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Dead Boys

Return of the Living Dead Boys DVD (MVD Visual)

First the good news: The NYC 1986 reunion concert documented here shows Northeast Ohio's own Dead Boys in top form. Atop Cheetah Chrome's sweltering guitar, the band's unified energy yields nonstop, nuclear punk. Stiv Bators bristles with charisma, unwaveringly belting out the tunes, plus he manages to be pretty damn funny in between songs. Because the songs were so dense and intense, the set's 50-minute length feels not brief, but satisfying. And a short but sweet intro by Joey Ramone seals it as essential punk history. The sound quality ain't lousy either, although the alternate "Surround Sound Mix" sounds a bit squirrely and out of phase.

The bad news: The video looks like third- or fourth-generation bootleg VHS. It's dreadfully pasty and fuzzy with periodic dropout, noise and wavy horizontal banding. And although the camera work is commendable, it was only shot with one camera from the back of the crowd. Fortunately, given punk's raw aesthetics, it holds up in a way that, say, a fourth-generation Yanni video wouldn't. And while it's a drag that this seemed to be the best footage anybody could find, the performance was so hot as to make fans happy that it's preserved at all. There's also a terrific bonus feature of a 1980 interview with Bators on the *Good Morning Youngstown* TV show. It's monumentally priceless but its video quality is even worse. - *Michael David Toth*