

# Ramones long lived but not over the hill yet! 'Animal Boy' their best record so far in the '80s

Review by Chris McCubbin  
Senior Reporter

## Ramones, "Animal Boy," Sire.

The Ramones are the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band. Are, were, and will be, world without end.

There are those who have written off the Ramones in the '80s. The reason for this aberrant behavior is a common mental disorder which affects the fans of excellent but long-lived bands. Since this condition was first diagnosed in Rolling Stones fans, it has been christened the "their last album didn't sound like 'Let it Bleed'—so why don't they just die already" syndrome.

It's true, the Ramones are never going to make another "Rocket to Russia"—they know too many chords now—but the fact remains that, with the admitted exception of the lame "End Of The Century," their '80s output has been great stuff, head, shoulders and chest above all of the mainstream and 95 percent of the underground. And "Animal Boy" is their strongest effort yet this decade.

Unlike the Stones, though, the Ramones didn't get to be the World's Greatest by changing their formula every album. Instead the boys have three or four things that they do perfectly. They do the same things every

time and, as far as I'm concerned, they can keep doing them for the next 50 years.

"Animal Boy" has everything you'd ever want from the Ramones. You've got your "I'm alienated in a world I never made" songs in "Mental Hell," "Freak of Nature" and "Animal Boy." You've got your "everything sucks" songs, "Crummy Stuff" and "Somebody Put Something In My Drink." You've got your pseudo-hardcore rant, "Eat That Rat." You've got your sneakily subversive AOR-style anthem "Something To Believe In." You've even got a catchy song for the morning after, "Hair Of The Dog."

A couple of the songs deserve special attention. "Love Kills" is a hummable, nasty, refreshingly irreverent requiem for Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen. Over the bounciest, cheeriest bass hook imaginable, Joey Ramone whines the lyrics, which reveal these latter-day folk heroes as the wasted, neurotic, burnt-out junkies they really were. Sid would have found it hilarious.

The record's undeniable classic is "My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down (Bonzo Goes to Bitburg)." For those of you who think the Ramones can't expand their horizons, this cut has some of the trickiest music they've ever

used, it's one of the most intricate production jobs they've ever used. It's about *politics* for pete's sake, and it kicks butt as well or better than anything they've done before.

The song is sort of a *mea culpa* from the band for the fascist imagery they used on some of their earlier songs. They didn't mean any harm back then; they just didn't realize how obnoxious the radical right really was. The words are kind of hard to understand, but they're worth the effort it takes to figure them out. This song is one of the best, biting anti-Reagan polemics ever written. Ronnie's fans will be P.O.ed, but reactionary republicans have got no business listening to the Ramones anyway.

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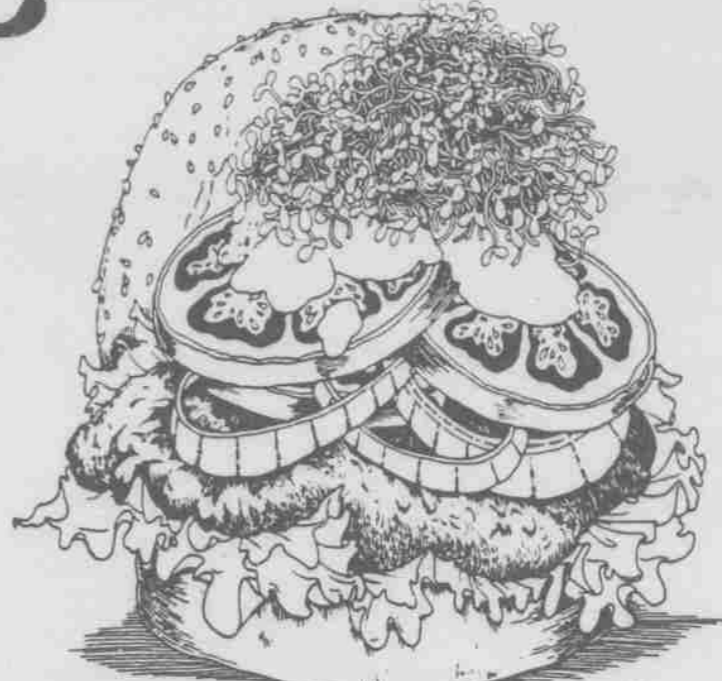
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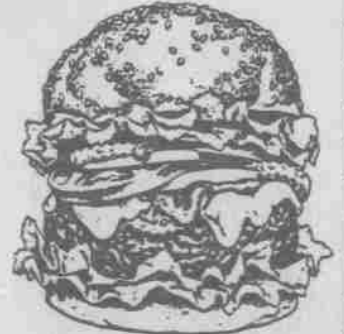
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