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DVD Review: The Sacred Triangle: Bowie, Iggy & Lou - 1971 - 1973 & David Bowie: Rare And Unseen

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“On July 2, 1973 – glam superstar David Bowie announced his retirement from music,” is the statement that begins *The Sacred Triangle - Bowie, Iggy & Lou: 1971 - 1973*. Narrator Thomas Arnold continues, “Over the course of these years, their careers would coalesce, offering each artist their opportunity to shine.”

It is a great description for this story of the brief, yet incredibly important two-year period for all three of them. Forty years of rock history may make their accomplishments seem inevitable today. At the time, it was anything but.

As leader of The Velvet Underground, Lou Reed was widely respected – by about ten people in the United States, most of them rock critics. Iggy Pop had even fewer fans. And David Bowie was some weird Brit who wrote songs about Andy Warhol, and wore dresses. They were an unlikely trio from the start, and each used the other for his own benefit. Yet somehow it all made sense, and made for one of the most groundbreaking periods in rock history.

The DVD begins by walking us through the early years – starting out with a discussion and some live shots of Reed’s band The Velvet Underground. The first connection between any of the artists is made when the V.U. play Ann Arbor, MI. Young James Osterberg aka Iggy Pop wound up backstage, being picked up by Nico – who simultaneously broke up with Lou Reed. David Bowie was an English fan of the Velvets, who was biding his time trying to get his career up and running in London.

The crux of the documentary are the groundbreaking albums (all produced by Bowie) that the trio recorded during this time. The three are: Lou Reed’s *Transformer*, Iggy and The Stooges’ *Raw Power*, and Bowie’s own *Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*.

The Sacred Triangle is an unauthorized DVD, so any commentaries from the principals come via public domain sources, such as interviews that ran on the news. The bulk of the opinions are given by peripheral participants such as author Victor Bockris, former Stooges manager Danny Fields, Warhol associates Billy Name, Lee Black Childers, and Jayne County, and Bowie’s former wife Angie Bowie. Your tolerance for ancient hipsters may be sorely tested during these scenes.

The bonus feature of note is titled “The Nico Connection,” a seven-minute discussion of her interactions with all three. The fact that she first came to the attention of Warhol with a cameo in Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita* (1960) was the most interesting tidbit to me.

David Bowie: Rare And Unseen is a pretty self-descriptive new DVD. The *Rare And Unseen* series collects little-known public domain material from the featured artist, and edits the pieces together. The bulk of this 64-minute program comes from an interview Bowie gave in 1975 to promote *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (1976) on Russell Harty's British ITV network show.

This is quite possibly the worst interview of Bowie's career. For one thing, it was done via satellite, with Bowie in Burbank, CA and Harty in England. In 1975, these types of linkups were still very primitive, and the timelag between question and answer is pronounced. Bowie was also drunk, and admits as much on camera.

There is a train-wreck element at play here though, which is interesting. For one thing, Harty is simply the most obnoxious host I have ever seen. Tom Snyder could only dream of being this rude.

Asking Bowie inane questions like "Do you believe in God?" or "Do you pray?" are just ridiculous in this context. As screwed up as David Bowie obviously is (he honestly looks like death warmed over here), it is a wonder he put up with the man's crap at all. He should have just walked off the set.

Interspersed with the Harty footage are interviews with Bowie from later periods, in which he looks comparatively radiant. There are a number of items having to do with his huge Glass Spider tour of 1987. There are also segments with John Landis and Julien Temple. There are no extras included.

Both of these David Bowie DVDs are clearly meant for the hardcore fan, and as such have their own unique value. With that in mind, they are a worthy addition to the David Bowie visual library.