

LEFT of the DIAL

bandwidth



The High Strung
Moxy Bravo
(Future Farmer
Records)

By combining musical equipment from the past and present, it's easy enough to create a record that sounds like it was made at the height of The British Invasion. But writing songs that are good enough to make those sonic choices sound like more than just hollow posturing is much more difficult. The High Strung knows how to put together tight, concise pop songs that have immediacy and staying power. The same talent that led *The Washington Post* to name "The Songbird," from the band's album *These Are Good Times*, one of the best songs of 2003 is all over this follow-up record, *Moxy Bravo*. In the two years between releases, The High Strung has gone through some big changes. In 2004 vocalist Mark Owen bowed out and the remaining members decided to continue as a trio; leaving full-time lead vocal duties to guitarist Josh Malerman. With Owen went a certain unhinged quality that originally helped to distinguish the group from the ever-growing pack of garage rock wannabes, but The High Strung still has the songwriting and chops to set the group apart from the majority of '60s revivalists. For *Moxy Bravo*, the band once again chose to record with the master of skuzzy garage rock, Jim Diamond. While the results certainly could not be called polished, the record isn't as gritty as *These Are Good Times*. The High Strung is obviously influenced by bands like The Zombies, The Kinks, and The Creation, but it is never confined by its retro style. *Moxie Bravo* is loaded with music and lyrics that are intelligent and inspired, and that's why The High Strung is more than just warmed-over corpses of dead rock legends.

—matt barber



New York Dolls
All Dolled Up DVD
(Music Video
Distributors)

After watching the much-touted rock documentary, *Dig*, which chronicles the career tragedies and triumphs of the bands Brian Jonestown Massacre and The Dandy Warhols. I was struck by the thought "How did the filmmakers manage to be there at exactly the right moment to capture this stuff?" (If you haven't seen this yet, do yourself a favor and give it a viewing. I didn't give a rip about either band's music before watching it and, frankly, still don't. Having said that, the pure personal pathos and absurdist egoism displayed in the film is an absolute delight to watch and deserves repeated screenings). Alternately, immediately after viewing *All Dolled Up*, a newly released DVD of behind the scenes and live concert footage from proto-punk rockers The New York Dolls, I had to ask the question, "Why have we never seen this stuff before?" As captured by rock photographer Bob Gruen and his wife, Nadya Beck, *All Dolled Up* represents a truly important document for music aficionados, fans of revved up rock and Dolls newcomers alike. Simply stated: this is the best film on the New York Dolls to date.

"So what's the big deal?" you may well ask. Well friend, how about the chance to finally witness what all the hubbub was about in the first place? As told endlessly before, The New York Dolls arrived in the early-1970s ready-made to erase the softy tones of singer-songwriters that were filling the airwaves and bring rock music back to its hard, fast and exciting origins. What the band member's lacked in schooled musicianship was made up for in pure attitude, onstage swagger and outrageous fashion. While the band's appearance (make-up, platform shoes and a tight fitting blouse were the norm) certainly flirted with androgyny, the New York Dolls' music was all machismo. The blisteringly tough riffs of guitarists Johnny Thunders and Sylvain Sylvain were the perfect compliment to the hoarse-throated vocalizations of singer David Johansen. Likewise, the rhythmic section presented by the monolithically-statured Arthur Kane and hyper-limbed drummer Jerry Nolan imbued the Dolls music with a propulsive nature that was simply impossible to ignore. For a time, the band was the toast of New York, even managing to bridge the gap across the divide presented by the "rock" and "art" scenes in the Big Apple, and earned gracious salvos from the British press who drooled at the band's ability to channel rock music's early zeal. But, in the end, the band got completely screwed by the music industry (an all too common story) and had to sit back and watch helplessly as most of its distinctions were co-opted by more radio-friendly bands (Aerosmith, KISS, et al). Sure, the Dolls made a huge impact on the nascent punk scene, and the band's presence can still be felt in genres ranging from heavy metal to garage revivalism, but they never really got their due in their lifetime. While a recent reunion of sorts finally earned the group some long overdue respect (and cash), it seems a hollow victory as Thunders, Kane and Nolan aren't here to enjoy it.

Thankfully, *All Dolled Up* gives viewers a little taste of who exactly these guys were. Not "the legends" buoyed by the praises of countless bands and tawdry rock bios so much as the real people behind this group. People who loved playing music, who loved partying and who loved all the attention that being notoriously famous afforded them. Early videographers Gruen and Beck, managed to capture the Dolls in their heyday, taping the band's performances in their hometown and on the road for a brief West Coast tour. Footage of the band onstage finally shows how revolutionary the group's music must have been to audiences weaned on arena rock and the coffeehouse circuit. Surprisingly, both the audio and video quality of this video is quite high and this film is easy to watch (in contrast top many rock films which must be watched with one eye closed and the volume up full blast). While the band's live performances are a revelation, it's the non-staged moments of the members that prove to be the most memorable: a drunken Johansen being chided by a waitress at a San Diego diner; Thunders saying goodbye to his mother and sister at JFK airport; Sylvain shopping for novelty souvenirs in a gift shop; Kane, sidelined by hand injury, mouthing the words to the Dolls' songs form offstage; Nolan sitting prone in a hairstylists chair before a television appearance. This is the real treasure presented by *All Dolled Up*. Thank God it has finally been recovered.

—mark norris

Group Name: Syxsysycos

When/Where playing this week?

Saturday (Jan. 14) at midnight at Club Diablo (517 Washington St.).

Band Members / Instruments played...

Ira Lowe-Vocals
Brian Williams-Guitar
Mark Fuller-Bass
Dan Grzybek-Guitar
Joe Colarusso-Drums.



When did the band form?

November, 2003.

You might like our music if you like....

A mix of all elements of metal, new and old. Slayer, Hatebreed, Lamb of God and others.

List of Recorded Releases

No Body, No Crime - 2004

Incompetence should be delt with a stiff fist - Spring, 2006.

Upcoming events:

Feb. 4: Hell at the Hall 6 at The Sikora Post (917 Payne, North Tonawanda)

Spring, 2006: CD release party (check website for details)

Best show the band ever played...

The Cruise Inn with Misery Index and the Autumn Offering.

Worst show the band ever played...

The *Buffalo Beast* benefit party last fall with Roach.

Anything else you would like our readers to know about the band?

We are planning a huge CD release party with all new merch, a great lineup of bands and even a few surprises. Look for it early spring.

Contact information:

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