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## NEW YORK DOLLS • All Dolled Up: A New York Dolls Story • (2005 MVD)

Gery Vermin rates it:

NEW YORK DOLLS  
All Dolled Up: A New York Dolls Story  
(MVD)

Waaaaaaaay back in 1972, photographer Bob Gruen and his then-wife Nadya got ahold of one of the first-ever home video cameras, the Sony Portapak. As videotape machines were yet to be a household item, their main audience for what they shot were the performers themselves (sort've like football players critiquing their own games) or as party entertainment. In early 1973, Gruen began to film and photograph the New York Dolls, culminating into a friendship with vocalist David Johansen and an invitation to film the band whenever he liked. Following a string of packed New York club shows in the summer of '73, the Dolls crossed country for the first time for a stint of California dates with Gruen and bride in tow. The result was over 40 hours of black and white footage, edited together here as a full-length (96 minute) documentary and available for the first time. Although lofty bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane is out of action for many of the California performances due to a plaster-encased left hand (the result of a rather possessive girlfriend attempting to saw loose his thumb in an effort to keep him from making the California jaunt), his equally towering and lanky replacement Peter Jordan manages to hold down the bass front quite well, making performances at the Whiskey A Go Go ("Vietnamese Baby", "Looking For A Kiss", "Jet Boy") and The Matrix ("Mystery Girls", "Personality Crisis", "Private World") some of the film's greatest musical moments. In addition to some wonderfully nostalgic song snippets recorded at Kenny's Castaways and Max's Kansas City in New York, we're also treated to the whole "life on the road" circus that surrounds a gaggle of femininely-attired ruffians - openmouthed stares in airports, restaurant bouncers, PA-free soundchecks and destined-for-fiasco photo shoots. Interestingly - and likely because Gruen admits to readily being a part of it - the pharmaceutical follies the Dolls became known for is almost nonexistent, although it is obvious that something is amiss as guitarist Johnny Thunders (who, along with drummer Jerry Nolan, eventually succumbed to his excesses) goes from a fast-talking New York wiseguy to a somewhat slackjawed dimwit by film's end (this is even more evident in Gruen's bonus photo gallery). As the film winds down, Gruen treats us to extremely rare footage from Seymour Stein's big '73 Halloween wingding held in the Waldorf Astoria, as well as vintage news footage (quick eyes will catch a fully made up and as-yet-to-record-an-album Ace Frehley) of the ensuing debacle.

Not only one of the greatest photographers in rock's illustrious history, Gruen proves to be an ace amateur filmmaker as well. It's a crying shame that he couldn't have palled up his Portapak with a slew of bands as a documentary of New York's glam/punk heyday in his hands would be absolute magic. Surely I'm not the only one dying to hear the illustrious Teenage Lust or watch "Fags To Bitches: The Jayne County Story" am I? Gruen also presents a few foods-for-thought I'd never quite tasted: the first being that the Dolls did NOT dress like women ("No woman dresses like THAT.") and the second, that none of the five lads were gay. I'd assumed that guitarist Sylvain Sylvain was (his diatribes in the reunion DVD don't help his case). The fact that a bareassed Arthur Kane plants one on readily-receiving Syl as a thank-you for the pair of booby-adorned house slippers he's been given... well... YOU can say "It was the Seventies"... but I say "That's a guy with his balls hanging free kissing another guy."

Also included are the full performances of 12 Dolls songs (only sizeable portions are used in the film proper), a fascinating 53-minute slideshow of Gruen's still shots with commentary by Gruen (I actually enjoyed this as much if not more than the film - very cool to know the stories behind the most famous of Dolls shots: their performance on "The Real Don Steele Show", the tour bus on Hollywood Boulevard, Johnny loitering in front of Hollywood High School, etc.), a 23-minute chat between Gruen and The Dictator's Handsome Dick Manitoba within the cluttered walls of Manitoba's tavern, audio commentary by Gruen, Johansen and Sylvain and a 16-page photo booklet.

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