

MCN Columnists

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New York Dolls: Lookin' Fine on Television

One of the reasons crusty old rock-'n'-roll journalists take the Hall of Fame less than seriously is the nominating committee's tendency to honor performers whose ability to sell records trumps innovation, sacrifice and influence. Some musicians and singers have been inducted several times, while others are only considered after the uproar gets too loud to ignore. The fact that such mainstream entertainers as Billy Joel are members and not hard-core acts like the New York Dolls demands loud debate. Watch "Lookin' Fine on Television" and I think you'll see the case to be made for the Dolls. Directly influenced by the Rolling Stones, Rod Stewart and the Faces, the Stooges and MC5, the Dolls may have been the first American band to embrace Britain's emerging Glam Rock and Punk movements and convincing suburban teenagers that boys have the same right to wear makeup and tease their hair as their girlfriends. Among the bands the Dolls influenced were Alice Cooper, Kiss, Sex Pistols, Motley Crue, the Ramones, Guns N Roses, Poison, R.E.M., Aerosmith and Clash. David Johansen was able to survive by morphing into the persona of lounge lizard Buster Poindexter and making songs for hipper elements among the disco crowd. Filmmakers Bob Gruen and Nadya Beck have compiled clips from the band's formative years in L.A. and N.Y.C., as well as vintage interviews. From MVD, it's one of the best rock docs I've seen in a while.