


[home](#)
[subscribe](#) / [search](#) / [letters](#) / [shop](#) / [contact](#) / [about](#) / [advertise](#)
[music](#) / [film/DVD/Video](#) / [books](#)

## FILM / VIDEO REVIEWS

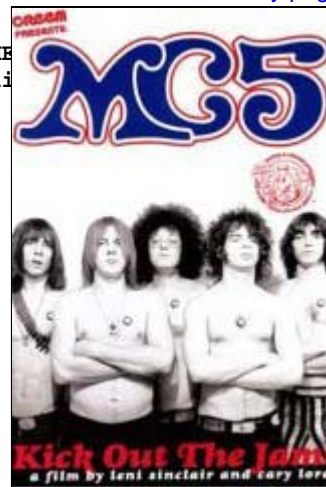
Last Updated: **Jul 10th,  
2006 - 03:47:48**

Jul 12, 2005, 03:42

[Email this article](#)  
[Printer friendly page](#)

MC5: KICK OUT THE JAMS  
A Film by Leni Sinclair

Just about anything that adds to the canon of audio-visual documentation of the MC5 is worth having. In fact, in light of the devolutionary path rock 'n' roll-derived music has taken under the cultivation of the record business per se, it's pretty damned essential and unquestionably essential.



The MC5, at their best, were one of the most perfect, complicated and balanced statements of the positive, progressive, constructive impulses inherent in rock music we've ever seen. They were working class kids propounding left socio-political ideals, who expected to get rich in the process... while remaining true to their ideological program. They were obsessive, hammy entertainers determined to wind-up audiences and pursue a homegrown avant-garde vision at the same time. Their roots went deep into Rhythm & Blues as practiced by its Black American inventors, British white boys' pop-ification thereof and the latter's garage-bound honky U.S. acolytes. But they'd heard post-bebop Coltrane and Sun Ra and one too many acid trips had convinced them that the two could dovetail... believed it so fervently they made it work. So they effectively summed up much of rock's greatest achievements and aspirations and provided a starting point for most of the worthwhile shit that followed in their wake.

So, *Kick Out The Jams* is some great shit as it documents all this as manifested in the MC5's music and stage show, period. There are no interviews with the band members or associates nor is there any narration. Their performance is left to speak for itself.

*Kick Out The Jams* is a montage assembled by Cary Loren (from the original line-up of Destroy All Monsters) culled from home movie footage shot by Leni Sinclair (their manager's wife), set to live recordings of repertoire from their debut album, with a few notable exceptions. Little or no

effort has been made to synch up sight and sound and throughout *Kick Out The Jams* the viewer is treated to sequences of Sonic Smith and Wayne Kramer singing on mic when only Rob Tyner's vocals are to heard. Or we see Rob singing his heart out while we hear torrid guitar soloing. Ad nauseam.

Moreover, each number is stitched together from footage filmed at multiple performances—a perfectly fine method for building one video clip on occasion, but in the context of presenting a documentary of live performances this definitely underlines the contrivance at hand. And this artificiality is heightened by repeated use of several blocks of footage in song after song. This effect is further exacerbated via many songs being summarily, inexplicably truncated.

Throughout, the songs are inter-sliced with recreations of psychedelic light show hijinks or displays of vintage memorabilia—concert posters, magazine articles, buttons and badges. A lot of this particular material focuses on band manager John Sinclair's own political agenda and legal travails. These certainly were part of the MC5 saga though band members have gone on record saying that this was not central to their legacy overall. In line with this, the same ten seconds of Sinclair furiously (if inaudibly) honking on the sax is inserted into at least three different songs (though his playing doesn't appear on any of the band's studio efforts or 95% of the live recordings that have come to light).

The main "bonus" material included is a 2003 interview with Sinclair. Filmed in grainy B&W with the volume level and overall sonic quality shifting wildly to and fro—the latter being further obscured by a recording of Sinclair and backing musicians performing. Some of his anecdotes are pertinent little epiphanies, others are just an old guy rambling about de good old days. Safe to say, this coulda benefited from some editing, though all told, I STILL think this essential despite the many caveats. [Creem/MVD]

*-Howard Wuelfing*

© Copyright 1981 to 2006 by YOURFleshMag.com

[Top of Page](#)