



by Chris Estey

More than any other performer, Iggy Pop's sweet but cocky mug may be the deconstructed happy face of punk. Known more for self-abuse than ever hurting anyone else, and being a very endearing guy if you ever get to meet him, his open-heartedness and warm humor could use a little plagiarizing by the legions of sweaty leather-bound contenders that trail behind his brutal pop art expression.

A recent DVD, titled after probably Pop's best solo album after leaving the Manson-era king-thug rock band The Stooges, shows Pop both scaring the hell out of thousands of people all at once in that period, and attempting a come back in the mid-80s. [Lust For Life](#) shows how Iggy (named after his early fuzz-stomp band The Iguanas) collaborated with fellow Ann Arbor, Michigan, brothers of the garage Ron (guitars) and Scott Asheton (drums), and bass player Dave Alexander to make Motor City mayhem that was as inspirational, if not more so, than the Velvet Underground. These scenes are full of blood and fire and Pop's eyes seem to glisten with apocalypse as the amps pour out sonic revolution. It feels as if polite society is about to be crushed by the pent-up urges of a rising, amphetamine-injected under class.

This documentary shows how Pop recreated rock once with The Stooges, achieving 'O-mind' around the packed bong like shaman warriors, as the once-named James Newell Osterberg, Jr. eviscerated himself and the senses of fans, slathered in peanut butter and jabbing himself with glass. This footage is essential for any rock doc library, and has only been shown before on West German TV.

About fifteen years later, *Lust For Life* continues with a post-recovery, Stooges-less Pop handsomely smiling for the camera around the time he had re-collaborated with David Bowie, for the somewhat dull "Blah, Blah, Blah" album. This 1986 interview touches on the period where the two had basically created New Wave with Pop's first two solo records, *Lust For Life* and *The Passenger*, which are still being overheard in any hipster haunt today, fusing a damaged futurist perspective with an always contemporary weary decadence. Bowie had replaced Ron Asheton well as a co-creator of brand new rock, but the DVD doesn't delve into the struggling late 70s work most punk fans grew up with (often confused with just why Iggy was the bomb).

These interviews are great, because Pop is sober and revealing though he is hustling sub-par work, the live footage also shown shot around this time informs anyone why they keep hanging on to Iggy Pop like a fragment of rock holiness — his live performances in any period are sacramental, his wiry, violent, trembling frame just as threatening when pumped full of THC and speed as when it's clean and running like a suicide machine.

The documentary's eager Iggy chats are juxtaposed with OG partner in crime Ron Asheton's from the same period. The comparison is sad but interesting to see, as Pop seems to be winning souls back while the guitarist is struggling in post-fame limbo in his mother's basement. These often were the two roads for aging punks in that time (and all time). This footage is fascinating, as Asheton shows the resilience of an aging punk, and he freely shares his hard-won wisdom obtained by riding the whip-lash coaster of cult band acclaim and abuse. And knowing that Ron recovered The Stooges with Iggy to record another album and play festivals like Bumbershoot before he passed away last year, makes this dark moment in time seem like a cleansing valley for an awesome apex a decade later.