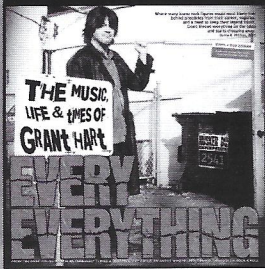


# DVD REVIEWS



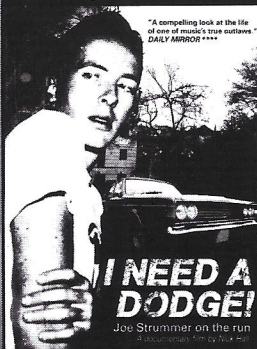
## "EVERY EVERYTHING: THE MUSIC, LIFE & TIMES OF GRANT HART". (MVD)



This documentary serves more or less as the visual accompaniment to Andrew Earles latest book on Husker Du, in that it's imparted from the standpoint of Grant Hart. Of course "Every Everything: The Music Life & Times of Grant Hart" expands on the book and as the

title implies there is added focus on Grant Hart and his life either side of Husker Du. It's a one-handed account for certain and I've seen this film being dismissed as merely one guy talking about himself for over an hour. That in essence is the basic cut-down of the piece, but when your story is as gripping as Grant Hart's, that surely isn't a terrible thing. From his early childhood days in Minnesota, through his interest in collage art, personal hardships and of course his music in and out of Husker Du, it's all dissected by Hart and in many instances he's in fact quite critical of how he handled certain things, providing honest equilibrium to his story. On Bob Mould however, he remains eternally bitter and curt around his dominant oversight of Husker Du, particularly when it came to Grant's growing influence over songwriting. Bob Mould is understood to have been an authority figure in the band, but that in part is what made them what they were. It seemed a forgone conclusion that had Grant Hart and Greg Norton exerted the level of influence they sought it would need to happen outside of Husker Du. Hart's post Husker Du years are equally interesting and perhaps that's on account of its general omission from past reports. During this time his drug addiction spiralled out of control, the effects of which are evident in his speech throughout the documentary, yet beneath the slurred drawl is a sharp wit and intellectualism not immediately apparent at the outset of the film. We get a walking tour of Minneapolis/St. Paul as Hart points out areas of significance. He discusses his interest in classic automobiles and his respect for certain auto companies that maintained solid labour relations practices with their workers. Grant Hart also fathered a child at some point along the way and appears emotionally distraught at his failings in this area. Behind the documentary is a human story, which places the music and infighting observed elsewhere into clear perspective. Despite the years taking their toll on Hart, he's emerged a wiser and more astute artist today, still plugging away on the underground circuit. The editing is a little loose in spots but taken as a whole "Every Everything" is a fascinating story and comes with a concrete recommendation from this source. (MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)

## "I NEED A DODGE: JOE STRUMMER ON THE RUN". (CADIZ MUSIC)

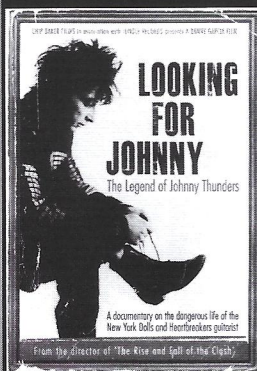


My second time to see this documentary on Joe Strummer's time-out in Spain on foot of The Clash's break-up. I must admit I didn't enjoy this near as much the first time round in the cinema, but watching it again here on DVD it makes a lot more sense. Strummer's exile in the Mediterranean can be attributed to mounting pressures in his

personal life in England and the erosion of his band. The Dodge in the title is a double entendre, referring not only to Strummer's Dodge Dart which he acquired (and subsequently abandoned) whilst in Spain, but also his need to dodge England and get away from his

home life. In 1997 Strummer gave an account of a story on Spanish radio about his time in Spain in 1985 and mentioned ditching his Dodge motor in a car park as he needed to fly back to his partner, Gabby Salter, who had gone into labour in London. This is where filmmaker Nick Hall picked up on the idea to construct a documentary around tracing Joe Strummer's car, but it's something of a red herring as, in essence, what the documentary is about is Joe's brief stay in Spain and what he got up to during that time. I made the mistake of getting too hung up on the car story the first time out, which is kind of a dead-end story, but shift your focus away from that and you'll discover a rather compelling aside to the story. Joe spent a considerable amount of time working with a local band in Madrid named 091 and went on to produce their ill-fated album whilst resident in the city. The interviews are largely culled from 091's circle of friends and those who interacted with Joe during his stay. Additionally we get the viewpoint of those back in London, notably Gabby Salter and "Cut The Crap" era Clash members Nick Sheppard and Pete Howard, both of whom are refreshingly humble and frank about their time in the band. Much of the interview footage is in Spanish with English subtitles but this only adds to the ambience and landscape of the times. Recordings from the aforementioned radio interview are interspersed throughout and it's amusing to hear Joe fumble through the interview in broken Spanish. This DVD release is loaded with physical and digital extras including a cassette copy of the radio interview in its entirety, which adds a pleasant touch. "I Need A Dodge" has a lot of heart and whilst you may argue that the story could be better developed in places, it is what it is and provides further insight into what made Joe Strummer tick on both a personal and a musical level during this time. (CADIZ MUSIC LTD: 2 GREENWICH QUAY, CLARENCE ROAD, LONDON SE8 3EY, ENGLAND.)

## "LOOKING FOR JOHNNY: THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY THUNDERS". (JUNGLE)

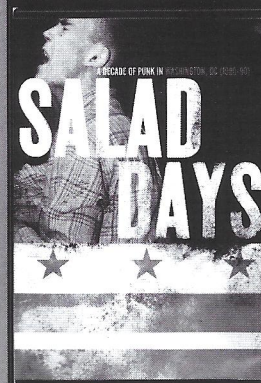


No matter how much Johnny Thunders has been mythologized down the years, it's always been a task to overlook his gloomy personal life, which in fact was the double-edged sword which provided the source energy for much of his work. This documentary from Danny Garcia, who also brought us the recent Clash opus "The Rise And Fall Of The Clash"

is the Johnny Thunders story laid bare by those closest to him. I remember when Johnny Thunders died. I'd watched him what seemed like only days earlier on national television joyful in the fact that he'd kicked heroin. And though the circumstances surrounding his death are open to discussion, it was clear his lifestyle choices had caught up with him. Danny Garcia does an excellent job here in reaching out to the likes of Sylvain Sylvain, Lenny Kaye, Bob Gruen, BP Fallon, Walter Lure and many more for their first-hand and candid stories of the time they spent with Johnny Thunders. Each hold a special place in their heart for the man and this ensures the film is much more than a bunch of talking heads pontificating on the merits of a bygone rock star. It tracks the subject from his early childhood days in Queens as an aspiring baseball player before discovering The Beatles and his sister's record collection, which ultimately puts him on the path to becoming a guitar player. The era of the New York Dolls is looked at, all of which has been well-documented in the past, before we get back to Johnny's journey and his tribulations through the corporate structures of the music industry. The feature strikes a good balance between live footage, archived interviews of Johnny and contemporary thoughts from those who knew him.

A complex character and the ravages of his hard-drinking and drugging lifestyle are well evidenced throughout. His interviews are often difficult to decipher - there was always a functioning brain in there but it's something of a chore for the thoughts to emerge. The songs though retain that insolent, badass Rock n' Roll charm. Sure, people tend to romanticize about the importance of Johnny Thunders, but I'm willing to grant him pretty lofty status, uneven as he could be at times. This package comes with a whole raft of extras that are worth checking out. A compelling story - and also an exceptionally sad one. (JUNGLE RECORDS: RESEARCH HOUSE, FRASER ROAD, PERIVALE, MIDDLESEX, UB6 7AQ, ENGLAND.)

## "SALAD DAYS: A DECADE OF PUNK IN WASHINGTON, DC (1980-90)". (MVD)

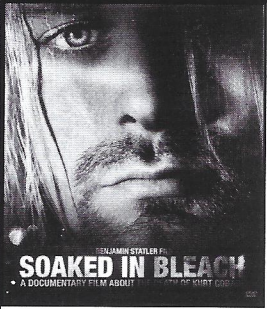


With the notable exception of Nation Of Ulysses, I can't say I've liked much of anything Washington DC Punk has produced since the late 80's and thankfully the cut-off point for this documentary is the early stages of when the rot began to set in. I visited Washington DC recently and it's an interesting place. Segregated to the point where an 80%

Black city is almost exclusively White anywhere within a five mile radius of downtown. The organic DC has been pushed beyond these borders and it's pointed out here that as the Government is the primary employer, the economy is consequently built around federal workers who redeploy from other cities. "Salad Days" strives to expose what the teenaged children of these federal workers undertook to create a meaningful existence of their own throughout the decade of the 1980's. Anything related to DC Punk will of course feature interviews with Ian MacKaye and no one could deny his influence, but I think we're at the point now where his story has been told so many times over that really there is nothing new to uncover. Again on "Salad Days" a disproportionate amount of the documentary relates to the Ian MacKaye/Dischord story and it comes at the expense of others. I'd have loved to have heard more from Sab Grey of Iron Cross and Boyd Farrell from Black Market Baby for example; both of whom receive far too little airtime. I think it would have served the documentary better had they included alternative voices of DC Punk here. Brian Baker (Minor Threat/Dag Nasty) does however offer insightful contributions to the narrative, oftentimes reflecting on the ridiculous self-righteousness of Straight Edge and blinkered teenaged rich kids. A fascinating aspect of the film is when it abruptly shifts from the pomposity of scene politics to the real issues facing Black DC residents of the day - drugs, crime, homelessness and a multitude of other socio-economic struggles. I'm not sure if it was intentional or not but it provides a very real counterpoint to their story. DC's Go-Go scene is scrutinized as an element of this diversion, including gestures made by Punk Rockers to reach out to that scene (albeit ineffectively). There're some stirring live performances throughout the documentary, skilfully pieced together with photographs, fliers, political paraphernalia and record sleeves of the day which together create a dramatic picture of Reagan's America. The latter part of the 1980's is when DC took a nose dive in cultural terms with the arrival of Revolution Summer and, most irritatingly of all, Mark Anderson. His "Dance Of Days" book (from where this documentary takes its name) goes on record for me as being the only document on Punk history that I had to give up reading midway through. Agonizingly pompous stuff! This was also the era when an element of DC Punk became depoliticized to an extent and its painful seeing self-absorbed band members celebrate being able to write about

their broken hearts instead of more pressing concerns of the day. The notable exception of late '80's DC was of course the arrival of Fugazi, but again this means back to Ian MacKaye. Surely some insight from Guy Picciotto was at least warranted here? "Salad Days" is peaks and troughs, but when it's good it's very good and there're more than a handful of truly great Punk bands that came out of this era included in the film. Much like the city itself, it's blatantly divided. (MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)

**"SOAKED IN BLEACH: A DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT THE DEATH OF KURT COBAIN". (MVD)**

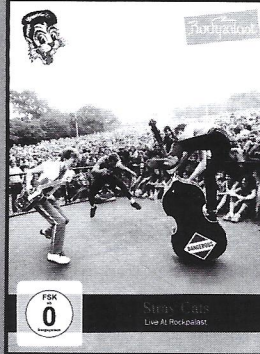


When most people think of conspiracy theorists it tends not to be in the most complimentary of terms, but personally I've always had a thing for them and it certainly peaked my interest in this documentary when it showed up

for review. Nick Broomfield's 1998 film along similar lines was a riot and whilst "Soaked In Bleach" turns up nowhere near the same amount of intriguing creatures, it does further develop many of the same theories around Cobain's death and backs them up with, what has to be said, is reasonable evidence. Benjamin Statler's docudrama is based on Tom Grant's version of events surrounding the death. Grant is the renowned Private Investigator hired by Courtney Love in the days leading up to the discovery of Cobain's body and I should point out that Tom Grant in no way regards himself as a conspiracy theorist, but viewers may beg to differ! Many of

the audio recordings used are legit and go together with visual re-enactments of the investigations to create a more complete version of events. It takes a little time to become accustomed to the cheesy actors playing the roles of Courtney, Dylan Carlson and Cobain himself, but the story ultimately overshadows this. Tom Grant has an unshakeable belief in Cobain's murder and nothing will convince him otherwise. This inherently is what carries the film along and the more engulfed I became in Grant's story the less I cared about my own views on Cobain's suicide. In a sense I wasn't too bothered whether or not it was true; the fact that it's narrated in such a plausible way was enough to retain my attention. No one could argue that the police made a botched investigation and there're countless examples of shoddy work practices right the way through but the strongest argument made against a suicide is of course the amount of heroin in Cobain's system at the time of death, which it's argued would render him incapacitated and thus unable to pull the trigger. Nick Broomfield's aforementioned documentary provided counter evidence to this claim using a medical photograph of a patient standing on one leg having consumed comparable quantities of the drug. Grant asserts this study to be bogus given that it was methadone and not heroin used in the experiment and also that it was ingested orally, taking considerably longer to enter the patient's bloodstream than if it had been injected in the same manner as Cobain. Whatever one thinks of Kurt Cobain's death "Soaked In Bleach" is an counter-argument worth hearing. (MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)

**STRAY CATS ..... "LIVE AT ROCKPALAST". (MVD)**



Pulling together these two gigs from the Stray Cats in Germany, circa 1981 and 1983, which for those who may not know was the band pretty much playing in their prime. In reverse order for some reason the DVD kicks off at the Open Air Lorely in '83. This appears to be an afternoon slot at a somewhat larger scale festival and first thing I notice is the small number of Rockabilles in the audience, which tells us this is not their crowd they're playing to! In ways it kinda makes it more fun and the Stray Cats take nothing for granted. Passionate and incredibly creative from a musical standpoint, they touch on the anger of

Punk but are informed by multiple strands of outlaw American culture from the pre-Rock n' Roll Jazz period right up to the present. Brian Setzer's voice rings with a purposeful resonance, whilst Slim Jim and Lee Rocker provide the crucial bare-boned rhythm section that makes the Stray Cats what they are. Their forcefulness shines through on "Too Hip, Gotta Go", "Runaway Boys" and the ever cool "Stray Cat Strut". Setzer also straps on the banjo for a run through Earl Scruggs "'Foggy Mountain Breakdown". This is a multi-camera shoot though given that it's an outdoor festival in the '80's the sound can be a little so-so at times. Dave Edmunds joins the band for George Jones "The Race Is On" before they appear to have had enough of the large stage and take it out into the crowd, where a handful of teddy boys have breached the crash barrier for a dance-off with Setzer. An extended 7-minute version of "Rock This Town" sees out the set in a memorable way. Keep watching for the next gig which takes us back a couple of years to July of 1981 for a club performance in Cologne. This is definitely more Stray Cats territory and the tighter confines and improved sound of Satory-Sale bring out the best in the band. The setlists cross over in many parts with each other but the fact that both gigs are carried out under disparate circumstances make each essential viewing. The Stray Cats look a lot more menacing in this gig, in particular Lee Rocker who appears under the influence of a substance or two. Completely killer DVD - check this out for Stray Cats brilliance and a window into something of value that happened in mainstream music of the 1980's. (MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP: 203 WINDSOR ROAD, POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, PA 19464, U.S.A.)

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