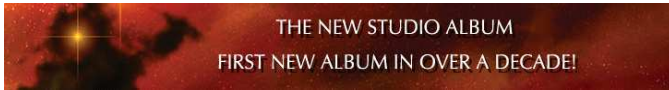


CLASSIC ROCK REVISITED

ESTABLISHED 1999



ERIC CLAPTON
PLANES, TRAINS AND ERIC



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Merchandise

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RATINGS: A = must own B = buy it C = average D = yawn F = puke

Johnny Thunders – Looking For Johnny: You CAN Put An Arm Around A Memory!
Chip Baker Films
www.chipbakerfilms.com

Rating: A-

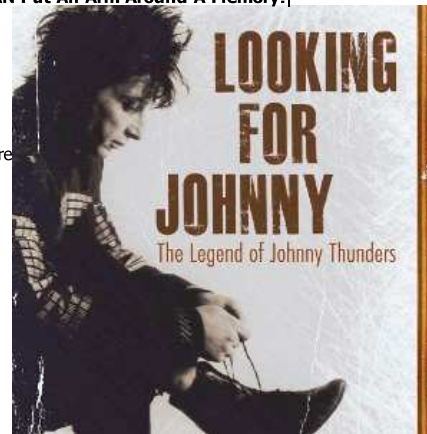
Johnny Thunders is one of these romantic rock and roll figures who died before he got old. While hardcore looms large in the myth and memory of JT, director Danny Garcia hoped to make a documentary that remembered him more as a person than as a junk-crazed rock star. Garcia has succeeded with flying colors although he is careful not to paint a candy-coated picture of someone who has always lived life on the edge and crossed a lot of people in the process.

Madrid native Garcia spent over a year raising \$32K in funds via indiegogo.com assembling interviews with the people who knew Johnny best—as well as rock journalists who followed his career closely. The most prominent commentator is Nina Antonia, author of *In Cold Blood* (the ultimate JT bio) and she has many interesting points to make about both Johnny's talents and pitfalls. Patti Smith axeman and rock historian Lenny Kaye critiques the mystique of JT while former Dolls bandmate Sylvain Sylvain comments on JT being "the world's best songwriter" as well as what really caused the demise of the New York Dolls, as Syl is the one who drove Thunders and Nolan to the airport in Florida on the day they broke up in 1975. The late Marty Thau, who managed the Dolls in the early days, talks about how they wound up getting signed to Mercury Records (who really didn't know how to market them) and Malcolm McLaren, who handled them at the end is featured via a phone interview. The late Lee Black Childers, who managed The Heartbreakers in the late 70s and went on tour with them when they opened for the Sex Pistols, has the most gossip to air and talks about how the band tried to put 1000 pounds of cocaine on their recording bill for Track Records when making the now legendary 1975 L.A.M.F. album. Photographer Marcia Resnick and former roommate and school days friend Gail Higgins give personal insight into Johnny's charisma and flair for fashion.

There is plenty of great Dolls and solo career footage here, and there is even a bit of coverage of Johnny's foray as an actor via the indie films *Mona Et Moi* and *What About Me*. It's inevitable that heroin gets discussed, as it was the root of both The Heartbreakers and Johnny himself to get major label interest. Great insight to the personally uneven but musically brilliant world of The Heartbreakers is given by sticksman Jerry Nolan's longtime girlfriend Phyllis Stein who is first to point out that the band's druggy image made things harder for them to make it in the US than it should have been. Johnny's close friends like actor/musician Luigi Sciorra and photographer Bob Gruen give incredible insights to the everyday JT, particularly at the end of his life circa 1991—how he was trying to clean up via methadone treatment and hoping to start a new band made up of New Orleans musicians. (He died under mysterious circumstances at the St. Peter's Guest House in the French Quarter on April 23, 1991, and today friends and family still do not know whether he was "dosed," died of the leukemia that he was secretive about or had an overdose.)

Old footage of Johnny himself being interviewed is featured throughout *Looking For Johnny* and it's fascinating to see the straight Johnny versus the stoned Johnny, including times he let loose on the audience and waited to see the reaction. (He definitely liked to "stir the pot" and didn't care if people walked out after politically incorrect stage commentary, LOL!)

No matter how you feel about JT and his music, he is indeed a legend. He is missed in a lot of rock and social circles, and you can easily see how his often-distorted guitar style, messy hair and colorful clothing influenced rockers for years to come. Everyone from Motley Crue to Poison to Green Day seemed to lift his look and guitar stance (at the very least).



I'm really glad that Danny Garcia decided to go "looking for Johnny"—because he was able to "find" him through some of his very fascinating colleagues and friends! If you are an original punk scene aficionado like I am, I also suggest that you check out Garcia's excellent rock doc *The Rise And Fall Of The Clash*.

By Anne M. Raso

Comments

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9 comments

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Donna Destri · Singer-songwriter at Music Recording Artist · 376 followers

Very nice review!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 8 · May 22 at 10:55am



Mike Kelley · TESST College of Technology

When it comes to punk rock history I always thought *The Heartbreakers* seemed to get left out (along with *The Dictators* and *Generation X*). *L.A.M.F.* is such a great, funny and catchy album. It's snappy and you can dance to it!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · October 21 at 8:51pm



Tommy Gunzz · Works at Writer

I would concur, the film was interesting and brought a sense of order to a fairly messy story. He was one of a kind, good bad and in-between

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 23 at 5:45am



Bill Bachman · Top Commenter

Was a fan of *Thunders* since *L.A.M.F.* and it was glorious to backtrack to the *New York Dolls* records just the same.

He was real Rock n Roll to the point it killed him, don't try this at home.
I will have to find this DVD.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · July 1 at 10:05pm



Jan Long Collins · Carole Nash Modeling School

Right on the money I'd say...I'm glad Danny decided to look for Johnny too.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 22 at 11:47am



John Hamlin

Great review, makes me want to see the film even more.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 23 at 4:34am



Richard Doredant · Singer-Songwriter-Guitarist at King Richard & the Bayou Boys

L.A.M.F. was great, I miss him

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 22 at 3:42pm



Sparkle Gail Higgins · 113 followers

Nice review!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · 1 · May 22 at 10:25am



Jonathan Price

This is very well written, a balanced critique.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · May 22 at 10:07am

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