



Tribute - The DVD Collection

[Lou Reed](#)

Chrome Dreams - DVD31S042 (3 DVD Set)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
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Lou Reed's passing elicited a lot of printspace and hoo-rah, much of it ill-informed and overly adulatory, but that was to be expected. Myself, in a grinning tribute I think the man himself would've smirked at, paid my homage by first going back that killer Japanese box set of the Velvet Underground **without** Reed, that *Final V.U. 1971-1973* gem, and then throwing the very early *Vault Tapes* box in the player, the set of the group's days **with** him. It seemed the right thing to do. I next wrote a tribute, published it in my meta-anarchist newsletter and then asked Jason Gross over at *Perfect Sound Forever* to add [the snarky farewell](#) to the roster of, as I mentioned a moment ago, overly adulatory tribs. That also seemed the right thing to do.

It's now plus or minus a month later, so I'm settling into the Chrome Dreams/Pride/Sexy Intellectual label's 3-DVD box of previously issued rock docs with or about Reed:

- *The Velvet Underground: Under Review*
- *The Sacred Triangle: Bowie, Iggy, & Lou*
- *Punk Revolution NYC: Pt. 1: 1966-1974*

I've already reviewed *The Sacred Triangle* ([here](#)), so I'll here concentrate on the other two, *Punk Revolution* first. That DVD claims the Velv's primogenitured punk, but I take issue; it's a bit too far off the beam. The band was, after all's said and one, a mutant folk group. Think not? Go back and listen to the early LPs with that sobriquet in mind, and the fact's not difficult to discern. A touch of jazz here, a bit of rock, some avant-garde thrown in elsewhere, but Village folk underneath the tip-ins. The Byrds were electrifying and countrifying folk, but Reed & Co. dragged it into the gutter. *Revolution* kinda edges around the controversy, with Robert Christgau, in rare non-hallucinating (and thus probably sedated) commentary following in step, Richie Unterberger (heh!, not even mentioned in the film's liner) as usual right behind him.

Leave it to the English, though, to nail things down properly. One of the Brit crits here unhesitatingly lifts the cover on the Dylan influences Reed aped so adroitly pre-John Cale. The American confusion of the time, though, may be somewhat understandable as the New York scene was in turmoil, many bands heading to the West Coast, leaving drugs, crime, waste, and devolution in their wake. Reed knew exactly what all that was and dug in, bringing a literary bent to things, something the punk movement could never be accused of. If you want to locate punk's roots, you need to look to Blue Cheer, The Stooges, early Who, and etc., not the Velvet Underground. Regardless, this documentary traces the history of Reed as co-founder (with Cale) of the now infamous V.U., encapsulating things nicely. When you're done watching it, you know pretty much everything you need to know...even the fact that Cale was actually the more pronounced influence on everything. Short of reading several books on the phenom band (which sold horrifically poorly at first), this and the *Under Review* disc are your best Cliff Notes backflash, loaded with old clips, photos, much commentary, etc. And, in *Revolution*, you get a hell of a lot more beyond the Velvets: The N.Y. Dolls, Richard Hell, CBGBs, Richard Lloyd, etc.

Quoted on the reverse liner of *Under Review*, Lester Bangs called the V.U. the band 'that started modern music', which is about what you'd expect out of a barbled Romilar addict. A gent given to much too brief interludes of genius, Bangs was actually quite mediocre overall, and anyone who thinks *Almost Famous* is laudatory needs to go back and re-view the film; for one thing, the guy was far from the naïf being portrayed. But he understood something unusual was present in Reed's group and thus was correct connotatively. The proof is seen in the evolution: the first LP sold a truly sad 5,000 copies, but over the decades, millions and also launched no end of bands. Following on Bangs' mis-statement, it's said by one of the documentary's in-film critics that the raga-folk *Venus in Furs* 'started everything' by removing the guitar-bass-drums-vocals limitation of the genre.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Obviously, these 'esteemed' crits hadn't heard Pink Floyd and all the psychedelicians who preceded *The Velvet Underground & Nico* by years...as did a very small nearly obscure band called 'The Beatles'. And it wouldn't hurt any of these bastards to go back to the Pride imprint's *Going Underground: Paul McCartney, the Beatles, and the UK Counter-Culture* ([here](#)) to learn a thing or three about how heavily Paul McCartney was into the avant-garde.

Still in my patented, trademarked, copyrighted, and incorporated Kill-The-Messenger Pitch-A-Ritch critical style, I **love** hearing this

om, in my patches, adorned, copy-right, and incorporated into the web-page. I don't know what you're hearing and shit in with the terrific ongoing narrative, stills, performance clips, and whatnots because...well, it's like reading Paul Stump's *The Music's All That Matters*. I'm not sure any writer has ever been more wrongheaded than Stump re: music (progrock in this case), but he's so damned good and entertaining at it that you can't NOT read him. As opposed to Stump, though, Chrome Dreams releases are overwhelmingly factual and commentaristically cogent...and then carry those great flakeries besides. Love 'em to death, wouldn't wish it otherwise...although all the mess about Reed's lyrical prowess is overwrought as well: Jim Morrison kicked his ass seven days a week, thrice on Sunday, so did Lennon and a hell of a lot of others. Attribute Lou's oft adulated versifications to heroin, which isn't exactly an intelligence booster.

Moe Tucker and Doug Yule appear in some of the later-gathered later interviews, talking about the actual experiences chockablock with old face-to-faces from Warhol, Reed, Cale, and Sterling Morrison as well as a buncha crits and such. The pacing and editing, as on all Chrome/Pride/Sexy Intellectual releases, are excellent, so, in short, if you want a Lou Reed orgy, this box set is it. And when you go back and listen to his oeuvre, you'll have re-tuned ears. But, hey, want further proof of how damn entertaining critics can be? Listen as Robert Christgau informs you that Moe Tucker's simplistic drumming "changed musical history". Hilarious! What would we do without hideous pretension on that scale? Life would be very boring indeed.

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