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## johnny thunders dvd

**JOHNNY THUNDERS**  
*Who's Been Talking?*  
(MVD)

Johnny Thunders is a rock and roll icon and I don't think this concert DVD does justice to his talents as a guitarist or frontman. Recorded at Club Citta in Osaka Japan on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1991, *Who's Been Talking?* features the kind of performance that's at times so mild and average one even wonders what was it about Thunders that attracted so many or made him a star. Most of the performance is indeed so flat, a point could be made that Thunders should have never left the pub circuit. Judging by *Who's Been Talking?* Thunders can play the guitar, but he is nowhere near his original status as a hero. Granted at the time this was filmed he was in full junkie mode; a fact that is further put in evidence by his skeletal complexion and poor abilities to handle the mike and the guitar at the same time. He does one or the other, but never even tries to pull both at once.

Johnny Thunders was born John Anthony Genzale Jr on July 15, 1952 in New York City. In 1968, while frequenting a West Village bar named Nobody's, he met Arthur Kane and Billy Murcia. He would then join the two on the band Actress, which would eventually evolve into The New York Dolls. With them, he'd record two commercially unsuccessful albums (the self-titled debut and *Too Much Too Soon*). Upon the band's break up, Thunders would join other punk luminaries (Demon's Walter Lure, Television's Richard Hell, the Dolls' Jerry Nolan) in The Heartbreakers. In 1979, he'd move onto Gang War with MC5 stellar guitarist Wayne Kramer, but that project was short lived.

Around the same time he had also started releasing solo albums; starting up with 1978's *So Alone* and through a string of albums during the 80's.. During that decade Thunders' music varied in quality, a fact that was at least partly the result of his heroin addiction. Which is where *Who's Been Talking?* comes into the picture. The situation was well described in the book *Please Kill Me*, that magnificent oral history of New York punk. Thunders was short on money and accepts an offer for a handful of shows in Japan. A few were electric, like the ones featured on *Who's Been Talking?* while some others saw Thunders performing acoustic sets with a reduced band.

The set list is comprised of mostly covers (from Ray Charles to The Monkees to his old New York Dolls) and a few original Thunders' penned songs. For the most part *Who's Been Talking?* is highly forgettable footage of a pub band playing covers. Even with a full band that includes two guitarist, a bassist, a drummer, a saxophone player and a female singer, the stage seems bare and empty, sadly, the same can be said about the performance and the soul of the band.

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