



The New York Dolls was an ingenious idea for a rock and roll band, the group hitting an audience with all volume on March 3, 1973 at K-K-K-Katys, part of the Boston Club complex in Kenmore Square, Massachusetts. They played a week there, a soon-to-be famous Steven Tyler in the back of the club watching the Dolls blast everyone out of the room. It was so intensely loud it felt like being in an airplane hanger with a jet getting ready for take-off. You won't get that experience by watching this interesting look back at their early days, but the MVD release of vintage footage is essential for those of us who saw the Dolls in all their glory many a time back in the day.

For such an important group to have only two Mercury albums in release at the time of their emergence is a shame. And much like Iggy and the Stooges with their one-two punch on Elektra, the New York Dolls – like the Stooges – did get some respect as power brokers of the punk scene. They both overshadowed The Runaways (though the Runaways saga did get the gals their story to film decades later), these three groups and more – Talking Heads, Tuff Darts, The Dead Boys all generating something very special in a time long ago...

Lookin' Fine on Television is a nice title, though not necessarily accurate. Some of the footage makes for a tough viewing experience that needs the David Johansen axiom "Real Rock & Roll fans will listen to something they love on a blown out speaker on a transistor radio" (paraphrased). On that level this works out well, part of the puzzle that puts the story in perspective for fans old and new.

The Johansen quote above was utilized a year ago for the Iggy Pop Roadkill Rising disc and, no, Johansen didn't bring it up at that Boston party where he was preaching to me that he thought I would be the guy to get Johnny Thunders off of heroin (?? – I got a record deal for Thunders in Paris on New Rose but, sadly, couldn't help the exquisite pure rock guitarist to expel his demons), the quote is actually from some magazine interview from decades back. The black and white footage does add to the legend, puts the Dolls in the time of the post-60s rock & roll re-emergence, a harder sound with less polish and more angst.

The New York Dolls are iconic – in 2012 – but hardly household names. In a perfect world Buster Poindexter would have stayed with the Dolls to chug along creating album after album. They would have had a hit record or two, of that I am sure, and they could have been the 70s version of the Kinks or something of that commercial stature.

Watch Johnny Thunders on YouTube doing "Green Onions" to see what a fantastic sound he would generate (even with the squealing wrong notes and vulgar tongue) ...and it's a shame that kids today don't know him as the rock & roll renegade he was; they just think he's a fictional character from some Ray Davies tune.

After leaving this band that he was such an essential part of they went their separate ways for a time, Sylvain Sylvain making some superb recordings over the years as well as live shows, New Rose Records releasing an important "Sons of the Dolls" LP with stray solo recordings that helped fill the void somewhat. Thunders death left another void. Lookin' Fine on Television helps fill it somewhat.

Joe Viglione is the Chief Film Critic at TMRZoo.com. He was a film critic for Al Aronowitz's The Blacklisted Journal, has written thousands of reviews and biographies for AllMovie.com, Allmusic.com and produces and hosts Visual Radio. Visual Radio is a fifteen year old variety show on cable TV which has interviewed John Lennon's Uncle Charlie, Margaret Cho, Ray Manzarek, John Densmore, Felix Cavaliere, Marty Balin, Bill Press and hundreds of other personalities.

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