



the Rock and Roll Report

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New York Dolls LOOKIN' FINE ON TELEVISION



FILMS BY NADYA & BOB GRUEN

1. The fully, perfectly B&W action kicks straight off down some desolate roadside with a dusty, yet meticulously trashy-as-ever Dolls being asked "how you, um, guys got together." "I met Arthur on MacDougal Street," says Johnny. "Na na na, *that's* not how it started," complains Sylvain, as nearby twigs 'n' cigarette butts suddenly become airborne. And? We're off !!

2. Vintage "Lookin(g) For A Kiss" performance footage is expertly intercut with shots of our not-yet-ready-for-celluloid heroes as they walk down Hollywood Boulevard, checking out the neighborhood novelty-slash-porn shops, cruisin' Frederick's, and catching David JoHansen actually experimenting for perhaps the first time with a terrifyingly great big proto-Poindexter coif.

3. A lone, brave fan holds up a crudely-scrawled cardboard sign proclaiming N.Y. DOLLS ARE GREAT as "Trash" picks up, this time accompanied by off-site, quite *outasite* sequences of the boys poncin' n' prancin' up their proverbial storm at a calculatingly lo-budget photo shoot ...David's hair now back into its proper Tyler-vs-Jagger shambles, we see.

4. Speaking of whom, hilariously quaint all-last-night's-parties footage of the man being interviewed, *poolside*, soon begins appearing between songs. And I quote: "Pittsburgh, they went *wild*. We played third bill to Mott the Hoople and the Blue Öyster Cunt [sic!]. We didn't even have a dressing room – they gave us this little trailer that was in this ice-skating rink/swimming pool complex. We ate in this *diner*. It was just about time to go on and EVERYBODY started throwin' up. Violently!"

5. The Dolls' faux-Tommy gun ridden homage to *Alice Cooper's Greatest Hits*, aka their "Lipstick Killers" proto-gangsta shoot, is herein repositioned beneath "Bad Detective," followed by the wisenheimers as severely alt. cowboys in toy holsters and plastic GI Joe bazookas for, of course, "Vietnamese Baby."

6. Cut to WNBC-TV newsman Tony Hernandez reporting: "History is being made in the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria hotel tonight. For the first time that anybody really can remember, a Rock Halloween Party is being held here. As you can see, the Guest List appears to be quite unique" – as the WNBC cameras pan across a 1973 audience much more *Rocky Horror* than "rock" – "as are the hosts of this Halloween party. I'm speaking of the unique group of young men known as the New York Dolls." Cue "Human Being," Syl quite convincing indeed in his Charlie Chaplin costume (that little tramp) as a VERY Doll'd-up, far-from-dull pantomime horse suddenly waltzes on stage, giving David JoH *quite* the run for his \$.



7. Those of the Gawker persuasion should meanwhile keep a close eye peeled for gorgeously grainy glimpses of Cyrinda Foxxe, Michelle Piza, and other certifiably *Rock Scene*-approved arm candy sprawled backstage and underfoot throughout *Lookin' Fine On Television*. In fact, look *very* closely and you can even spot the Dolls' Mercer Arts Center compadre Ace Frehley celebrating his very own Rock Halloween.

8. So nice to see *so* much of Arthur "Killer" Kane throughout the proceedings as well, he the solid-bottomed Ox (as in John Alec Entwistle) of mock-rock. RIP...to *both* of them.

9. During the concluding "Jet Boy" sequence we are naturally treated to frightfully hilarious footage of the hot-panted Dolls invading Kennedy Airport, actually being allowed to board an L.A.-bound jet (*with* Bob and Nadya Gruen's trusty video gear rolling!) then watch what's left of them being most unceremoniously dumped hours later out upon the left coast. This was, rest assured, *many* years before the creation of the TSA, all you frequent flyers out there will be most relieved to know.

10. But perhaps the true black-and-white heart(break) of the matter is to be found within *Lookin' Fine On Television's* Bonus Footage, wherein David, most uncomfortably – in more ways than one – clad in some turtleneck/sports jacket contraption interviews his old – in more ways – bandmate Johnny Thunders outside CBGB. The two attempt witty, friendly banter one 1976 night on the Bowery just prior to Thunders' UK *Anarchy* tour with the Damned and the Sex Pistols ("I think they're real cute; that's all I know about 'em, really. I've seen their pictures," says Johnny). Reference is duly made – though at this early stage in the game neither can realize the full import *or* irony of the situation – that the Pistols are under the command of, and "outfitted," as David points out, by none other than ex-Dolls' svengali Malcolm McLaren. "He's really got an eye," adds JT. Malc also certainly realized, though in this footage it isn't clear if either Messrs. Johansen *or* Thunders do yet, that the Dolls' days and nights have already clearly come and gone; the band and its brand already tragically unhip by '76, rendered utterly redundant by the Ramones and painfully passé by those Pistols. More proof cannot be had of this than watching herein the stragglers outside CBs pushing obliviously by our two joking B&W video stars, busy instead with the *new* hot club and the *new* cool scene(s) the New York Dolls themselves, as *Lookin' Fine On Television* more than shows, *more* than inspired and instigated.

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