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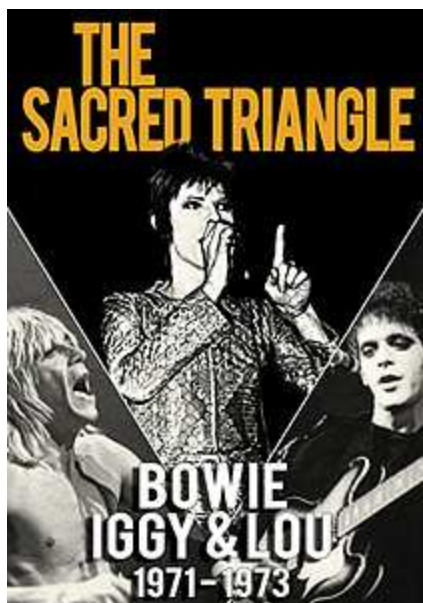
The Sacred Triangle: Bowie, Iggy & Lou, 1971 – 1973

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By Christian Lipski

In 1971, David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Lou Reed had careers that were in various states of stagnancy: Bowie's a one-hit nonentity, Iggy's a flaming wreck, and Lou's a fading flower. Using testimony from eyewitnesses as well as music journalists, *The Sacred Triangle* aims to illustrate the bonds that tied together three of the most interesting entertainers the 1970s had to offer.

Bowie at the time is shown as an aimless sort of folkie, wanting to be famous yet not knowing exactly how to accomplish that. He's inspired by Warhol and the Velvet Underground, but when the New York artist brings the outrageous stage play *Pork* to London, Bowie is convinced that to be talked about is to be halfway to fame. His travels to America bring him into contact with Iggy Pop, whom Bowie considers a rough talent in need of polishing. It's not until about 20 minutes into the film that the viewer understands that Bowie is the main point of the title's Triangle. Reed and Pop have their own spheres of influence, but the primary focus is on how they influenced Bowie.



The interviewees—including Billy Name, Lee Black Childers, Jayne County, and Angela Bowie—provide crucial first-hand information. Their personal recollections are well balanced by writers Paul Trynka and David Thompson, who are able to frame the events in the context of the times. The most animated commentary comes from Angela Bowie, dressed in a flowery grandma-top and talking at the top of her now-raspy voice. This is also where the most dubious claims come from, as Angela takes credit for quite a bit of her ex-husband's career. But each witness was closest to one of the three stars, and bias can be tolerated.

The film includes songs from all three artists, and many live clips are used to illustrate events. At times, the quality of the images appear low-resolution, with visual artifact apparent, but for footage of Bowie's legendary 1972 Rainbow concert, the quality can be forgiven. What is puzzling is that media known to be available in good quality is displayed in low-res form, such as the *Ziggy Stardust* movie, or the cover of the *Aladdin Sane* album. The rare photos of the *Pork* show, though, are clear. The flaws are not widespread, just startling when they appear.

The idea suggested by *The Sacred Triangle's* title is that the three protagonists are part of an equal triumvirate, but Bowie comes out a bit battered by the end of the 107 minutes, despite being credited with assisting the other two with later success.

Similar events are reported differently, depending on the singer involved. Lou Reed was performing acoustic folk when he connected with John Cale, and was convinced to branch out into electric experimentation. However, when Bowie follows the same path, much is made of his cluelessness and his need to be led to the light. Lou Reed's goal was to be famous at any cost, eventually leading him to force Cale and Nico out of the Velvets, while Iggy Pop and James Williamson pushed the Asheton brothers to the far corners of the *Raw Power* album.

Not much is said about these symptoms of wild ambition, but Bowie's drive is made much of, even hinting that his songwriting was of secondary importance. His ex-wife would normally be expected to rise to his defense, but she is frequently occupied with her own accomplishments or philosophy. It should be noted that the uneven focus does not overpower the story, but does bear mentioning.

Overall, the research done for *The Sacred Triangle* is a treat for fans of any of the three rockers. Rare photos and new stories help to bring the underground rock scene of the early '70s to life. The story of these three men is a fascinating one, in which two stars descending serve to illuminate the rising path of a third, and by doing so reverse their own direction.

The Sacred Triangle: Bowie, Iggy & Lou, 1971 – 1973 was released by *Sexy Intellectual* on November 23 and is available from [See Of Sound](#).

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