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(Book). First-ever look at the intertwining, outrageous lives of three rock legends. When Lou Reed and Iggy Pop first met David Bowie in the fall of 1971, Bowie was just another English musician passing through New York City. Lou was still recovering from the collapse of the Velvet Underground, and Iggy had already been branded a loser... Yet within two years they completely changed the face of popular music with a decadent glamour and street-level vibe. With Bowie producing, Reed's Transformer album was a worldwide hit, spinning off the sleazy street anthem "Walk on the Wild Side." Iggy's Raw Power, mixed by Bowie, provided the mean-spirited, high-octane blueprint for Punk. Bowie boosted elements from both Iggy and Reed to create his gender-bending rock idol Ziggy Stardust. Your Pretty Face Is Going to Hell is the story of this friendship and the incredible productivity and debauchery that emerged from it. Presented here for the very first time are their stories interwoven in a triple helix of sexuality, glam rock, and drugs as seen through the eyes of the people who made it happen.

Your Pretty Face Is Going to Hell: The Dangerous Glitter of David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Lou Reed Details

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From Reader Review Your Pretty Face Is Going to Hell: The Dangerous Glitter of David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Lou Reed for online ebook

Scott Rhee says

I recently watched, for the first time, Todd Haynes's 1998 film "Velvet Goldmine", a fictionalized "interpretation" of the 1970s glitter-rock era. Specifically, the film focused on David Bowie; except, in the film, Bowie was a character named Brian Slade (played wonderfully by Jonathon Rhys Meyers), who fakes his own death in 1974 and disappears into obscurity, or so everyone thinks. It is meant to reference Bowie's "killing off" of his Ziggy Stardust persona on-stage, and the multitude of subsequent transformations---personally, publicly, and musically---that characterized his post-'70s music career.

Apparently, Bowie himself saw the film and didn't like it, and I can understand why. While beautifully shot, with a killer soundtrack, the film is somewhat cruel in its treatment of Bowie. On top of that, it's not wholly accurate. For example, the film focuses on an alleged homosexual love affair between Bowie and Iggy Pop (a character named Kurt Wild, played by Ewan McGregor), which ultimately led to a hostile divorce between Bowie and his wife Angela (played by Toni Collette).

In everything I've read about Bowie and Pop's friendship, I have never come across any evidence that theirs was a sexual one. Granted, it's Bowie and Pop we're talking about: two men who enjoyed pushing the envelope of societal mores and cultural sexual norms, so anything is possible, but from what I've gathered, theirs was mostly a friendship based on mutual respect of each other's musical talent, of which both of them had in abundance.

Plus, Angie and Bowie's divorce had been a work in progress, and it hadn't been finalized until 1980. Close friends and enemies all agreed that it probably should have happened years before, but very little of it had anything to do with Pop.

There is also Haynes's more-than-implicit condemnation of Bowie for becoming a sell-out in the '80s, with his release of his 1983 album "Let's Dance". I personally think that this is unfair, only because "Let's Dance" was one of the very first vinyl albums I ever bought, and I loved that album to death. So what if Bowie happened to make an album of catchy pop tunes, almost all of which got serious radio-play? As if true musical artists can't also write popular songs that everyone likes. For fuck's sake, I dig Arcade Fire, but I also like Taylor Swift. Sue me.

It's an age-old silly argument, though, between music-lovers and pretentious musical "artistes".

For a somewhat more objective take (as if that were at all possible) on the '70s glam-rock era, check out Dave Thompson's immensely readable and thoroughly researched book "Your Pretty Face is Going to Hell: the Dangerous Glitter of David Bowie, Iggy Pop, and Lou Reed".

This book---besides having the coolest title in the world---is rock journalism at its best. This book will remind you of Cameron Crowe's film "Almost Famous", if that movie had been rated NC-17, of course.

Thompson's treatment of Bowie, Pop, and Reed is a fair one, if not always a glowing one. Bowie comes across as a British dandy sometimes who seems way out of touch with the crassness of the New York scene.

Pop just comes across as an idiot, albeit an idiot who has more talent than he knows what to do with. Reed just comes across as a pretentious asshole, but I suppose that's a part of his charm.

It's basically a chronological examination of the phenomenon that was glitter rock, starting with Andy Warhol and The Velvet Underground, moving into Bowie's Ziggy Stardust days, his introduction to Iggy and the Stooges, Reed's resurrection as a New York rock icon, and, finally, the inevitable dissolution of the glitter rock era as the UK Punk movement slowly encroached upon the scene. Weird to think that all of this only happened within a few short years. It seemed like a lifetime.

Robin says

Glam rock confessions; sounds like fun.

Cami Castle says

Interesting book. I particularly liked the last half of it and how this author wrapped up the very interesting story of arguably the most iconic men in classic rock. I still don't know why Bowie didn't like to play China Girl, but still a good read. If you are interested in getting a first look at these guys, this is definitely the book for you. It might not be for those who have read a lot about Bowie, Reed, and Pop however. I had only read two books on Bowie prior to this, so I was fascinated!

Erik Deckers says

Not only is Dave Thompson able to provide a historian's and music lover's perspective to this book, the dude turns a mean phrase. Powerful, powerful writing. It's on my list of styles to emulate now.

Leila says

This was okay overall. Too many insignificant people are name dropped for me to keep track of. I don't need to know every minor player on the British glam rock scene in the early 70s, thanks though. Iggy Pop is just as awesome as I always suspected. I do not hold David Bowie in such high esteem after reading this.

Jack Vinson says

This was a fun read about Bowie, Iggy and Lou Reed - taking their history from their arrival on the music scene through the end of the 1970's. I enjoy all of their music, so it was interesting to read how their worlds intersected and blew apart.

The writing style was a little awkward at times with too-leading phrasing and somewhat pointless name-dropping. (Why mention Aerosmith as openers for a mid-70's Iggy show?)

Nelson Niero says

Who needs another book/review/article/whatever saying that The Velvet Underground is the best rock band in history? No, it isn't, it's only your opinion, Mr. Thompson, it's only your little world, which, by the way, is a overpopulated little world, full of "cool" little people. Oh, but Reed, Bowie and Iggy Pop are so outrageous! They're so iconic! They're so heroic! They're so revolutionary! I'm so sick with that talk! And this has been going on for decades, and there are no opposition in rock criticism, no one single voice raise above this endless chant of yes-men. No, Mr Thompson, not even "establishment" (really?) critics. Metal Machine Music has been redeemed? So has Yoko Ono. The world is a better place now? Is it the beginning of the New Age? Maybe. Maybe you time has come, Mr. Thompson. The history has ended, the revolution saved rock and roll. Welcome to Rock and Roll People Republic of North Korea. There's only one truth, only one leader (three, actually, Mr. Thompson's Trinity) and the ten commandments of the White Power Party. Oh, no, are rock music fans really this naive?

If you live in Mr Thompson's glittering world, if you are still wondering if Bowie was really gay, read his book. It's like a gigantic press release of Bowie-Pop-Reed, Inc., the Makers of the Revolution®, with lots of outrageous pics (look, it's Andy Warhol sucking on a banana!) and even some new information on how the war on straights was on and revolution took power. Keep it in your living room table (oh, no, too bourgeois), it will reaffirm your coolness.

But if you want something more, let's say, journalistic, try "Transformer: The Lou Reed Story", by Victor Bockris. Haven't finished it, but I can say that it's first time I see someone (reporters do that) asking Lou's family and friends what are *their* feelings about him. Now this is outrageous: there's a good chance that his parents aren't what he always has said they were ("My Old Man", "Families"). Did the poet of the underground created some drama in which he developed his myth? Just another spoiled child driving his mom and dad crazy? The eletroshocks didn't work, but maybe they have given a *raison d'être* to the "tormented" figure upon the stage. I don't know the answers. What I know is that at least they are new questions.

Jason says

Pretty good historical bits and interviews butttt not free of the typical music critic thesaurus-raiding bullshit describing songs. I would still recommend it to friends though.

Karmstrong says

Frankly, I want a bit more gossip and color pictures, but nonetheless I'm glad I stole it from Sarah. I feel like I need to get some more bios of the individual players...with color pictures. And I should probably put "Labyrinth" on my netflix now...

J. says

"What about the annihilation of self?" asked the New Musical Express.

"I have tried that in the past --with some success, I might add."

"But you gave it up?"

"I do it on weekends." -Jimmy Osterburg

A crash-course for the ravers. Doesn't diverge from the generally accepted version of things but adds a plethora of interconnections.

When the Velvet Underground played the *Cafe Bizarre* in Greenwich Village, six sets a night for three nights before Christmas 1965, Gerard Malanga, Paul Morrissey and Andy Warhol were there.

The Cafe Bizarre engagement was a disaster. Occasionally the band would slip into a song that the audience-- on occasions that there was an audience, might recognize... but they concentrated on their own compositions, and swiftly discovered that the club's owner was not a big fan of theirs, or of their dissonance. "The Black Angel's Death Song"-- in which viola keened over percolating guitar while Reed's vocals clashed staccato poetics with nightmarish vision-- was especially objectionable, and finally the owner laid out an ultimatum. If they played that song once more, they would be fired on the spot. "So we started the next set with it," Sterling Morrison laughed, "the all-time version" --and sure enough, they were fired. And hired almost immediately.

The audience was listening.

Author Thompson proceeds in this vein to shake out all the webs of influence and connection, starting in the early mid-sixties and proceeding thru the late seventies. Everybody's here who was anybody: Mott The Hoople, Marc Bolan & T-Rex, Maryanne Faithfull, Romy Haag, Wayne County, Cherry Vanilla, Mick Ronson, Nico, John Cale, Ingrid Superstar, Kraftwerk, Anita Pallenberg, Johnny Thunders, Stiv Bators, Brian Eno, Roxy Music, Patti Smith, and the New York Dolls. Sinatra and Bing Crosby make cameo appearances too.

Here's Iggy Pop on the old Max's Kansas City hang : "I was a kid from the midwest who had some exposure, mainly through books and records, to both the outrageous and the arts. I was aware of John Cage, I was aware there was a concert that had been given consisting of a woman playing nude cello while someone else beat the strings of a piano with hammers, I was aware of these things... But coming into that room [Max's:] was kind of like entering a University Of Dementia ... "

Heady times, sights and sounds of the never-before and never-again. Thompson sticks to the standard hagiography of Pop/Glam here: In the beginning there was Warhol, it was almost good, and even better with the Velvets as the soundtrack. The general idea became *The Idea* as one David Jones lifted a million outré cues from pop culture and created alienist & clairvoyant, doppelganger 'David Bowie'; even more unexpectedly, the Idea persisted to become flesh with circumstances conspiring to give birth to Iggy Pop, idiot-savant and world's-forgotten-boy ... Warhol is the grey (or shock-platinum) Eminence who founds the cult, Lou & the Velvets the greek-choir; wizardly Bowie triangulates the signs & symbols, and emerges as a different Other every outing; Iggy subsumes, encapsulates and proceeds to yank down the swish velvet curtains in the sanctuary.

As on this occasion :

Pop gasped, "I don't think I had ever seen so many rock critics in one room in my life, nor will I ever. If they weren't rock critics, they looked like rock critics. It was just wall-to-wall."

Pop's reputation for self-destruction had of course preceded him and he was in no mood to disappoint.

Wayne County recalled watching Pop leave the stage mid-set, and pick his way through the audience via their chairbacks and tables, until he finally tumbled from his perch and landed chest-down on a table stacked with glasses. As he rose from the shattered mass, his chest was slashed to ribbons, with one cut so deep that, every time Pop moved his left arm back, a jet of blood shot out.

So he kept on doing it.

"It was horrible, like a Roman arena," County shuddered, but the show went on, Pop still singing even as roadie Bob Czaykowski attempted to patch him up with duct tape. But Pop was bleeding so heavily that the tape couldn't adhere to the flesh ..."

Enchanting times, lilting tunes, and a good day's work turned in by all contestants.

Erin says

I enjoyed reading about these three artists and glam rock in general but I feel this book lacks focus. It's more of a detailed history of the '64 - '78 underground/avant-garde rock scene than anything else. I would've liked to know more about the artists and the writing/recording of their albums than the business managers and record label doings. I guess the main point of the book (only summarized in the last paragraph) is that even though these three collectively changed music and influenced every rock act after them, they were only marginally successful/well known in their heyday.

Simon says

Your Pretty Face Is Going To Hell by Dave Thompson
The Dangerous glitter of David Bowie, Iggy Pop,
and Lou Reed (www.backbeatbooks.com)

File this book in the Rock History section and
don't dare ask a Take No Prisoners era Lou what
he would have thought of that.

I read over half of this book on the way back
from Cornwall and the other half in about a week
so it is easy to read and of course on a subject
that I already have over 40 books!

So what does it give the fan like me well the
book really only covers the Mainman years in
detail with of course a good long intro leading
up to those years but the bulk of the interviews
are with the people from the Mainman

organisation which gives it a good view of what happened by the likes of cherry Vanilla and Wayne County Tony Secunda et al.

But unfortunately at times the book concentrates too much on the reception of albums on there release and personally that for me is the biggest undoing of the book.

Surely when dealing with three artists who have made some of the most influential music of the last 40 years looking at initial sales is likely to confuse things as say an album sells modestly to start with but in the case of all three of these guys they just keep selling steadily after that with sales peaks on the re-issue dates.

But also Dave takes some pretty dismissive views of some classic Lou and Iggy records that had weight in 1973 or 4 but not in 2009 when this book came out. Yes Raw Power didn't sound good but that was the point as to why it's influential, he might hate Sally Can't Dance as much as anyone but for many of us fans its still a great record. Also putting down Lou's 1976 touring band without mentioning that the said band was the Don Cherry Quartet could be a way of avoiding some flack.

So for the real fans some of the opinions that Dave has could be troubling he is of the opinion that the three of them have produced very little of worth since about 1978/9 when this book pretty much ends its story.

A good read if you want an argument over not even mentioning Bowies Lodger album and other such gaping holes in a highly readable and sometimes informative book.

Rachel says

This book has been on my shelf for years, but jumped up to the top of the heap with the unexpected passing of David Bowie at the start of this year. That period, musically speaking, has always been pretty interesting. It saw the birth of lots of musical movements. But it's one I didn't know a whole lot about aside from the explosion of awesome sounds that came from it.

The book covers the early careers of Bowie, Pop and Reed starting in the late sixties and their varying associations with Andy Warhol's factory members and follows each man through the end of the 1970s. Each man had his own unique sound and his own unique demons that followed him through the decade.

I really wanted to like this book more than I did. It wasn't a bad book by any means. But my interest in the

subject matter was much higher than my interest in this book. Perhaps it was Thompson's writing, which often comes off like so many pretentious music snobs. Maybe, with regard to my musical heroes, I don't like seeing how the sausage is made. Perhaps I'd just prefer to believe that Bowie magically plucked Space Oddity out of the aether rather than find out it was a gimmick song written after the first moon walk. Regardless, if I were to recommend a memoir from this era, I'd recommend Just Kids by Patti Smith first.

Alexandre Melo says

A música já teve sua era de ouro, pode me chamar de saudoso e ranzinza mas em tempos de 'funk', sertanejo, duplas melosas e meladas e letras mais ocas que um cérebro conservador, ler esse livro apenas comprova que salvo exista mesmo a reencarnação, estamos fadados à mediocridade.

Um relato único sobre como a história desses ícones se entrelaçaram para moldar tudo que depois deles veio e ainda recheado de fotos, discografias essenciais de cada um e uma descrição da cena que mudou a vida de muitas pessoas eu incluso.

Belo!

Christophlaw80 says

Awesome!
