

High Bias

Listening with extreme prejudice

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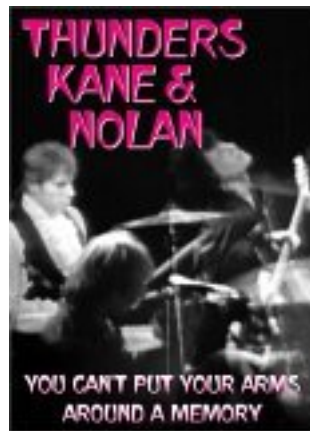
Audio-Visuals

THUNDERS, KANE & NOLAN: YOU CAN'T PUT YOUR ARMS AROUND A MEMORY

Directed by nobody
(MVD)

The titular trio is not some law firm run amok, but, of course, Johnny Thunders, Arthur Kane and Jerry Nolan, AKA three-fifths of the New York Dolls. Fortunately this one-off semi-reunion, performed in 1987 at the Roxy in Los Angeles, was captured for posterity and has been released through the auspices of Kane's widow. I gotta tell ya, I had mixed feelings going into this one. After recently seeing a bootleg of the Thunders doc **Born To Lose: The Last Rock 'n' Roll Movie**, I wasn't sure if I ever wanted to see or listen to the rock underground's most infamous junkie ever again. But lo and behold, this performance is an excellent example of what keeps Thunders an icon. He sounds, if not totally sober, at least lucid, singing nearly on key, playing stinging leads that are loose rather than sloppy and in general sounding better than I think I've ever heard him. When he starts to slur a bit following the acoustic segment (I imagine his prolonged absence from the stage coincided with some sort of substance ingestion), he still keeps it together enough to deliver a solid show. Even the famous Thunders temper is kept in check; when some lout in the crowd throws a drink at him during "Too Much Junkie Business," he ignores it completely, rather than attacking the antagonist.

Apparently fired up by a mostly adoring crowd (not counting the cooler-than-thou stoics on the front row), Thunders and company rip through a mostly inspired set consisting of JT tunes ("Dead or Alive," "Blame It on Mom," "You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory"), Heartbreakers hits ("Chinese Rocks," "Born To Lose") and a passel of covers. Some of the latter are surprising. Bo



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Diddley's "I Can Tell," Booker T. & the MGs' "Green Onions," the surf classic "Pipeline" (which both opens and closes the disk) and the Stones' "Play With Fire" had long been staples of Thunders' shows, but the band also bludgeons Howlin' Wolf's "I Ain't Superstitious," "Chuck Berry's "Little Queenie" and Jimmy Reed's "Baby What You Want Me To Do." During the solo acoustic portion, Thunders also essays Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction" and a playful take on Marc Bolan's "The Wizard."

Jerry Nolan, allegedly an even worse junkie than Thunders, looks and sounds great as well. Surprisingly, though, despite having Nolan and Killer Kane behind him, Thunders plays only two Dolls tunes, and only one of those with the band. But "Personality Crisis" scorches the stage, and the solo acoustic "Lonely Planet Boy" is as poignant as any wasted rock fan could hope for. Overall, this is a strong set, hampered only slightly by the one-camera setup. If you're curious to see Thunders in performance, I can actually recommend this as an excellent starting point. And if you're a fan, you've finally found your ultimate Thunders recorded live experience. *Michael Toland* [[buy it](#)]

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