

the crash of thunders. by dave tyler

Johnny Thunders

The Tenth Anniversary of the death of guitarist Johnny Thunders is only two months away, however it's not all doom & gloom on the late New York Dolls life. Author Nina Antonia, has after much suggesting, finally updated & revised her official biography, *In Cold Blood*. David Tyler had a chit-chat with this charming & somewhat humorous lady, from London about all things Thunders.

In Cold Blood was first published in 1987, but has never been updated until now, though Johnny died in 1991, in strange circumstances. Nina recently wrote a book solely on The New York Dolls short existence, but is renowned globally for her writings on Thunders varied life. Her annotations over the years in CDs of the guitarists re-issued works have proven invaluable to this much misunderstood mans legacy.

Q: Did you first discover Johnny Thunders via the New York Dolls, the Heartbreakers or as a solo artist from 1978 onwards?

A: I got into the Dolls stuff when I was 13 years old. So I started really early. I was brought up in Liverpool so I had this great epiphany when I realised the New York Dolls existed. How I wish I'd seen them on that 1972 London Tour, but my mum wouldn't let me leave the house. I was under house arrest. I guess you've seen the New York Dolls book. However, footage-wise the Bob Gruen (film maker/photographer) stuff is really great.

Q: When & where did you first meet Johnny?

A: I saw the Heartbreakers, but I first met Johnny in 1982 when he came back to London during his resurrection phase. He was supposed to be dead, but he wasn't (laughs!)

Q: What was your musical upbringing?

A: It was probably Marc Bolan. I loved Marc Bolan when I was like 10 or 11 and I followed that trail. Actually Johnny came to England very early on and saw Marc Bolan at the Roundhouse. You can hear some sort of Bolan-esque influence in the Dolls I think. Marc Bolan was very influential.

Q: How did you get into writing & what inspired you to write a book about Thunders?

A: Absolutely by accident! I covered for someone at a fanzine when they were off sick. However the reason why I decided to write *In Cold Blood*, in my early 20s, was simply because I wanted to read a book about Johnny. I was sort of going through a low phase in my life, so I thought why don't I try and write a book about him. Also he was supposed to be dead and there was hardly any press about him. So I started a journey really.

Q: Why so long to update the book when you kept proposing it in various CD sleeve-notes?

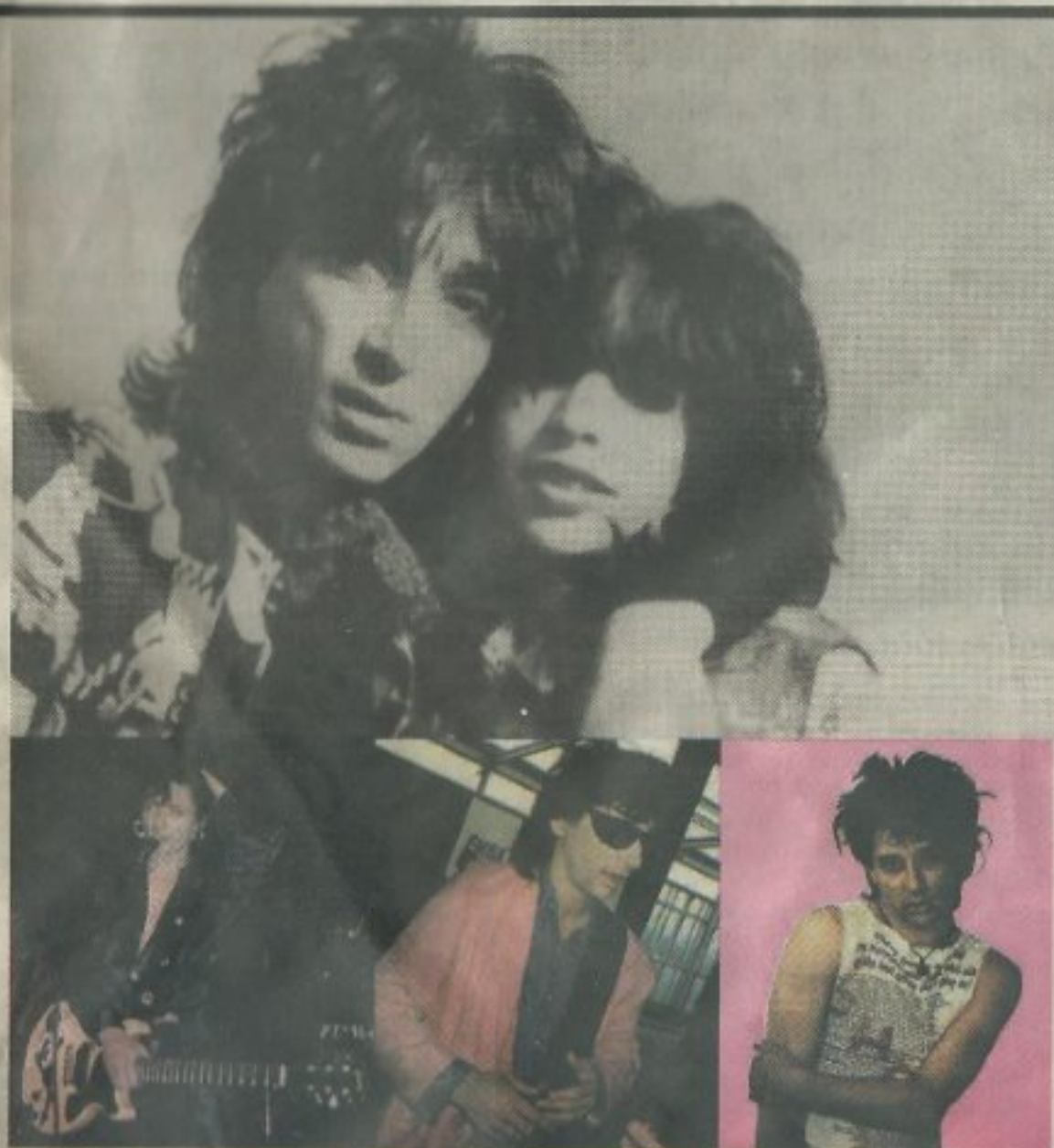
A: Well I kept waiting for Jungle (Books) and they kept waiting for another publishing company to licence it and a lot of companies don't want to do licensing deals. And then Cherry Red (Books) came along - so good for them! In reference to the 'hard to get' first edition, it breaks my heart when I hear about real fans having to pay over the odds for it because it's the dealers that are making all the money on it. My fantasy is to be able to go up in a helicopter & airdrop copies to people who really want it (laughs!)

Q: What additions & changes have you made to this post-death edition and how did the bonus CD inclusion come about?

A: Well in the summer before Jerry (Nolan - Dolls/Heartbreakers drummer) died (1992) I got to meet up with him & he did quite a long interview with me. It's difficult remembering and looking back (sounds saddened). There's also added interviews with Johnny's sister and family members. It's the handbook of all such things Thunders! Though I miss the scale size of edition one for the photographs. Freddy Lynxx did a great discography. I can never face discographies, so Freddy came to the rescue. The CDs inclusion was to do with Cherry Red and Jungle and I'm happy that they liased on that because I think they did a good job.

Q: Thunders & Music - His passion & lyrics. What do you recall?

A: (Pauses) Part of me feels that Rock'n' Roll died the day Johnny died! Johnny's death was the major one for me. It's all in his music and in the way he played guitar and there will never be anybody that comes



close to him again. Once he was in the studio and he lost his notebook so he sent me back to the hotel to get it. I flicked through it and it was all strange sorts of scribbles and his writing reminded me of Marc Bolan's. Near the end Johnny had matured as a songwriter.

Q: Johnny & Heroin - His addiction & health. What do you recall?

A: (Pauses) Johnny was quite protective towards people that didn't take heroin. He didn't let those worlds collide. I thought that he definitely had

boundaries and he wouldn't turn anybody onto it who wasn't already doing it. Johnny could be a really sweet person and he was a human being. We won't forget him!

In *Cold Blood*, Nina Antonia's recently updated biography on the life of Johnny Thunders, is available thru Cherry Red Books - <http://www.cherryred.co.uk>

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