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NEW YORK DOLLS – ALL DOLLED UP

'ALL DOLLED UP' NYD-DVD ECSTASY!

The New York Dolls are without doubt catalysts via a bond of rebellious and raucous rock 'n' roll added to an androgynous and anarchic appearance. Their aim to shock overshadowed the commercial or critical acclaim that their power pop deserved. The early 70's was a time for experimentation, and the Dolls certainly took their adventure to the limits, and at last there is footage available to enter both the private and public worlds of this most influential band in their youthful exuberance.

Rock photographer Bob Gruen and his wife Nadya were one step ahead of the crowd, and a big thanks to this couple of clued up personnel for purchasing a portable video camera. In a yet to be explored era of high technology, the Gruen family had the foresight to record The Dolls over a thrilling three years. In excess of forty hours of film was filed, and it has taken until now for an edited account of this momentous mayhem to reach the public. It may be over thirty years ago, but this black and white documentary entitled 'All Dolled Up' (via Music Video Distributors) is a gripping tale of the flamboyance and flair of the most potent of pop peacocks.

The Dolls (a.k.a. 'The Lipstick Killers') take us on a journey charting their origins, kinship, extravagance, and the excesses that ended up being the root of the disintegration of the band, and later added fuel to the unfortunate demise of the core its members. The story is cemented with aplomb, and it leaves the viewer wanting to get to grips with the remaining celluloid that has not yet been utilized for the consumption of Dolls disciples.

In 2006, The Dolls only number David Johanssen and Sylvain Sylvain, and this dynamic duo are currently recording new material on the back of successful comeback dates in 2004. This is eagerly anticipated, but the guessing as to the fire and furore of the Dolls in their juvenile prime is now no longer a mystery to those future generations of fans, who were unable to catch this crazy combo in action in their glam glory. The fledgling New York Dolls cast their wand all over the soon to develop punk rock scene, and without them there would not be any Sex Pistols. Pop and fashion guru, Malcolm McLaren, of course managed both bands, but his apprenticeship at the helm of the 'Big Apple' battleship paved the way for the filth and the fury of the 'Crafty Cockneys'.

The interviews, back stage parties, media reaction, the gigs, the gear, and shopping with the band offer bags of humour, and Johanssen is the star attraction with his erudite and entertaining verbal volleys. The clothes are the mark of the most

hedonistic outrage, and a giant of a man like the sadly now departed Arthur 'Killer' Kane is a transvestite treasure (NOT!!!). There is so much more to offer on 'All Dolled Up', because to add to the main feature, we have the ultimate bonus of the music taken from a variety of American shows, narrative contributions from Gruen, Johannsen and Sylvain, plus a variety of other pictorial plusses! If that does not get you going, the greatest named rock star of all time also makes a contribution-The Dictators, lead vocalist, Handsome Dick Manitoba!

New York Dolls at The Move Festival, live at Old Trafford Cricket Ground, Manchester, July 2004 Nearly 30 years since their last show as the classic New York Dolls line up, the remaining, living members are back on the live scene. Such was the furore of the Dolls in their heyday that they were voted both the best and worst group of the year in the 'Creem' magazine poll of 1973. The rock press either labelled the Dolls as crazy, transvestite, junkies who could not play their instruments, or alternatively they were hailed as the greatest band in the world. However, the red blooded, red patent leather wearing rebels have had an immense influence on both the glam/punk movements. Their ambivalent -sexual anarchy and high-energy motor music paved the way for a new wave of revolution. Malcolm MacLaren, managed the band, prior to his stint as the Sex Pistols guru, and on one viewing of the Johnny Thunders guitar sound/playing style, the template for Pistols axe-man, Steve Jones is evident. Unfortunately, famed Dolls such as Thunders, Jerry Nolan and Billy Murcia have headed for the rock 'n' roll graveyard. The NYC icons circa 'Move' are fronted by: The strutting peacock, stage presence of vocalist, David Johansen, and the guitar gusto of Sylvain Sylvain, both of whom were an integral section of the original engine room of the Dolls.

Morrissey (who edited an early N.Y. Dolls fanzine) instigated the current reformation as part of his recently led, 'Meltdown' Festival in London. Such was the success of that date, that the band wanted more of the same. N.B. Unfortunately, original bass player, Arthur 'Killer' Kane, who played Meltdown, fell ill and more tragedy was to strike The Dolls, as just on the horizon no sooner than the 2004 dream was re-ignited, Kane was also sadly to pass away, and he made his exit from this mortal coil.

Those who attended the final day of the 'Move' Festival at Old Trafford Cricket Ground were treated to a show of unique quality, which was a fitting tribute to The Dolls, past, present and hopefully future!

Age has not diminished the enthusiasm and energy of Johansen (a.k.a. Buster Poindexter of the 'Hot Hot Hot' single fame). The Sylvain axis offers the fulcrum for the new Dolls to flourish, and the crowd found themselves in the company of legend. The songs came thick and fast, and the arsenal of aural assault is as refreshing now as they were many moons ago. The fire of 'Looking for a Kiss', 'Pills', 'Frankenstein', 'Jet Boy', 'Private World', 'Subway Train', and the all conquering anthem, 'Personality Crisis' were delivered with power and panache. A special tribute to the deceased Thunders, in the form of his moving opus, 'You can't put your arms around a Memory' was a touching sentiment to a true star that had been taken by the ravages of a destructive lifestyle.

The foot was on the gas for most of the set, but the Dolls love of r 'n' b & soul filters in to the mix, and the cover of the classic, 'Piece of my Heart' exemplifies the dynamics of the Dolls.

Those in attendance (including Morrissey) have waited a long time to see an incarnation of The New York Dolls on our shores, and this present line up helped fuel those historic tales of a band whose pedigree as pioneers goes without question. For the uninitiated, check out the 20 track, 1994 New York Dolls career defining anthology, 'Rock 'n' Roll', or if you can get hold of 'Live in NYC-1975 Red Patent Leather', there is an opportunity to witness the chaotic final concert before their 70's split. However, to avoid The Dolls legacy is to starve your musical momentum of an electric and enlightening experience!