

## [The New York Dolls - All Dolled Up](#)

**DVD released:** December 6, 2005.

**Approximate running time:** 95 minutes

**Aspect ratio:** 1.33:1 Fullscreen

**Rating:** NR

**Sound:** Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound

**DVD Release:** MVD

**Region Coding:** NTSC Region 0

**Retail Price:** \$19.95

**Reviewed by:**

Ian Jane on January 24, 2006.



**Quick links:** [\[video\]](#) [\[audio\]](#) [\[extras\]](#) [\[overall\]](#)

### The Film

Most people know of Bob Gruen because of his extensive work as a rock and roll photographer but Gruen was also one of the first people in the world to clue into the fact that music could also be captured on a then burgeoning format known as video! Yep, Gruen got himself a first generation video camera and set out to see what he could do with it, and what he did with it is actually pretty impressive – he shot over forty hours of footage of the late, great New York Dolls both on and off stage over a period of two years.



What is (presumably) the best of this footage has recently been edited together and turned into this brand spankin' new documentary, ***All Dolled Up***, and it proves to be a reason for much rejoicing for New York Dolls fans indeed. While some of this material has been making the rounds in bootleg circles for years, here it's presented taken from the original source tapes and with a lot of clips and segments that didn't show up on those gray market goodies.



Presented as a series of instances rather than a cohesively narrated or structured documentary, ***All Dolled Up*** is a fantastic testament and tribute to a band that was way ahead of its time. Consisting of the band's best known line up, vocalist David Johansen, the infamous Johnny Thunders on guitar, Sylvain Sylvain also on guitar, bass player Arthur Kane, and Billy Murcia on drums, we're treated to live performances, interviews, and casual candid and more personal moments from the bands short history together.



There's a wealth of concert footage in here, which will be the highlight for most fans, and it is excellent material, but what makes this stuff as interesting as it is are the pieces in between the live performances, the clips where we get to know the people behind the names and faces we see up there on the stage. One thing that is very obvious while all of this is playing out is just how young these guys were when they started to take off. Thunder here, compared to later era footage shot after and/or during years of hard drug abuse, looks positively radiant compared to his later, zombie like appearance as seen in releases like [Johnny Thunders – Live In Cold Blood](#), where he can't even be bothered to stand up for the entire show.



At one point in time we witness some fantastic footage of a very drunken band descending upon a vegetarian restaurant at some ungodly hour in the morning. Johansen explains that the band didn't drink that much and because they had been that night they were all super plastered - the results speak for themselves in the footage.



Tender moments like Johnny saying goodbye to his family members at the airport before heading out on the road with the band give us some very human moments to ponder while aggressive and enthusiastic renditions of popular Dolls songs such as Jet Boy and Personality Crisis ground things firmly in rockumentary territory. The bookends to the feature are also a nice touch, which feature the band all dressed up as 20s era mobsters. We see the band do a few TV appearances, hang out at bars, go shopping, and encounter groupies and fans and while some context explaining there where and the when of it all might have made things more coherent, the content more or less speaks for itself most of the time. We see them pose for photographers, rehearse and do sound checks, getting to and from performances and more. The end result is some great 'day in the life of' moments that compliment the rock and roll footage nicely.



For material shot on an early generation portable video camera over thirty years ago, this footage doesn't look half bad. Yeah, there's some blurring and some softness to the image and the black and white picture doesn't have reference quality contrast but everything is perfectly watchable on this DVD. In terms of the transfer itself, there are only the slightest instances of mpeg compression evident here in some of the darker spots, other than that, things are alright. You can't go in expecting this stuff to look like a million bucks, but for what it is, MVD's DVD does a fine job with the visual presentation of the material.



## Audio

3/5

The entire presentation has been re-mastered in an all-new Dolby Digital 5.1 sound mix though for the most part it's simply the original mono mix spread out a little bit. There's hiss. There's distortion. There's background noise and sometimes the dialogue is slightly muffled as is the music, but it is cleaner sounding than the bits and pieces of this material that have shown up in bootleg circles over the years.

## Extras

5/5

First up are twelve songs performed live by the Dolls from a few different shows played in San Francisco and in Los Angeles in 1973. At Kenney's Castaways they perform Human Being and Bad Girl; at the Whiskey A Go Go they do Vietnamese Baby, Looking For A Kiss and Jet Boy; at Max's Kansas City they do Subway Train and Trash; at The Matrix they perform Mystery Girls, Personality Crisis and Private World; and at Club 82 they do Chatterbox and Pills. These, for most fans, will be the highlight of the disc. There's an amazing amount of energy here and getting a chance to see the band do their thing in these smaller venues is quite excellent!



Up next are the commentary tracks, one from Sylvain Sylvain and a second from David Johansen who is joined by Bob Gruen himself. The Gruen Johansen track is more lively as it has two participants who seem more into what they're doing. Sylvain tends to clam up in a few spots and there's a bit of dead air here and there on his track, noticeably whenever he's on screen (he seems to just stop talking in these spots and watch what's happening!). There's a lot of information covered here through the two tracks, they manage to put a lot of the footage





into context by explaining what's happening and where and sometimes, if they remember, even why. At times it's a little catty, other times it's touching (this goes for both tracks) but again, having the chance to have the man who shot this and two surviving members of the band put all of this done for posterity's sake makes for a very important document of their work and their time together.

An interview with Bob Gruen is also found here, conducted by the one and only Handsome Dick Manitoba from The Dictators. Dick gets Gruen to talk about how he met the New York Dolls and how he ended up following them around taping their exploits for a long as he did. He covers the differences between working as a rock n roll photographer versus taping bands and he talks about the grueling schedule that some bands have to deal with while touring. At just under twenty four minutes in length it's a good interview and Manitoba manages to get different information out of Gruen than is revealed in his commentary track. To wind it all up, Dick asks him who's more obnoxious, him or David Johansen.

Rounding out the extras on the disc is a massive still gallery of over one hundred pictures that Gruen took while following the band, that are presented here with commentary from the photographer himself. This is pretty interesting stuff as not everything covered here is covered in the footage. A lot of these pictures are excellent and almost everyone has a story behind it, whether it be Johnny and a girl he'd found that night or a couple of the band members posing in front of a billboard promoting their first record at the first Tower Records built in America. This lasts for well over fifty two minutes and proves to be an excellent and very interesting treat for New York Dolls fans.

Inside the keeppcase is a handsome sixteen-page booklet of liner notes from Gruen and a bunch of color photographs, as well as disc and documentary credits.

## Overall

4/5

While the lack of context might make some of this material impenetrable to those not already into the music and history of the band, *The New York Dolls - All Dolled Up* contains so much great footage of the band from their prime that the already initiated sincerely need to run out and buy this DVD as soon as they can.



Add to that some absolutely fantastic extra features and you've got one of the best seventies rock releases to come out in quite some time. An absolutely essential purchase!

Want more info? Sure you do. Check out the Music Video Distributors website by clicking [here!](#)

## Film Rating

## DVD Rating

**Director:** Bob Gruen, Nadya Beck

Film: ★★★★★

**Writers:** N/A

Video: ★★★

**Released:** 2005

Audio: ★★★

**Cast:** David Johansen, Johnny Thunders, Sylvain Sylvain, Arthur Kane, Billy Murcia

Extras: ★★★★★

Overall: ★★★★★

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[\[Review Index\]](#) [\[Top of Page\]](#)

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