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[Boys: Return of the Living Dead Boys:  
Dead Boys: Return of the Living  
Dead Boys: Halloween Night 1986](#)

Written by Jason Neubauer

Monday, 21 April 2008



*The set list alternates from fast-tempo flare ups of energy back to slow crooning that, quite honestly, leaves much to be desired.*

#### (MVD Visual/NR)

Steven Bator, Gene O'Connor, John Madansky, Jeff Halmagy, and William Wilden are not names that ring with any amount of familiarity for most people. When referred to by their respective show business names, Stiv Bators, Cheetah Chrome, Johnny Blitz, Jeff Magnum, and Jimmy Zero however, they become The Dead Boys. *Return of the Living Dead Boys: Halloween Night 1986* is a chronicle of their reunion concert at the Ritz in New York City, some seven years after their breakup in 1979.

The show opens with a decidedly brief introduction from Joey Ramone, followed by the band themselves appearing onstage, frontman Stiv Bators pausing for a salutary "Hey" before offering the opening track "Sonic Reducer." Bators is clad in a black PVC dominatrix style outfit complete with elbow length gloves and boots. Lead guitarist Cheetah Chrome resembles a circa 1980 pimp donning a black wide-brimmed hat with a cheetah print shirt, while bassist Jeff Magnum sports a NAMBLA t-shirt.

Right from the beginning the picture quality is questionable, appearing as though the concert was filmed on a home movie camera from somewhere in the back of the venue, and there are skips in the tape intermittently throughout the show. The sound quality, however, is surprisingly crisp and clear and the music is easily discernable while audience and background noise are virtually nonexistent in the soundtrack.

The set list for the rest of the concert, while it has it's moments of energy, is largely a collection of examples showing why crooning in a punk rock band is a bad idea. The second song "What Do You

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Wanna Be?" illustrates this idea with slow, almost labored guitar riffs leading into a rather boring performance with the prophetic refrain "I wanna be a dead boy" belted out painfully by Bators who in fact died four years after the concert. Throughout the rest of the show, the set list alternates from fast-tempo flare ups of energy back to slow crooning that, quite honestly, leaves much to be desired and loses the viewer's interest.

Bators' stage presence is at least somewhat entertaining, his movements jerking in a goulash of Mick Jagger and Iggy Pop, the latter manifested further by his ropy-muscled arms and torso bare to the audience by the third track. He dons a dog mask for "Son of Sam" later in the show and during the reprise of "Sonic Reducer" at the end of a seven song encore he becomes fully naked and tucks his genitals between his legs.

The bonus feature provides a viewing of the rare 1980 music video for "Sonic Reducer" which has images of Hitler Youth, and the video games Space Invaders and Asteroids weaving in between clips of the band in a dark room playing the song. The video is part of a television interview with Bators and collaborator Frank Secich conducted by Gary Cubberly of Cleveland area's "Good Morning Youngstown," a morning talk show based in Bators' home town in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During the interview Bators shows a calmer side and an air of intelligence with a degree of knowledge about pop culture history and the music industry. His eccentric character seems contrived to some degree however and the viewer is left with the impression that while a pleasant conversationalist, Bators is acting rather than being himself.

All told, *Dead Boys: Return of the Living Dead Boys: Halloween Night 1986* will be appreciated best by fanatics of the band and those who consider themselves hardcore fans (no pun intended) of punk rock history. The casually interested viewer will find something left to be desired. | **Jason Neubauer**

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