

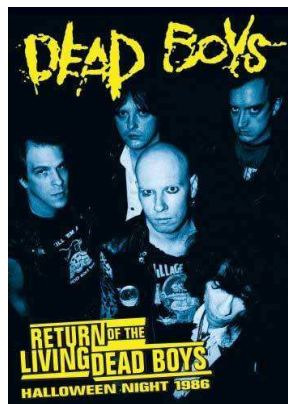


- Left of the Dial Magazine

April 25, 2008

[Dead Boys/Return of the Living Dead Boys: MVD](#)

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Forever know as the ribald and raucous kings of the first wave of hell-raising, bastard child, ruffian, rat cage poetry U.S. punk, who have spent much more time buried in punk lore than they actually did hitting stages and cutting infamous records, this DVD captures them naked and remorseless on a liminal Halloween showdown during the mid-1980s, when the Ramones had just shifted gears and NY hardcore was becoming monolithic. Also, this catches Stiv Bators taking a break from his more post-punk, neo-goth Lords of the New Church, right when they were also peaking and stinking up the prefab fluff of FM radio. The sound mix on this is taut and tight, no overbearing roominess, estranging echoes, or faraway sludge, but cropped close to the bone, though don't expect the visuals to be the modern equivalent of a flickering kaleidoscope of style and sleekness. This is more or less a bareboned but professional document, shot mostly clean and smooth, from midway back, getting the full band in riotous rampage as they deliver all the batches of leathered and weathered "classic" struts, from the twice banged out "Sonic Reducer" to their sutured stabs at the Stooges ("Search and Destroy," without the snaky glitter).

In fact, check out tracks like "I Need Lunch" and "Nothing to Do" to see Stiv act like the sole inheritor of Iggy's stage prowess, replete with gyrations and antics, like twirling the microphone round and round his neck like an electric noose. Johnny Ramone actually introduces the band, though without much fuss or explication, and although this is no CBGBs, the throng of frenetic concert goers, who often stage dive in tandem with the blaring songs, don't seem to care when this troop unleashes their unholy trinity of "Son of Sam" "Down in Flames" and Detention Home." The degraded, bellicose roar'n'roll of the Dead Boys has just enough swagger, slinkiness, and hipness to make it all rooted and cool to the touch. Plus, as a bonus, a little dog-eared gem known as the "Sonic Reducer" video shows up, proving, like the early video footage of the Damned, how the punk adventure seemed so homemade and off-the-cuff before succumbing to uber corporate throes by the 80s. Lastly, a 1980 interview with Stiv wraps up the whole package. Although low-key and visually warbly, as if taped right off the TV, or a 3rd generation copy, it does provide swell insight into the band in transition.

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