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DVD's that rock?

Johnny Thunders - Who's Been Talking? Review

by Kevin Wierzbicki

This film was shot in Osaka, Japan over the course of three nights in April, 1991. It is the last footage ever captured of Thunders; the guitarist would be found dead in a New Orleans hotel room three weeks later.

According to the bio info included here as a bonus, Thunders had to be rushed to the hospital as soon as his plane touched down in Japan as he was suffering the effects of a life filled with drug abuse. That's not apparent in the performance; Thunders may be a bit fatigued but he is not blatantly out of it due to drugs or the lack thereof.

The show starts with the campy "In Cold Blood" before quickly jumping into an awkward medley of "I'm Not Your Stepping Stone" and "Hit the Road Jack," two of many covers that the band play during the show. Back-up singer Alison Gordy takes the mic on "Hit the Road Jack" and sax player Steve Klasson blasts away like Clarence Clemons on the next tune, "Blame it on Mom."

Thunders plays a selection of material from his solo records, most of it depressing stuff like "Sad Vacation," a song he wrote for his late pal Sid Vicious. The lyrics of the song equate drugs with death and Thunders animates the fact by gesturing forcefully with one arm as if he's jamming a needle into the other, then making the "you're dead" slit throat gesture. Also ironic is the lyric that Johnny sings at the beginning of "Disappointed;" "I feel so lucky to be alive/Had so many friends who lost their lives..."

In sharp contrast, the set is sprinkled with some lively numbers including a couple of surf instrumentals, "Wipe Out" and "Pipeline" Thunders also dips into the blues briefly for a medley of "Little Queenie" and "You

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- San Francisco

Can Walk My Dog."

The show closes with a rowdy rendition of "Personality Crisis," a fan favorite from Thunders' days with the New York Dolls. The band comes back for an encore of "Born to Lose" and "I Wanna Be Loved." This film has been digitized and there are occasional glitches but overall viewing enjoyment is not affected.

CD Info and Links

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