, and if it doesn't get you all excited and tingly and shit, then brother, you couldn't possibly like rock n' roll.

Hmm...it suddenly strikes me that I ought to mention exactly *who* the Dead Boys were. They were druggy, scary freaks who named themselves after gay porn stars (**Jimmy Zero**, **Jeff Magnum**, **Johnny Blitz**) and like, weird THINGS (**Stiv Bators**, **Cheetah Chrome**). They started out in Cleveland, where they called themselves Frankenstein. Then they moved to NYC in '76, '77, around there, and all hell broke loose. Punk rock, you know. They released two major label records which collectively sold about 200 copies, and then they broke up before the 1980's could get 'em. Stiv went solo, then formed the **Lords of the New Church**, then died. Cheetah had a bitchin' streetpunk band called the **Ghetto Dogs** for awhile, than he moved down south to soak up the sun. The other cats I have not kept track of. Ask their probation officers. The Dead Boys were a cult act at best when they were

active, but 30 years later, people are finally coming around to the fact that they were one of the greatest rock n' roll bands of the 1970's, and their searing fusion of punk, metal, and glam, mixed with dive-bombing, razor-slashing theatrics, have yet to be matched by anybody. They were motherfuckers way before mothefuckery was commercially viable. And this DVD, well, this is what they looked and sounded like. Like a heart attack and a car crash and bloody murder, live and onstage.

Did I mention the show footage was shot by former Plasmatics manager and long-time Wendy O 'companion', **Rod Swenson**? How's that for authenticity? Oh, and I got mention the 'bonus' bits. First off, there's a vintage interview with the boys. Cheetah looks just like that pushy kid on the **Little Rascals**, and is quite marble-mouthed. Johnny Blitz is rock-starry. Zero is the resident pseudo-intellectual. Magnum it totally out to lunch. Stiv looks about 14 years old, and says he likes girls who like to "fuck and then go home. I hate it when girls hang around." Exactly.



There's also a new(ish) interview with Cheetah, who looks healthy and vibrant and speaks with the kind of clarity you would not expect from the wreck of a Dead Boy you see in the '77 footage, and there's also a short interview with **Hilly Kristal**, AKA the dude-who-owns-CB's. The Hilly footage is dark and he's looks like Colonel Sanders, if Colonel Sanders was a hostage left to rot in a graffiti covered basement somewhere in downtown NYC, but he's got good stories to tell.

Want more? There's a bit where Swenson comments on the experience of shooting the DB's, plus a vintage TV promo spot, and bonus live footage of the **Steel Tips**, the maniacal jazz-punk performance art hodge-podge that boasted crazy ass serial killer fetishist Joe Coleman in their ranks. He's on here, blowing his chest up with firecrackers.

All in all, a pretty tremendous package for old skull punk fans. I still think it's fuckin' crazy to have a digital Dead Boys flick in 5.1 stereo, but, as Stiv himself once howled, look out honey, 'cuz I'm using technology. My copy lurches and drags in my DVD player and makes all kindsa ungodly non-rock noises, but this may have more to do with my dropping it in a plate of spaghetti (don't ask) than any sort of manufacturing problem.

-Sleazegrinder

HOME