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# New York Dolls- Looking Fine On Television Reviewed By Dr. Wesley Britton of Bookpleasures.com

By Dr. Wesley Britton | Published November 28, 2011 | Music Audio CDs & DVDs

#### **Dr. Wesley Britton**



Reviewer Dr. Wesley Britton: Dr. Britton is the author of four books on espionage in literature and the media. He is also co-host of the online radio program, Dave White Presents, for which he interviews authors, musicians, and entertainment insiders. His website is www.spywise.net; the

radio program is archived at http://www.audioentertainment.org/dwp. Dr. Britton teaches English at Harrisburg Area Community College.

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In the summer of 1973, I was reading rock magazines seeking reviews of what new LPs I should be buying. In July, I was shocked, shocked to read critics panning Eric Claptons new Rainbow Concert. How could this be, thought I? EC, Pete Townshend, Stevie Winwood and the rest of the all-stars live? How bad can it be? I ignored the critics, bought the album, and was crushed. So I wondered-if the reviewers were spot on with Clapton, who were they praising? Without exception, they liked the debut album from the New York Dolls. So I went back to the record store and brought home an album based on reviews alone. Within a few bars of "Personality Crisis," I was hooked. Bowie had opened the door-for me, the '70s had finally left flower power behind.

Four years later, a friend popped by with his new discovery, the Sex Pistols Never Mind the Bullocks. It didn't take me long to start laughing. "I've heard all that before," I said, pulling out an old friend to make my point. It would take me years to really appreciate the Pistols, and I now agree with the critic who dubbed the Dolls the missing link between the Stones and Johnny Rotten and the boys. You can call the Dolls "proto-punk" if you like, but they're "proto" only in historical terms.

And that's what this DVD captures, the Founding Fathers of Punk when they were still calling their music "Glam-Rock." The package is 70 minutes primarily of performances with short interviews interspersed throughout. Film makers Bob Gruen and Nadya Beck, who've produced similar assemblies before, have collected grainy, mostly black-and-white concert footage. The substandard visuals are, considering the subject, completely appropriate. Likewise the raw, dirty audio mixes including amp squeals and squawks and unintended feedback. Most of the attention is focused on front man David Johansen, but, after all these years, I was delighted to see the rest of the band were quite capable on stage without the guidance of Todd Rundgren in the studio. This DVD is all about a band apparently on the rise, having a good time, and delighted with the attention they were getting.

Virtually their entire recorded catalogue is included from "Personality Crisis," "Human Being," "Trash," "Private World" to "Frankenstein." The one missing favorite I spotted was the band's version of Bo Diddley's "Pills." The one bonus is a 9 minute interview by rock writer Lisa Robinson outside of CBGBs in 1978 with Johansen and guitarist Johnny Thunders. By that time, the Dolls story was over, the hot new groups included The Ramones and the Sex Pistols. Thunders was unhappy Tom Petty had beaten him to the punch using the name Heartbreakers. Had the original New York Dolls gotten together that year, they would have been perfectly timed to join in on the wave they had started not so long ago.

The New York Dolls, in this rather primitive presentation, is for those who were there, those who've heard the legend, and for listeners who like their music loud, hot, and aggressive. Show it to your grand-children who won't believe rock was like this before their parents were born.

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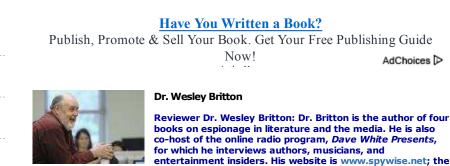
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