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Thunders, Kane & Nolan: You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory (DVD)

Picture: C Sound: C Extras: D Concert: B

Raining, raining and raining. It just won't stop raining here. I suppose I could choose to look at it as some sort of New Year's baptism, a cold gray deluge to wash away the detritus of 2005, a cleansing of the soul, a purification of the spirit, a something-something of the something. But really it's just an ugly endless rainfall and it's cold out and I'm damp down to the marrow. Simply put it's kind of depressing.

There's a certain comfort to be taken in retreating inward on such a day. Disappearing into the warm folds of one's inner self, vanishing from the sopping world for the brighter vistas inspired by some good ol' rock'n'roll. I'm talking about the serious stuff now, not your average band of boys and girls thumping their instruments somewhat rhythmically and delivering passably rebellious phrases through grit teeth in-between yowling and hollering indecipherable choruses. No, the real stuff has a sweet charm to it even when its taking delight in the lowest sort of indulgences whether that be drug abuse, sodomy, or kitten juggling. Real rock'n'roll has a beating heart in its chest and a lotta love to give.

Johnny Thunders was real rock'n'roll. He played rudimentary, riffy guitar and wrote songs that shared DNA with the girl group sound and surf rock. He was proto-punk with the New York Dolls and Punk with a capital-P with The Heartbreakers. He looked good in a leather jacket, smoked like an industrial chimney, and threw away what should have been a great career to heroin addiction. Johnny was truly great but he was also a complete idiot. What else can you say about someone who willingly becomes the clichéd drug addled rocker? It's kind of pathetic really.

MVD recently released a DVD of a concert Thunders played at The Roxy in LA back in 1987 called **You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory** on DVD. What makes this release historically important is that Johnny was playing with Arthur Kane (bass) and Jerry Nolan (drums), two of his brethren from the New York Dolls days. This would be the last time these three men played together and therefore it's worth viewing for anyone who cares about the pounding bloody heart of real rock'n'roll.

Unfortunately, the concert was filmed on analog video and the camera is completely stagnant. Add to that Johnny's periodically distracted performance and you have something of a disappointment on your hands. The boys work their way through highlights from the Dolls catalogue (Personality Crisis, Lonely Planet Boy), the Heartbreakers catalogue (You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory, Chinese Rocks), as well as some choice covers (The Wizard, Play With Fire) but the band never really catches fire. This judgment has a lot to do with the poor quality of the audio and video. Were the audio portion remastered and released as a CD I would probably have to reassess the show. In any case, though, the DVD is still worth checking out. It's historically important and not a bad way to while away a long rainy afternoon. Afterwards throw a copy of **Too Much Too Soon** or **LAMF** on the stereo and crank the volume way up. You'll feel a lot better. I did.

- Kristofer Collins

Kristofer Collins is an editor at The New Yinzer and the owner of Desolation Row CDs in Pittsburgh, PA. Visit Desolation Row at www.myspace.com/desolationrowcds

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