

## lonely planet boys documented at last

I'd never heard that Bob Gruen, the well-known rock photographer, and his wife Nadya made 40 hours of portable video footage of the **New York Dolls** in their '70s prime. It's like December 6's 90-minute DVD *All Dolled Up* (Music Video Distributors) dropped out of the sky. Having seen only clips and TV's *Midnight Special* footage, to have this surface now is like going from a starvation diet to a banquet. "I was just doing it as a hobby; my primary focus was on still photos," the affable Gruen tells **ICE**. "Plus it was really cheap. We had no crew. I could set the video camera on the tripod and take my stills. For \$10 I could film for half an hour. I made tapes of **Ike & Tina Turner, Patti Smith, Blondie, Robert Gordon, Wayne County**... but the Dolls were so much fun to be with. We used to have a party after the shows; the band could see themselves. They loved seeing how it worked/looked."

Split between a dozen vivid songs performed live in New York and California and interviews with the band clowning backstage, on the streets, in transit and lying on a hill, this is a boon – the first chance for those born after 1957 to experience the phenomenon beyond the band's two crucial LPs. The Gruens show the five young musicians to be captivating, charismatic figures living it up in a madcap free-for-all. So why is this bonanza appearing only now? "There was a VHS market in the '80s, and I got several offers," Gruen recalls. "But there was so much animosity between the [defunct] band and their former managers, so there was never anyone to make a deal with. Now they've reformed, and there's a new manager."

It's remarkable that Gruen shot so much of a band then deemed a "failure," as he agrees: "The words I heard were 'no commercial potential.'" Did he ever think that history would prove his judgment right? "Not really," he explains. "I tend not to project into the future. They were just great people to hang out with. They were really alive and aware and good-looking and talented and in the present. A number of bands I saw were fresh and raw, like **The Clash** at their second gig. In retrospect these things are seen in a new light." Pressed, he allows, "It was a vindication so many years later to have been proved right, because it comes as a surprise. The '70s are becoming people's roots rather than a waste of time, as they were considered back then."

Lastly, does he like the 2005 Dolls? "Absolutely," Gruen answers. "They play Dolls songs better than anyone, and they're great songs, and it's great to hear them again. And **Syl [Sylvain, guitar]** and **David [Johansen, vocals]** had great comments for the DVD's bonus disc. It adds a lot." (Other bonuses: Gruen's photo gallery, outtakes, commentary, an interview by the **Dictators' Handsome Dick Manitoba** and a 16-page booklet.)

## news and notes

What would really be great would be a reissue of their lone *Lubricate Your Living Room* and singles on CD, but Domino has nonetheless done us a favor by issuing **Fire Engines' Codex Teenage Premonition**, just now out. Comprised of unreleased rough outtakes, live tracks (first gig) and *Peel Sessions*, the set nicely documents this influential 1980-1981 Scottish band, led by **Davy Henderson's** rhythmic yowling, that specialized in quirky, raw, unpredictable, stripped-down punk-funk. (**Franz Ferdinand** recently coaxed the Engines out of a 24-year retirement) ■ Future alert: January 24 brings a new **Cat Power** album, *The Greatest*, on Matador – the follow-up to 2003's *You Are Free*, which sold more than 100,000. This time, the mentally fragile singer (a.k.a. **Chan Marshall**) traveled to Memphis to record at Ardent Studios with her old producer Stuart Sikes (1996's *What Would the Community Think*). Guests include a stack of soul-veteran locals like **Mabon "Teenie" Hodges, Al Green's** guitarist – so expect a different direction ■ DVD reissue of the month is **Bauhaus's Shadow of Light**, arriving on Beggars Banquet. Partly live from 1982 at London's Old Vic Theatre and partly video (all the groundbreaking Goth godfathers' singles clips), the footage had formerly taken up two VHS cassettes but now covers one disc. Also on Beggars December 6 is a reissue/doubling of the rare 1998 instrumental album *Underarms* by the **Hope Blister** (the post-**This Mortal Coil** brain-



■ new york dolls

child of 4AD Records founder **Ivo Watts-Russell**). This double-CD set is now called *Underarms/Sideways*. *Sideways* is *Underarms* remixed by German electronic artist **Markus Guentner** – whereas *Underarms* was itself a reconstruction/rethink of another Hope Blister album, *Smile's OK!* Look for a new v23-designed package as part of 4AD's silver anniversary ■ Two more DVDs worth mentioning: *Drift*, a collaborative audio/visual film of the art installation by **Son-**

**ic Youth** guitarist **Lee Ranaldo** and artist/photographer **Leah Singer**, out on Plexifilm November 29. Did **ICE** say visual? The package includes a 112-page color book of poetry, prose and images, plus a conversation with Ranaldo and Singer and texts by filmmaker Jonas Mekas, artists Tom Leeser and Sam Durant, and Alan Licht. (Also on January 24, look for a CD by Ranaldo and **William Hooker** on the Table of the Elements label, *The Celestial Answer*) ■ The other DVD is Music Video Distributors' punk anthology, *God Save the Queen*, out December 6. You can't go wrong with 75 minutes' worth of 21 studio and live clips from **Iggy and the Stooges, Buzzcocks, Dead Kennedys, Dead Boys, X-Ray Spex, Generation X, Johnny Thunders, Germs, U.K. Subs, Chelsea, 999** and **Sham 69** (and more) ■ Also worth noting/anticipating this holiday-gift season: 11/22: **Mendoza Line's Full of Light and Full of Fire** (Misra), **MX-80's We're an American Band** (Family Vineyard); 11/29: the **Greenhornes' Sewed Soles** (V2); 12/6: **Tender Forever's The Soft and the Hardcore** (K), **Bill Harley's Blah Blah Blah** (Empyrean), **Jackie-O MF's Flags of the Sacred Harp** (All Tomorrow's Parties), **Mt. Eerie's 11 Old Songs** (P.W. Elverum and Sun); and 12/13: **Liars' It Fit When I Was a Kid** (Mute). Coming 1/24/06: **Eric Matthews' Foundation Sounds** (Empyrean). ■

## icecubes

London art-punk quartet **Bloc Party** follows up a busy 2005 with *God Bless Bloc Party*, a DVD scheduled for January 17. Released exclusively to independent music stores, Tower and Virgin (Junketboy Distribution), the program consists of an hour-length documentary of BP's recent American tour, plus five songs cut in France last summer ■ Maybe baby: Mention of the name **Petty** might put most folks in mind of rocker **Tom** or racecar-driver Richard. The few who would connect the surname to Norman would be referring to the owner of a small Clovis, NM recording studio who happened to produce **Buddy Holly's** early hits and **Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs' 1963** chart-topper "Sugar Shack." Fewer still would know that Petty's facility, which has been in operation since 1955, was the birthplace of innumerable instrumental, garage/beat-group and psyche-pop sides. These relics from the Petty pantheon get their due early next year on a trio of compilations from Ace. "His was the only professional recording studio in the area," reissue producer Alec Palao tells **ICE**. "Once Holly hit, it attracted artists from the area, but after the Fireballs became popular, bands came to him from all over North America." Bands like Montana's **Frantics**, Colorado's **Teardrops**, Texas' **Cinders** (featuring future singer-writer **J.D. Souther**), California's **Chances**, Canada's **Wes Dakus & the Rebels** and Albuquerque's own **Fe Fi Four Plus Two** ("I Wanna Come Back from the World of LSD"). "Most of the tracks here come from 1960 through 1970," explains Palao, who labels Petty (who died in 1984) "an excellent producer, commercially minded but always willing to experiment." (It was Petty who, without the band's knowledge – and to its dismay – added the insinuating organ line that virtually defines "Sugar Shack.") The instrumental compilation is tentatively titled *Sour Biscuits*, the garage/beat volume *Now Hear This* and the psychedelic set *Groovy Motions*.