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BUY The Velvet Underground: *Under Review* (DVD)

[by [Alexander Laurenza](#)]

A band like The Velvet Underground is normally dubbed as *seminal*. I would take that reproductive metaphor one step farther -- with more biological accuracy. The Beatles, Dylan, and The Velvet Underground are more like the fructose in the semen of modern music, which the sperm of later years (Bowie, Eno, everyone that has recorded since, etc.) ate to survive the long swim up the uterus of pop culture to fertilize the egg of influence and success.

Which makes *The Velvet Underground: Under Review* less the definitive critical analysis which it claims to be, and more of a comprehensive

biography. The analyses provided by the Velvet experts appearing in this documentary are just recapitulations of the aforementioned statement, which is now synonymous with the band itself.

Taken simply as a biography, however, *The Velvet Underground: Under Review* digs pretty deep and covers lots of ground, and in a chronological fashion to boot. Interviews with Velvet Underground members Mo Tucker and Doug Yule also allow the filmmakers to give the viewer firsthand experiential information about the inner workings of the hallowed band - - and its numerous tensions. As if to prove the point,, the enigmatic Lou Reed was a no show for this documentary.

Velvet diehards may already be familiar with the finer circumstantial details surrounding their favorite band's tumultuous, groundbreaking career, but new generations of late adopters discovering the band for the first time should find this *The Velvet Underground: Under Review* informative and enlightening. The filmmakers and commentators did a phenomenal job of placing the work of The Velvet Underground into the context of the time when it was created, nailing down the pervasive fact that they were ahead of their time and played a defining role in the expansion of pop culture.

Another compelling part of the film is the abundance factoids narrated by experts in dark sunglasses. It is there one learns of Reed's fascination with S&M, transgenders, and the control he exerted over the band. Light is, pun intended, also shed on the mysteries behind their great album covers: Some might not have known that *White Light White Heat's* cover is taken from a skull-and-crossbones tattoo that some gay stud from a Warhol picture carried on his arm, or that Reed was obsessed with astrological signs, and that obsession eventually led him to recruit Yule into the band.

In other words, fans old, new and forthcoming should profit from this documentary, mostly

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because it never feels like a boring history lesson. The commentary is insightful and at times poignant, although it can also get somewhat repetitive. But taken together, *The Velvet Underground: Under Review* reinforces the importance of a band that literally could form today and take over the world. All over again.

May 10, 2006



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