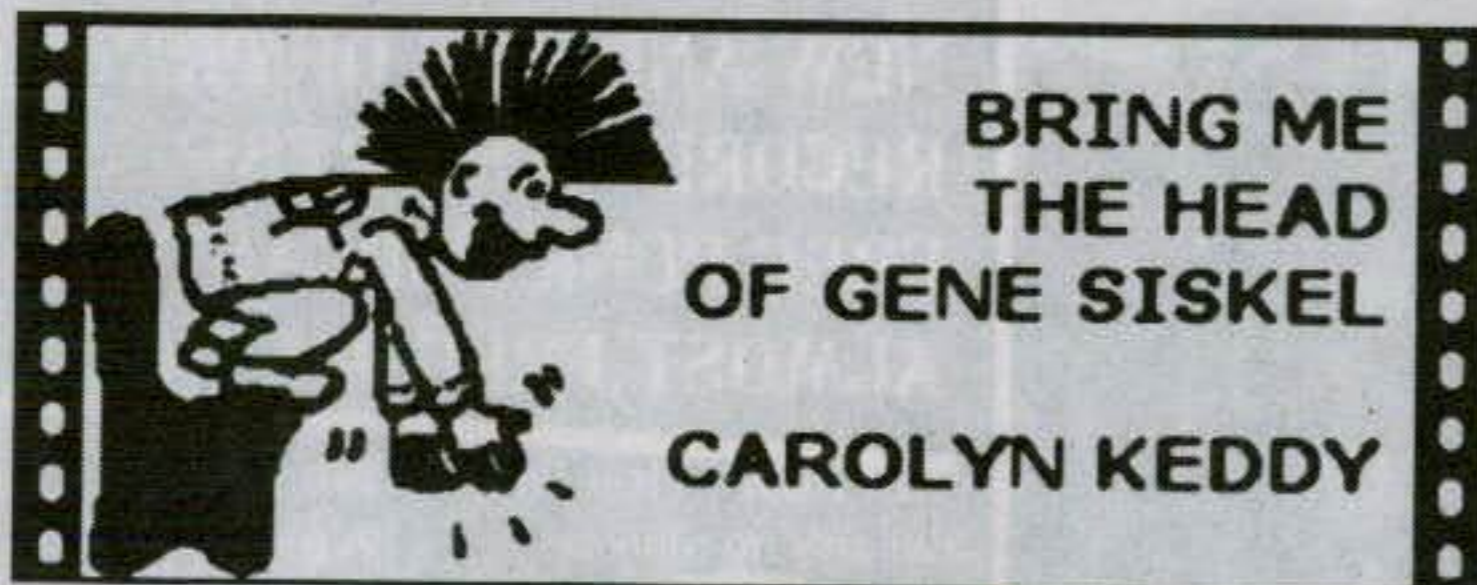


MOVIES



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Should the band Love have been as big as or even bigger than the Doors? Could that have happened? That's the question that sticks out most in my mind after watching *Love Story*, a documentary about Arthur Lee and Love. Imagine instead of all those annoying ubiquitous Doors songs floating around in your head, you had a bunch of Love songs in there. I don't think it would work. Even if they did everything the Doors did—tours, television, interviews, indecent exposures, etc.—I still think it is completely random who becomes a star and who gets saddled with obscurity. In 1989, at the same club within a month of each other, I saw a high anticipated, sold out Mudhoney show and a more modestly hyped and attended Nirvana show. Look how that turned out. You just can never tell who people are going to latch on to, no matter how hard record label executives try.

The story of Love starts when Johnny Echols brought a guitar to school for show and tell. Arthur Lee picked it up and immediately liked it. Plus the girls started paying attention to them when they played. They started playing at frat parties and worked their way up to clubs performing as the Grass Roots. When another band released a record as the Grass Roots, the band changed their name to Love.

Love played in clubs around Hollywood and was signed to Elektra records by Jac Holzman. Holzman was looking for another rock group instead of the label's usual folk singers after the label's band Paul Butterfield Blues Band were backed up Bob Dylan when he went electric at the Newport Folk Festival. Arthur Lee suggested that Holzman also see his friends' band the Doors who as a result also signed with Elektra. Lee took the \$5000.00 advance for Love's first album and bought himself a two-seater sports car for \$4500.00, and then gave the band members \$100.00 each. Lee's egocentric attitude continued to annoy the original band members even though they hadn't played with him for many years.

Arthur Lee was the band's main songwriter as well as manager. He booked all the gigs. Although they played in San Francisco as well as LA, they never toured or played on the East Coast. As a result Holzman feels it was the band's fault they were never more popular. People didn't get to see them. Doors' drummer John Densmore agrees stating that the Doors were flying around on weekends to play in other cities. The members of Love blame the label for not promoting their records. It's a bit of a conundrum.

When Love began recording their third album, the masterpiece *Forever Changes*, the band was unpracticed and using drugs. When they couldn't perform the complex songs within a few takes, they were fired. They were replaced with studio musicians who, although they could play the songs better than the band, were too squeaky clean. Since the sound of Love was very unique, Lee and producer were forced to rehire the band. That isn't the typical rock 'n' roll story. You always hear of studio musicians getting the credit deserved or not for many very famous songs. But to have to con-

cede that it isn't just musical ability that makes a song sound good is an excellent lesson for all record labels and musicians to learn.

Love Story gets all the essential interviews: Arthur Lee, Johnny Echols, Bryan MacLean, Ken Forssi, Alban "Snoopy" Pfisterer, Michael Stuart-Ware, Jac Holzman, record producer Bruce Botnick, John Densmore of the Doors, and *Forever Changes* arranger David Angel. Each person gives his recollections of what was happening at the time. Some events are contradicted by others, such as when the string arrangements were to be added to *Forever Changes*. Lee and Nichols contend that it was always the intention to add them, but producer Botnick recalls that there was no initial plan to put strings on the record.

Fortunately, the majority of *Love Story* is dedicated to the early years of the band and the recording of the first three albums. Lee's attempts to form a new Love, his years in jail, and his tours after his release are slightly touched upon. Just enough to let you know what happened, but not enough to bring the film down. (www.startproductions.co.uk)

Following last year's release of the documentary about the New York cable show *TV Party* comes a full episode of the show *TV Party: The Heavy Metal Show*. *TV Party* was "the TV show that's a party!" hosted by Glenn O'Brien in the late '70s, early '80s. This episode was filmed on February 24, 1981 and had the singular vision of focusing on the guitar solo. It starts out with eight guitarists and a drummer. Wigs are donned and everyone is doing his own interpretation of the heavy metal guitar shredding. Even though the soundman doesn't seem to pick up all the guitar noise and one person is playing a cardboard guitar, it all looks completely silly and entertaining. At one point Jean-Michel Basquiat and Fab Five Freddy get in a child-like fight over one of the guitars. It's a wild, fun mess.

I particularly like the shots of the audience who mostly look really bored. The musicians are having a ball, but those watching would rather be somewhere else. One guy is holding his head up with his hand, his elbow propped up on the chair arm. Others are just staring into space. Cookie Mueller also attempts to explain her recent test of heavy metals in her body, but doesn't manage to do it too well. Phone calls are taken from the home audience. I wish there were more of this type of reality on TV nowadays. We could use it.

The DVD has extra interviews from other episodes of the show and a Blondie tour video. More episodes are due out soon and I'll be devouring them all. (www.brink.com)

I have had an inexplicable fascination with Lee Ving lately. It is a combination of my *New Wave Theatre* obsession and his entertaining over-machoness. So when Michael asked me if I had ever seen *Get Crazy* and I hadn't, it was followed by watching nine minutes of the film on YouTube and then we were off to find a copy of it. It is not on DVD, so off to the video store. I have abandoned Netflix (again) for the more pleasurable experience of the video store. I am sick of waiting, then not getting what I want when I want it. The video store delivers instant gratification and still carries VHS tapes. *Get Crazy* was found at the best video store in San Francisco, Lost Weekend (1034 Valencia St.). Support them and rent a VHS tape today.

Get Crazy is the story of the New Year's Eve show at the Saturn Theater. An evil music promoter Colin Beverly is looking to buy out the independent promoter/music fan Max Wolfe who runs the space. He's not interested in selling, but when he suddenly becomes ill before the New Year's Eve show, his nephew Sammy is ready to make a deal. He even makes lame attempts at sabotaging the show as the staff steps up to keep things running smoothly.