

# SHOWCASE

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## Dead Boy Stiv Bator finds new life out west

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First there was the Sex Pistols — followed quickly by the Clash, the Damned and Generation X.

But in America, one of the first punk bands to roar into the cacophony came out of Cleveland: the Dead Boys. In punk's early days of the late '70s, lead vocalist Stiv Bator did his impish best to emulate his hero from Detroit, Iggy Pop of the Stooges, by leaping off the stage and scarring himself up. The rest of the band (Jimmy Zero, Cheetah Chrome and Johnny Blitz) shared the same attitude.

The Dead Boys sound — like most punk — was loud, boisterous and irreverent in the extreme. But after Johnny Blitz was seriously injured in a mugging, the band recorded one more album and broke up in 1978.

Ten years later they're back to stay — at least for 1988. After performing a yearly Halloween reunion concert in New York for the past three years, the Dead Boys are finally going beyond the shelter of the East Coast to play Los Angeles tonight (Variety Arts Center, Hollywood; 213-623-9100) and Saturday (Night Moves, Huntington Beach; 714-840-6118).

In the spring the band plans to return to New York to record an album of new material, then

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follow up with a 30-city U.S. "bar" tour. After the album is re-released in the fall, the band will embark on a major tour.

The Dead Boys' Los Angeles shows will be their first here in 10 years.

"I'm real excited about playing the West Coast because a lot of people there weren't exposed to the Dead Boys and what they're about," said Bator in a phone interview from New York. And what they're about, in his view, is "pure rock 'n' roll like it was in the old days."

Bator's last major music project — the Lords of the New Church — veered from the pure punk sound toward music with a more psychedelic edge. But the band's direction fragmented when bassist Dave Tregunna left.

"All of us came to realize that the attitude got lost and decided to stop for a little while," said Bator. "(We) were getting restless and wanted to play different songs that the Lords couldn't do anyways. And we had a lot of ideas that we had to get out of our system, so we're split for

right now."

Bator hedged a bit on whether the Lords would get back together: "Who knows what's going to happen in the future?"

Apart from the reunion of the Dead Boys, Bator has been working on more pop-oriented material with musicians such as former Stray Cat Slim Jim Phantom and Charlie Sexton. In the future he expects to release a solo album of "just me and all my friends."

Now residing in Paris, France, Bator said his creative juices have begun to flow again. "Paris is a beautiful small town. It's a good place just to be away from everything and to rest and to be

able to think and work out ideas — and just be alone with my girlfriend.

"I just wanted to get away from being stagnant and too predictable," he said. "That's a bit of the reason the Lords split."

Bator said one way his new material differs from the Lords of the New Church is the placement of his views into a more accessible framework. "There's not outright protest or whatever here," he said. "I always have seeds of discord underlying a lot of my songs. I think it's better, instead of preaching to people, just to imply things and let people figure it out for themselves

— let them discover what you say *personally*. They may have heard it four or five times (before) and didn't really pay attention. Then a line hits them and they figure it out and there was a meaning in the lyrics for them."

Musically, he describes his personal music projects as being "a little bit lighter," said Bator. "It's more pop-py. There's 12-string pop and there's good rock 'n' roll, too. It's a bit of a blend."

But Bator's solo material is being put on a back burner for the duration of 1988. "We're going to concentrate on the Dead Boys this year," he said.



STIV BATOR and the Dead Boys are officially reuniting and, for the first time in 10 years, will play Los Angeles tonight at the Variety Arts Center, 940 S. Figueroa St., in Hollywood, and Saturday at Night Moves in Huntington Beach.