

[The Screemers - Live In San Francisco](#) [September 2, 1978](#)

DVD released: October 12, 2004.
Approximate running time: 40 Minutes
Aspect Ratio: 1.33:1 Fullscreen
Rating: NR
Sound: Dolby Digital 5.1/2.0 Stereo
DVD Release: MVD
Region Coding: Region 0 NTSC
Retail Price: \$14.95

Reviewed by:
Ian Jane on January 8, 2005.

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The Film

The Screemers are one of the most famous bands to ever not be properly recorded. They came out of Los Angeles in the late seventies and distinguished themselves by putting keyboards into the mix in place of the buzz saw guitar sound that so many other bands from both England and America in the punk scene were using. They had a pretty popular following at the time they were playing, and apparently managed to sell out multiple consecutive nights at a few clubs along the West Coast. But they never cut a proper album. There are a few bootlegs and demos floating around in bootleg circles but for whatever reason the band never cut a proper studio record.

The band was fronted by Tomato Du Plenty, who had a background in performance art. It was this background that he used when the band played live to bring a very theatrical aspect to their shows, and that's well demonstrated in this seven song live set recorded in September 1978. Combine this over the top performance art with some influences from the New York scene of the late seventies (*Blondie* and *The Ramones*) and you've got The Screemers, a unique sounding band that acts as much as they do rock. Du Plenty's mime movements and physical comedy sort of resemble some of the moves that



[Dead Kennedys](#) front man Jello Biafra would use when the DKs played live, but there's a more comedic edge to Tomato's work.

Their music is the real reason to check out this concert recording though. Played with heavy distortion and at obscenely loud volumes, the band quite simply rocks. There's sort of an early [Devo](#) sound going on most noticeable in the synthesizer sounds but where [Devo](#) got cold, clinical, and technological in their music The Screamers are pissed off an angry – but with a more modern edge than other pissed off and angry punk bands like ***The Exploited***.

Despite some borderline success on the Los Angeles club scene in the later part of the decade of excess, ***The Screamers*** had trouble holding on to a regular line up for very long. The fact that they rarely ever played outside of California didn't help matters much either and three years after they'd formed, ***The Screamers*** called it quits for good, leaving this recording as the only official and authorized document of their work in existence anywhere in the world. Vocalist Tomato Du Plenty died of AIDS in 2000 after working as an artist selling his paintings sometimes for as little as \$25.00 each.

The track listing on this DVD is as follows:

- 1 – Vertigo
- 2 – The Beat Goes On
- 3 – Punish Or Be Damned
- 4 – 122 Hours Of Fear
- 5 – Another World
- 6 – The Last Four Digits
- 7 – Magazine Love





Video

2.5/5

This baby was shot on video back in 1978, and it looks the part. The fullframe image is soft and rather fuzzy looking at times, and it lacks much in the way of clarity. Now, before you think I'm trashing it, keep in mind that most footage shot on this type of equipment at around the same time frame looks this way too.



In short, a lot of the Target stuff all has that same softness to it and that same fuzziness to it and it's not a fault of the DVD transfer, but just a shortcoming of the source material. That being said, this concert is perfectly watchable and will surely look better than the old worn out VHS tapes of this show that are still around.



The same Target Video Bug that was on so many of their VHS releases is still sadly present on this DVD as well. I'm going to guess it's on the master.

Audio

3.5/5

You've got your choice of rockin' the concert in either the original Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo mix or a newly created Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound mix. All the 5.1 mix really does is separate things a little bit more and put the crowd into the back of the mix. Vocally and sonically, both mixes do the performance justice. Vocals are pretty easy to understand and quite clear and there's enough punch in the low end to ensure that the drums and bass come through clearly. There is some mild hiss present in a few spots, but again, this was likely always the case because of the way it was recorded back in 1978. Overall, both sound mixes on this DVD are quite good.

Extras

1.5/5

There aren't a lot of extra features on here at all, but this is forgivable given the obscurity of the band and the lack of material out there relating to them. Basically all we get, aside from the Target Video Promo Reel that has adorned other DVD releases, are five promotional videos for the Screemers recorded in the Target Video Studios. These are pretty fun and it's kind of cool to here these songs done in a studio as some of them differ quite a bit compared to how they're performed live on the concert section of the DVD.



Overall

3.5/5

Having this release in your collection will only make you want to seek out more of the band's material. Sadly, there isn't much out there to collect. Thankfully, MVD has made *The Screemers – Live In San Francisco September 2, 1978* available in a fine DVD presentation that comes recommended.

Film Rating		DVD Rating
Director:	Joe Rees	Film: ★★★★★
Writer:	N/A	Video: ★★★★★
Released:	1978	Audio: ★★★★★
Cast:	The Screemers	Extras: ★★
		Overall: ★★★★★

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