



Music DVD Reviews: Review of The Velvet Underground: Under Review

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The Velvet Underground: Velvet Redux (2006)



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If you haven't noticed, lately there's been a huge amount of rock and roll "documentaries" flooding the DVD market. The problem with most of these items is that they never actually contain any music of the band or artist being documented, and more often than not feature friends of a friend of the band as interviewees, rather than anyone remotely interesting associated with the group or artist. The packaging for these discs are often attractive and made to look like the product inside is going to be worth your hard earned money, but this is not the case.

Enter Sexy Intellectual, a company that is pumping out rock documentaries that actually feature licensed tracks and people who know what they're talking about when it comes to the interviews. The features themselves are unauthorized, but for once that doesn't automatically mean "worthless." In fact, the Sexy Intellectual "Under Review" series is one of the best out there now, even standing up to fully authorized documentaries. Surprise, surprise, someone finally got it right.

Therefore, it's very exciting to finally have a feature on the Velvet Underground that is in depth, contains the band's music, has lots of previously unseen footage and pictures, and includes members of the band, as well as respected rock critics and people who worked on the band's albums. No, Lou Reed and John Cale do not feature here. However, Maureen Tucker does, and for the first time ever, so does Doug Yule, so it's very interesting to finally get to hear Yule's take on his role in the band. If anything, not having Lou Reed as one of the talking heads here is a plus, as his memory is often selective and attitude overbearing at times that one often finds themselves longing to hear someone else's stories regarding the group.

"The Velvet Underground Under Review" traces the band's history from its early days all the way to the *Squeeze* album, which was released after Lou quit the group. The Velvet Underground and Nico, *White Light/White Heat*, *The Velvet Underground*, and *Loaded* are all examined closely, with certain standout tracks from each being examined further. Even "The Great Lost Fourth Album" whose tracks eventually surfaced on *VU* and *Another View*, is discussed. So basically it's all here. Even the most devoted fan such as myself found a lot to enjoy on this disc.

Lots of Warhol's Factory footage is included, as well as in-depth interviews with

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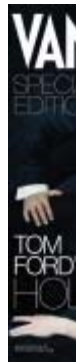
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Factory photographer Billy Name, who expounds on how the covert artwork for both *White Light/White Heat* and *The Velvet Underground* came about. Respected music critic Robert Christgau pops up from time to time, as well as the engineer for the band's first album. For the first time perhaps fans will actually get to hear some of the lesser-known stories that went into making the band's records. Truly a thrill for anyone who loves the music.

And then there's Moe Tucker and Doug Yule, who get to speak at length about their roles in the band. Maureen discusses her drumming technique and how she came about it, saying she likes a good straight rhythm and not a lot of cymbal action. She also discusses her playing on key tracks like "Sister Ray" and how she got her vocals down on "After Hours." Doug Yule reveals his initial naiveté regarding the song "Candy Says" and its lyrics and how much he enjoyed recording the third album, describing it as a very "organic" experience, something that wasn't true of the *Loaded* sessions.

And there's more. Much more. "The Velvet Underground Under Review" should satisfy most fans' need for a real video document on the group. Prior to this, you basically had to scour eBay for bootleg DVDs of varying quality for any sort of video documentation on the group. It is to Sexy Intellectual's credit that the company got to talk to all the right people and secure the licenses to use official tracks throughout. This is how an unauthorized biography of a band should be done, with respect to the artist and work at hand, on not just created as a quickie ripoff product. From what it looks like, the company will be releasing more documentaries on bands and artists who have needed such a thing for a long time. Keep your eye on 'em, as this is great stuff.

~Jason Thompson  
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