

DVD O.D. BY FALLING JAMES

Smash The State: The Raw Original D.O.A., 1978-81

(Sudden Death; www.suddendeath.com)

This has some great live footage of the Chuck Biscuits/Randy Rampage/Dave Gregg/Joey Shithead lineup of D.O.A., as well as some weird cultural oddities like a kinda square but still fascinating 1979 TV news report about Canadian punk rock. There's also coverage of D.O.A.'s participation in "Anarchist Anti-Canada Day," July 1, 1978, where the intrepid band attempts to put on a freedom-loving festival out in the forest but keeps getting hounded by sadistic policemen on horseback. It looks and feels like some Animal House type movie where the cool misfit kids are persecuted by the jocks/frat boys/rich kids. Most of these cops look the same age as the small crowd of punks, and they seem to take unusual delight in following the cool misfit kids into the forest and wrecking their party, for no justifiable legal reason except that they're bored, stupid cops with guns. Bizarre and hilarious. Best of all are some scenes from the On Broadway and Old Waldorf clubs in San Francisco in 1980 and 1981, which have the best sound and some shredding performances. It's exciting to see Chuck Biscuits - a highly skilled and sought-after drummer who seemingly had a short attention span and kept joining and leaving practically every famous hardcore band of the era - ransacking his drum kit with controlled abandon. D.O.A.'s had some excellent lineups over the years, including the recent underrated version with Mr. Shithead backed by The Great Baldini, but the Biscuits-era quartet was definitely one of the band's peaks, with more fullness and power than most of the trio lineups. Some of D.O.A.'s best early ditties are here, like "Fucked Up Baby," "Rent-a-Riot" and "Woke Up Screaming."

BONUSES: There's a quaint video of "World War III" from 1979 that looks like it was shot on a tacky, new-wave set like so many early videos. It's more like a kooky relic than anything amazing, but there's also that news report about punk rock taking over Canada. The straitlaced reporter is unintentionally a hoot with her sincere but ignorant questions, but the 10-minute segment still has some crucial early footage of the Vancouver scene in all its young, naive, beer-drinking, Mounties-baiting glory.



Ramones - It's Alive 1974-1996

(Rhino; www.rhino.com)

It's alive, and so are the Ramones, who have

been quite busy lately from beyond the grave. There's been such a steady stream of lovingly crafted reissues (especially the awesome combo comic-book/greatest-hits CD box set *Weird Tales of the Ramones*), books and DVDs in recent years that it's easy to pretend that Joey, Dee Dee and Johnny are still with us. You might wonder why you need this DVD incarnation of *It's Alive* (it shares the title of the band's first and best live album, which I assume you already own) if you already have the recent, fairly definitive and sometimes dark *End Of The Century: The Story of the Ramones* DVD or even the comparatively breezy, out-of-print video precursor, *We're Outta Here*, which used the band's final show in Los Angeles to cover a similarly wide (if happier) range of the band's history. Both documentaries do a good job of examining the

Ramones legend and telling the overall story, but *It's Alive* is made for diehard fans like me who just want to hear the band in concert. Over and over. Apart from the bonus features, there's nothing here but pure, nonstop live Ramones - with no depressing interviews about who stole who's girlfriend or any expert analysis from blowhards like Bono and Eddie Vedder. In some ways, with its emphasis on live performances, this is closer in spirit to Marky Ramone's 2004 DVD collection, *Ramones Raw*, although *It's Alive* spans a longer period of time. Luckily there's little overlap between *Ramones Raw* and *It's Alive*, and while clips from some of this footage were glimpsed in the two documentaries, most of the two-disc *It's Alive* hasn't been available before. Disc 1 is entirely devoted to the Tommy Ramone era, and it's centered on the famous New Year's Eve 1977 show in London during the stint that led to *It's Alive* (the album). This footage captures most of the set in front of a big, astonished crowd, with great sound and good visuals - it's the Ramones at their best. Much of the rest of the first disc features early appearances as far back as 1974 at CBGB, which is often fascinating, although the sound quality is generally more primitive until you get to the 1977 visit to Don Kirshner's Rock Concert. (which sounds great despite hokey enhanced applause.) It's funny to see early footage of Joey doing rock-star leg kicks while the band plays before polite, seated onlookers in half-empty clubs; by the time of the band's June 1977 stand at CBGB, though, the fans are standing up, pumping their fists in unison and wearing Ramones t-shirts, and the band is already starting to achieve its trademark freight-train-in-a-hurricane roar. Disc 2 encompasses the Marky, Richie and C.J. eras through various concerts and mostly live TV appearances (there are three or four lip-synched tunes scattered among the dozens of live tracks). There's

