

VCR Reporter

VENTURA COUNTY'S NEWSWEEKLY

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Jerry Brown

The many pieces of the politician who just won't stop

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MOLE TRACKS

Playing with dolls

If Morrissey, the Sex Pistols and Poison ever got trapped in an elevator together, the one thing they could all talk about before clawing each other's eyes out is the New York Dolls. That's the scope of the glam-garage icons' influence: They inspired the "anybody can do this" spirit that fueled the punk explosion a year or so after they broke up; gave sexually ambiguous Mancunians an outlet for their confusion; and, for better or worse, showed every hair metal band of the following decade that you can still get tons of chicks while wearing makeup and gallons of Aquanet.

All Dolled Up stitches a 90-minute documentary together out of nearly 40 hours worth of footage shot by famed rock photographer Bob Gruen and his wife on a primitive home video camera over the course of three years in the early 1970s. Its title isn't just a cute pun: half of the Dolls' revolution was their transgender fashion sense, and the film derives a lot of its watchability from awaiting what ridiculous combination of clothes the band will come up with in the next scene. Oversized sunglasses, glittery jackets, leather shirts, giant novelty bowties, platform shoes, top hats — if it was garish enough to freak people out, it made it into their wardrobe. At the Whisky-A-Go-Go, singer David Johansen performs as a bisexual cowboy—long before Brokeback Mountain, mind you

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EDITORIAL

Merry holidays

OPINIONS & LETTERS

FREE WILL ASTROLOGY

~ WEEKLY HOROSCOPE ~

PLANET VENTURA

ART & CULTURE

Pitter patter of Irish feet

No underachievers here: Ojai's Wood family fiddle from the heart

MOLE TRACKS

Playing with dolls

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O, not-so-silent night

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Kong is king

Director Jackson creates timeless masterpiece

THE ADVICE GODDESS

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BODY POLITICS

My party disaster

LISTINGS

~ AFTER DARK ~

~ HAPPENINGS ~

— complete with a plastic toy gun he “fires” at the audience. The greatest sartorial moment, however, is watching them walk through the airport in high-heels and short-shorts and seeing heads crane around to either laugh or gawk in horror. For all their androgyny, though, the Dolls certainly weren’t gay — the backstage groupie parties shown here prove that — and, contrary to appearances, weren’t cross-dressing. “No girls dressed like that,” Gruen points out in a bonus interview included on the DVD. “They were beautiful guys who were just trying to be more beautiful.”

Of course, the other half of the band’s impact on the pop world was their music, which wasn’t so much a revolution as a rebirth. More than any of their proto-punk peers, the Dolls represented a return to pre-Beatles rock ’n’ roll, all shambling velocity, bloozy swagger and sub-Chuck Berry riffs courtesy of guitar antihero Johnny Thunders. Because the equipment used to record the footage is so ancient, the sound quality is atrocious, but it actually compliments the trashy energy in live clips of classics like “Personality Crisis,” “Looking for a Kiss” and, appropriately, “Trash.” But combined with the musicians’ thick Brooklyn accents, the poor audio does a disservice to the offstage portions, which feature the band shopping in the women’s section of a department store and playing Pong (the commentary tracks, from Johansen, Gruen and guitarist Sylvain Sylvain, are also inexplicably muddled).

Even with that technological hurdle in the way, the goofy camaraderie between the five members at what was the peak of their career is obvious, which makes All Dolled Up retroactively sad: only two of them are still alive. But without any narration to drive that fact home, the film is simply a document of a brief sliver of time in which these neighborhood friends were having fun making a lot of ear-splitting, earth-shifting noise together. The trail of glitter and hairspray they left behind is still visible today. ★

~ **MOVIE TIMES** ~

DINING

A risky endeavor

Ruby's enters crowded, dangerous waters ...

— *Matthew Singer Got a tip? E-mail it to Mole4Life@aol.com.*

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