

# THE PUNK VAULT

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## **New York Dolls - All Dolled Up DVD**

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If it wasn't for the New York Dolls, you may not be visiting this site right now because were it not for them, who knows what would have happened in [music](#) and how punk rock would have formed, or if it would form. They were a huge influence on countless aspiring musicians who would start this new style of music that came to be known as punk rock. I'd say the Dolls were also an influence on hair metal that would become huge in the 1980s too at least in regards to the look.

At a time when a change was needed, five New Yorkers formed a band called the New York Dolls and proved you could look like a damn weirdo, and not necessarily be formally trained in music to make some kick ass music and make a difference, at least posthumously since the band never really caught on while they were still together. They were five guys who just wanted to play music together and have a good time and in doing so, they became an inspiration to many, despite the fact the band never was a household name in the US.

Luckily, photographer Bob Gruen understood at the time just how unique and special this band was and decided to buy one of the first portable video camera that was made, a Sony Portapak, which was a black and white, reel to reel device. He used this archaic piece of equipment (which was quite advanced for the early 1970s!) to follow the band around on a tour and document not only the shows, but the whole world of the New York Dolls. Now some 30 years later, it has finally been pieced together into a film and released to the world.

The film starts out in New York documenting some shows and backstage footage of the band hanging out and having fun. It is after a week of shows that they hopped a plane to California for a couple weeks of shows and TV appearances out there. The footage alternates between performances from these various shows, to backstage happenings, to some interview footage shot outdoors during the day in CA. The band was young and having fun and it was the fun factor that really shows in this footage. The band is always hanging out together at all times and you can tell they were really enjoying it at the time. There was never any fighting or complaining in any of the footage in this film and even if you aren't a hardcore fan, it was a treat to see this footage just because you can't help but enjoy watching this group of talented gentlemen having a good time and playing some great music.

The documentary is 95 minutes long and was entertaining from start to finish. It was really cool to take this trip back in time to see these then-youngsters at their prime and to see what the crowds and clubs were like at the time. Aside from the documentary, you can see the full performances of the live songs shown in the documentary as part of the bonus features. Other bonus features are a 25 minute interview with Bob Gruen conducted by Handsome Dick Manitoba of The Dictators that was conducted specifically for and about this film, and there is a photo gallery narrated by Bob Gruen showcasing tons of his great New York Dolls photos. It was really interesting to hear his stories about each photo and it was just shy of an hour long.

Visually the entire film is in black and white. It is a little grainy but this was 1973 technology, and after a few minutes you get used to it and it doesn't detract from enjoying it. In fact, considering the time it was shot, it is amazing that it looks as clear as it does most of the time. The sound has two options, stereo and 5.1 surround. The stereo option sounded better to me as the 5.1 was echoey sounding to me. The sound at first is low and hard to hear, but it got better as the film progressed, and it also varied depending on what show it was that was being shown. The original camera used to make this had mono sound. You'll have to turn your volume up rather loud in some points to make out some of the dialog. The disc also comes with a

booklet with liner notes by Bob Gruen and its chock full of his great photos of the band in both color and black and white, it really was a nice extra touch to include that.

Despite the grainy video quality and sometimes questionable sound quality, this film really was a neat time capsule and does an excellent job of showcasing a band that never got the recognition they deserved when they were around, and makes them come across as something pretty special, which they were. Fans of the Dolls both new and old should be grateful that someone had the good sense and “got it” at the time to document this band when they had the chance. It was a great way to spend the evening watching everything on this disc and it has inspired me to want to pull those old albums out of the vault again and start listening to them again.

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