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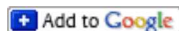
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New York Dolls - Lookin' Fine On Television

[MVD Entertainment Group](#) // Unrated // November 22, 2011

List Price: \$14.95 [Buy now and save at [Amazon](#)]

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Review by [Rich Rosell](#) | posted December 26, 2011 | [E-mail the Author](#)

Rock and roll doesn't always treat its trendsetting ancestors with the respect deserved, and sometimes those very same overlooked trendsetters burn white-hot before disintegrating into a million pieces, remembered only by the yet-to-be-formed bands they influenced and an even smaller circle of fans who know the truth.

The New York Dolls - existing briefly as one singular core unit - took the glam rock movement of the early 1970s and twisted its axis, reshaping the meaning of rock-and-roll androgyny into not only something visually daring, but most importantly cementing themselves as cross-dressing trailblazers with a couple of highly influential albums. There's no question The Dolls laid the foundation for the punk movement, and if there was ever any doubt about that just take a peek at this 70-minute film from Nadya and Bob Gruen which captures David Johansen, Arthur Kane, Jerry Nolan, Sylvain Sylvain and Johnny Thunders during their peak, circa 1973.

Lookin' Fine on Television is a fairly free-form doc, assembled out of various concerts and interviews, with the audio recordings intermingled over video footage from different performances pieced together. The end result isn't a pure concert disc, but rather a frenetic hodgepodge of The Dolls on and off the stage. There are 14 Doll classics represented here, and though the video/audio presentation is admittedly coarse it remains obvious just how dynamic and volatile the band was, churning through some of their most iconic tunes. You can almost see the future of music changing before your eyes.

Or maybe that's just the way I see it.

This may not be the definitive New York Dolls DVD - I would have to suggest **All Dolled Up** - but as a primer it is certainly an essential. On its own **Lookin' Fine on Television** may seem disjointed and sloppy, especially if you're new to The Dolls, but the manic energy the band puts on display has been caught by the Gruens in all of its ramshackle majesty. Still need more proof? Then pick up their 1973 debut - most of which is represented here - and wallow in its awesomeness.

This is rock and roll, people. See it. Touch it. Hear it.

Songs:



CONTENT

★★★★★

VIDEO

★★★★★

AUDIO

★★★★★

EXTRAS

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Video

The 1.33:1 fullframe black-and-white transfer is wonky and rough, but the excessive fuzzy grain and soft edges help lend a sense of urgency to these recordings. Don't go into this expecting some sort of pristine documentary, instead pretend you're a rock history archeologist and the footage on this disc is the only surviving testament to one of music's most influential/unsung bands. It may not be pretty, but it is what it is, kids.

Audio

Audio choices - neither of which are mentioned at the menu screen - consist of 5.1 surround and 2.0 stereo. That sounds generous enough, but with the sound quality of these recordings being as coarse and vintage as they are neither track is particularly noteworthy. There is a slightly wider presence with the 5.1 mix, but it is negligible at best, so I would forewarn viewers to remember that these are rare recordings from the early 1970s, full of all of the aural imperfections of the time.

Extras

The only supplemental material is an odd bit of rambling spontaneity entitled *Impromptu interview with music journalist Lisa Robinson, David Johansen and Johnny Thunders - Outside CBGB 1976* (08m:32s). Like the main film, the quality is pretty poor, and the whole thing does have the sort of late-night nonsensical yammering that isn't necessarily entertaining, but it is enjoyably curious to see Johansen and Thunders offstage, recorded at a point after the band's demise.

Final Thoughts

The presentation is appropriately rough and ragged, but that so fits the spirit of The Dolls that anything cleaner and tighter would have been conceptually all wrong. This is raw, electrifying and full of unbridled, genre-busting rock and roll.

Recommended as part of my imaginary Essential Rock History Symposium where I expound - especially after a few cold ones - on the importance of bands like The Dolls in shaping the future of rock music in the 1970s and beyond.

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