

LOOKING FOR JOHNNY: THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY THUNDERS

★★★★★
MVD Visual



You know how it ends already. Thus the many uplifting moments "from happier times" in this well-made documentary do not bring quite as many smiles as you might hope. But that's the curse of the subject matter.

Fact is, the considerable New York Dolls section of the film ends up being the best Dolls doc you've seen; despite the sad fact that so many of the participants – both in the band and in the audience – were no longer "available for interviews". Sigh. But director Danny Garcia has managed to round up almost all the peripheral characters you would hope he'd round up. And some of those folks – Phyllis Stein in particular – were savvy enough to act as archivists back in the day. Failing that, much of what you see here would be lost to history.

David Johansen and Richard Hell are conspicuously absent from the interview chair, which is a shame, but I promise you will not miss them. There's a lot of excellent cutting-room floor stuff in the "extras" section as well, including an oddly-endearing interview with Howie Pyro, in which he explains the method via which he gained Johnny's respect and friendship. Via a very public fist-fight one night at Max's.

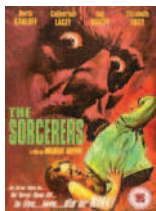
It's also nice to see so much space given to Johnny's post-Heartbreakers career, which a lesser documentarian would probably have made a footnote out of.

The film never quite finds the Johnny that it's looking for; but that's the whole point, isn't it?

Mike Fornatale

THE SORCERERS

★★★★★
Odeon Entertainment



Released by Tigon in 1967 as the second feature from Michael Reeves – the reigning *enfant terrible* of British cinema prior to the arrival of his masterpiece *Witchfinder General* the following year – *The Sorcerers* survives as a classic example of charismatically low budget independent British horror cinema in its depiction of the living for kicks Swinging London jamboree of the mid-60s.

Starring Boris Karloff in one of his last roles as a down on his heels Professor of Medical Hypnotism on the look out for a suitable guinea pig to road test his custom built mind control device when he encounters a willing participant in the shape of

Reeves' regular leading man of choice Ian Ogilvy in, of all places, a Wimpy bar! What starts out as a controlled experiment of sorts rapidly escalates out of control thanks to the unhinged goading of the Professor's wife, memorably played by Catherine Lacey, who enters into a deadly psychic battle with her husband as the pair fight for complete control of the mind of the Ian Ogilvy character.

Besides the fully re-mastered print the DVD boasts an impressive package of extras including a featurette on the evolution of the screenplay, an informative documentary on the films of Michael Reeves (originally broadcast as part of Channel Four's *Eurotika* series in the late '90s), the original theatrical trailer and *Intrusion* ('61) – a silent black and white short film made by then teenage *cineste* Reeves in which he appears as a burglar alongside the ubiquitous Ogilvy.

Grahame Bent

THIS IS GARY MCFARLAND

★★★★★
Century 67 Films



Famed for his willingness to incorporate pop and other elements including the then

all conquering influence of bossa nova into his work, maverick vibes player, composer and arranger Gary McFarland amassed a sizeable discography on labels including Verve, Impulse, Buddha and his own Skye records between 1960 and his untimely demise in November '71, when, the suspicion remains, he died as the result of consuming a methadone-spiked drink given to him in a New York bar.

This beautifully made multiple award-winning documentary memorably brings to life the life and career of a sadly neglected figure in the history of modern jazz. A compelling narrative is assembled from audio and filmed interviews, archive footage, vintage stills, album sleeve artwork and home movies all held together by the inventive use of graphics and animation.

Contemporary interviewees include Gary's widow Gail McFarland-Benedict and musical collaborators Clark Terry, Grady Tate, Chet Amsterdam, Bob Brookmeyer and Airto Moreira. The archive performance and interview footage features a stellar cast including Bill Evans, Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan and Antonio Carlos Jobim.

Exactly how and why Gary McFarland became a forgotten figure remains something of a mystery but now, some 43 years after his passing, this stylishly crafted documentary does much to keep his memory very much alive and kicking.

Handsomely packaged as a DVD/CD combo, *This Is Gary McFarland* comes with an audio CD of a '65 radio broadcast by The Gary McFarland Quintet featuring Gabor Szabo which, like the film, is the personification of '60s jazz cool.

Grahame Bent



Need your lovin'. The Spoonful in happier days

HOTTER THAN A MATCH HEAD: LIFE ON THE RUN WITH THE LOVIN' SPOONFUL

Steve Boone with Tony Moss
★★★★★
ECW Press



Written as a survivor with many colourful tales to tell, Steve Boone's memoir cum confessional offers his personal take on the on the ups

and downs of the Spoonful's whirlwind early career. Boone details the infamous May 1966 San Francisco drug bust which resulted in Boone and Zal Yanovsky agreeing to "co-operate" with the SFPD, thus earning themselves the tag of "finks". He also recounts his frequently perilous lifestyle choices which followed in the wake of John Sebastian's decision to quit the band in '68.

Boone likewise guides the reader through the back stories of his aborted solo album, the failure of his career as a producer (turning down the chance to produce James Taylor's mega-selling *Sweet Baby James*) and, most pivotal of all, his decision to get away from it all by buying a yacht – a move which opened up a whole new career as a drug smuggler, with Boone running shipments of marijuana from the Caribbean and Colombia to the US throughout the '70s.

Besides his adventures on the high seas the book also details the attempted reunions of The Lovin' Spoonful, Boone's ongoing battles with addiction and his chaotic catalogue of relationships with women. Delivered with at times painful frankness, there's a palpable sense that Boone's thought processes can never completely get away from thoughts of what might have been had the '66 San Francisco drug bust never happened, Zal Yanovsky had never been fired and John Sebastian had never walked out on the band he

had co-founded in search of a solo career.

Grahame Bent

PRETEND YOU'RE IN A WAR: THE WHO & THE SIXTIES

Mark Blake
★★★★★
Aurum Press



A letter to *Shindig!* #42 in response to the previous issue's Who cover story suggested that many *Shindig!* readers aren't too interested in The

Who after 'Magic Bus'. If so, this book should appeal to them, as though it goes just beyond that period, it's all about The Who in the '60s. It's an oft-told story of post-war Britain's journey from austerity to the impact of rock 'n' roll, skiffle, trad jazz, the influence of the art school system, the beat boom and the birth of rock. However, Mark Blake has carried out plenty of fresh interviews with the remaining band members, as well as numerous contemporaries and acquaintances. The author has also interviewed three members of The Who several times over the course of his career as journalist. Possibly aware that the story follows a well-trodden path, he's at pains to add new interviews and also references from the last few years, so we get references to relatively recent books such as Keith Richards' *Life*. Blake's writing flows easily and pages effortlessly fly by. So, even if there are no real revelations, his assertion that "the trail The Who blazed in the '60s has lost none of its lustre" is true enough. Blake acknowledges his debt to other Who books, including Tony Fletcher's Moon biography – most of his characterisation can be found in that book.

Nevertheless, if you were to only read one book on The Who and favour their groundbreaking '60s adventures, this may well be the definitive text.

Richard Turner