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## **All Dolled Up: A New York Dolls Story**

A Music Video Distributors Inc. production. Produced by Bob Gruen, Rick Fuller. Executive producers, Ed Seaman, Darren Hill, Dan Jagunich. Directed By Bob Gruen, Nadya Beck.

With: David Johansen, Arthur Kane, Jerry Nolan, Sylvain Sylvain, Johnny Thunders.

By DENNIS HARVEY

'All Dolled Up: A New York Dolls Story' uses early video footage to explore the impact of the seminal New York glam punk band.

A Great White Hype that disappointed commercial hopes in its brief early '70s existence, Manhattan's New York Dolls has been upheld ever since as a quintessential cult band ahead of its time. Boiling down 40 hours of footage shot over three years, "All Dolled Up" is a wonderfully intimate on- and off-stage portrait that sees the quartet going from brash, optimistic kids to jaded veterans. Already available on DVD, pic is playing San Francisco's Roxie Cinema in conjunction with the concurrent docudocu "New York Doll," about late bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane, and further limited theatrical exposure seems apt.

Friends as well as fans of the group early on, rock photog Bob Gruen and wife Nadya found the musicians delighted to be frequent subjects for their new portable video camera. There was no thought of using the footage commercially, since hardly anyone then had the ability to view videotape.

Described accurately enough by Joel Siegel in a local TV news item as "a cross between the Rolling Stones and Alice Cooper," the Dolls were a New York City sensation almost immediately, inheriting the Velvet Underground's role as resident cutting-edge idols at legendary club Max's Kansas City. But Siegel also called them "belligerent, hostile and deafeningly loud" -- terms used just a few years later to describe early punk bands. In retrospect, perhaps no other pre-Ramones rock unit sounded so punk (despite occasional R&B influences).

No doubt that raw, garage edge factored into both their cult following and their failure to reach a wider public. So did their flirtation with camp, drag and androgyny, which mixed confoundingly with their Noo Yawk macho swagger and a bounty of female groupies.

After a while, the level of substance-abusive wear among Dolls becomes obvious, with lead singer David Johansen particularly three-sheeted at various times. But he cleaned up nicely for subsequent career stretches on record and film, while fellow bandmates (notably guitarist Johnny Thunders, an heroin casualty) foundered.

Though NYC, Los Angeles and S.F.-shot concert segs remain dynamic -- with performances of such proto-punk classics as "Personality Crisis," "Trash" and "Chatterbox" -- you can feel their collective well-being deteriorate as docu proceeds. There's little joy in a late sequence when they're groomed for a TV shoot, whereas earlier a ride to the airport, shopping expedition or simple interview had found them all like kids in a candy store.

Considering that personal-use video technology was in its infancy, B&W visuals and (newly cleaned-up) sound are surprisingly good, their rougher edges apt for both band's scruffy persona and feature's verite nature.

To read Variety's review of "New York Doll" [click here](#).

Camera (color, video-to-DV), Gruen, Beck; editor, JoLynn Garnes; music, New York Dolls; original sound recordists, Gruen, Beck; sound mixer, Ryan Rogers. Reviewed on DVD, San Francisco, Dec. 4, 2005. Running time: 95 MIN.

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