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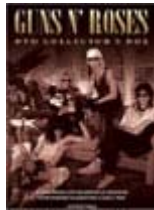
BEST of 2006

Home now playing (film) Guns N' Roses: The DVD Collector's Box (Chrome Dreams)

## Guns N' Roses: The DVD Collector's Box (Chrome Dreams)



Written by Brian Kenney



With Axl Rose, we want to remember the Axl in the black-and-white "Sweet Child O' Mine" video, not the bloated, corn-rowed Axl in his last high-profile appearance, winded and sweaty after a semi-rousing set of "Rocket Queen" at the 2003 MTV VMAs. We want to remember Adler, Izzy, and the summer of '88 when the Gunners broke loose of the Sunset Strip scene.

As fans, we want to recall the pristine nature of our heroes: Elvis as the fresh-faced youngster of "Heartbreak Hotel" over Vegas Elvis; *Streetcar*-era Brando, not the slob who stole scenes in *Apocalypse Now*. Likewise with Axl Rose, we want to remember the Axl in the black-and-white "Sweet Child O' Mine" video, not the bloated, corn-rowed Axl in his last high-profile appearance, winded and sweaty after a semi-rousing set of "Rocket Queen" at the 2003 MTV VMAs. We want to remember Adler, Izzy, and the summer of '88 when the Gunners broke loose of the Sunset Strip scene.

With the "Unauthorized" G'n'R set, fans are privy a glimpse of an industry prepubescent Axl and fellow Gunners, vulnerable and unsure but equally vivacious and amplified about the road ahead of them, a road to which most of us know the ending. "Unauthorized" is the key word, here as Axl is prone to hawk over every aspect of the G'n'R machine like a helicopter parent. Nevertheless, the nostalgia of these 120 minutes may seem too much to pass up.

True Gunner fans might salivate over this double *Collector's Box DVD* set, where we might expect montages of vintage G'n'R live shots, concert promo, and interviews with those who brought them to the top, all with a vintage soundtrack of the Gunners before the days that *Appetite* hit the shelves. Maybe sound bites of early demos. Or we hope for Izzy to come out of hiding and line up an interview. But that's not the case here.

What we get are poorly lit interviews from Hollywood has-beens and repeated still-shots of famous clubs on the Sunset Strip, replete with a stock soundtrack of a heavy-metal riff from electric guitar 101. The true abyss is the female voiceover narration hits: a high-strung nasal Brit narrates the entire DVD as if it's an infomercial. Here we see textbook irony: one of iconic "America's" baddest bands narrated by Britain's answer to Barbara Walters.

But the discs are not without perks. On the first disc "Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll," unauthorized of course means a documentary sans artist. You won't see an interview with David Geffen or Tom Zutuat, nor will you hear any tune by Guns N' Roses. You will get interviews with journalists from L.A.'s *Music Connection*, who claims to have issued the band their first-ever cover story. (Here you start to see just why Axl lords over all of the G'n'R creation: just about everyone in the documentary claims dibs on "discovering" the band, from the newsstand owner to (now 50-year-old) groupies from the Sunset scene. The DVD even goes so far as to include a self-appropriated "scenester" who claims to have known Slash. Yes, it's that high budget. What does play out is more of a public access-ready rockumentary of encyclopedic information most G'n'R fans have already read about on Danny Sugarman's *Appetite for Destruction: The Days of Guns 'N Roses*.

The companion DVD "Axl Rose: The Prettiest Star," on which more people claim to have broken the band and for those Gunnerphiles, offers a bit more. We finally meet names familiar from the liners notes of *Appetite*, such as early G'n'R manager Vicki Hamilton, who helped steer the Gunners into their record deal with Geffen. Also the mystery of Chris Weber is solved. Weber, long known in the annals of G'n'R lore as co-writer of early *Live...Like a Suicide* tunes "Move to the City" and "Reckless Life" as well as "Anything Goes" (from *Appetite*), recalls his involvement with Hollywood Rose and the temper tantrum that is Axl in early Guns incarnations. Also interviewed is Robert John, photographer in the early days. The majority of the disc settles for the same interviews spliced into the set's previous Sex, Drugs disc.

It's unfortunate that fans (and filmmakers like) have to resort to unauthorized bios of the band. But this is what we'll have to live with until Axl opens up the vaults for all to see. | **Brian Kenney**

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