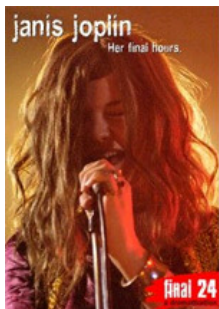


Janis Joplin – Final 24: Her Final Hours DVD Review

BY JOE VIGLIONE AUGUST - 6 - 2010



With the passing of Bobby Hebb this week the last thing I should be doing is reviewing this series of DVDs, Final 24...but being devoted to Janis Joplin I had to give this one a spin.

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There are a batch of these "Final 24" discs focusing on major musicians with some questionable characters and their stories thrown in to boot: Anna Nicole Smith, David Koresh, Nicole Brown Simpson, Sid Vicious, Gianni Versace (the subject of a Marty Balin song from his new album Blue Highway; actually the first single), John Belushi and Keith Moon.

As these things go I was surprised at how well it is put together, despite its morbid aspect. There are valid and credible people talking on-camera including Sam Andrew and John Till, the two guitarists who were with her (separately) from the beginning of her fame to the conclusion. Andrew was in Big Brother & The Holding Company and half of Kozmic Blues Band. John Till played one date with Andrew together onstage passing the mantle, so to speak, to Till who was the sole guitarist from the latter part of Kozmic Blues Band right up to Joplin's passing. It should be noted that the stylistically different but equally brilliant James Gurley, who left us December 20, 2009, was part of the two guitar blast of Big Brother & The Holding Company (check out the book review published recently on TMR Zoo). Author of Buried Alive (and Joplin's publicist) Myra Friedman and road manager John Cooke (who has written liner notes on the Sony CD re-releases) are also included on this viewable re-telling of the last day in Janis Joplin's life. However...conspiracy theories do abound and what is on this disc is in direct conflict with two other possible scenarios that can be found in one of the books out there ("Scars of Sweet Paradise", I believe) as well as the usual public investigations on the web.

Marty Balin has told me during interviews that he was with Janis during her last 24 hours...believable because they shared the same girlfriend, Peggy Caserta. Caserta wrote "Goin' Down With Janis", a sordid 1974 paperback. According to legend (or "the internets") Caserta and Joplin's male fiance' – Seth Morgan – were not around on the fateful evening of October 3, 1970 and Joplin was depressed with both of them missing. Now other sources on the web claim that the Joplin family keeps some things from going public, keeping a tight lid on the public face of Janis Joplin. This, of course, adds to the intrigue. As Joplin's 40th anniversary is coming up this October, and with a new perspective on the passing of Joplin on October 4, 1970, Blind Owl Al Wilson (September 3, 1970) and Jimi Hendrix (September 18, 1970). Hendrix and Canned Heat performed at The "Super Concert '70" at Deutschlandhalle Berlin, Germany on September 4, 1970 – the band put on a plane allegedly when Wilson couldn't be found. The gig featured Jimi Hendrix, Procol Harum, Ten Years After, Cat Mother (a band Hendrix had produced which had a minor hit in America), Cold Blood, Murphy Blend and the Wilson-less Canned Heat.

I bring all this up because – though the narrator does his chilling Twilight Zone voice – there was a lot of territory that still goes uncovered. A big question for me is this: if Janis Joplin had already injected the smack when she went to talk to the clerk at the hotel desk, what if there was foul play? Wouldn't she have been overcome by a so-called "hot shot" if she couldn't tolerate it? I do have information from credible sources which might show up in a future story but the "Final 24" here, though surprisingly informative and – because of that – important, is still not the full story.

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