

HOUND DAWG

MAGAZINE

"I'M A HOUND DAWG!"

NO. 7 MAY 2010

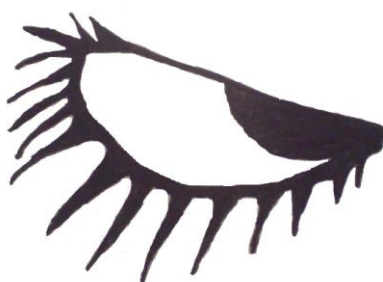


THE
VELVET UNDERGROUND
SPECIAL ISSUE

This issue has taken more than a little detective work on my part, oh my loyal readers. The Velvet Underground are one of the most important rock groups of all time and also one of my faves. The arty New York pre punk legends who gave birth to the alternative music scene. So, in a similar fashion to Hound Dawg Issue Two (which was a Stranglers special), the new issue is devoted to the Velvet Underground. As well as bagging a great little interview with their legendary drummer Maureen "Moe" Tucker (one of the nicest interviews we have ever run) I decided to explore the post Lou Reed days, interviewing members from that era and delving into the times that are less written about in press and books alike. So I tracked down some members who are perhaps overlooked, people like Walter Powers and Willie Alexander. These people are, to some Velvets fans, nonexistent. It was great fun to do I must say and was one of my favourite parts in the history of the magazine so far. To tie in with the features on the group, Mary Woronov answered 11 questions for the magazine about her career as a dancer in the Warhol/Velvets show, Exploding Plastic Inevitable and as a B movie icon.

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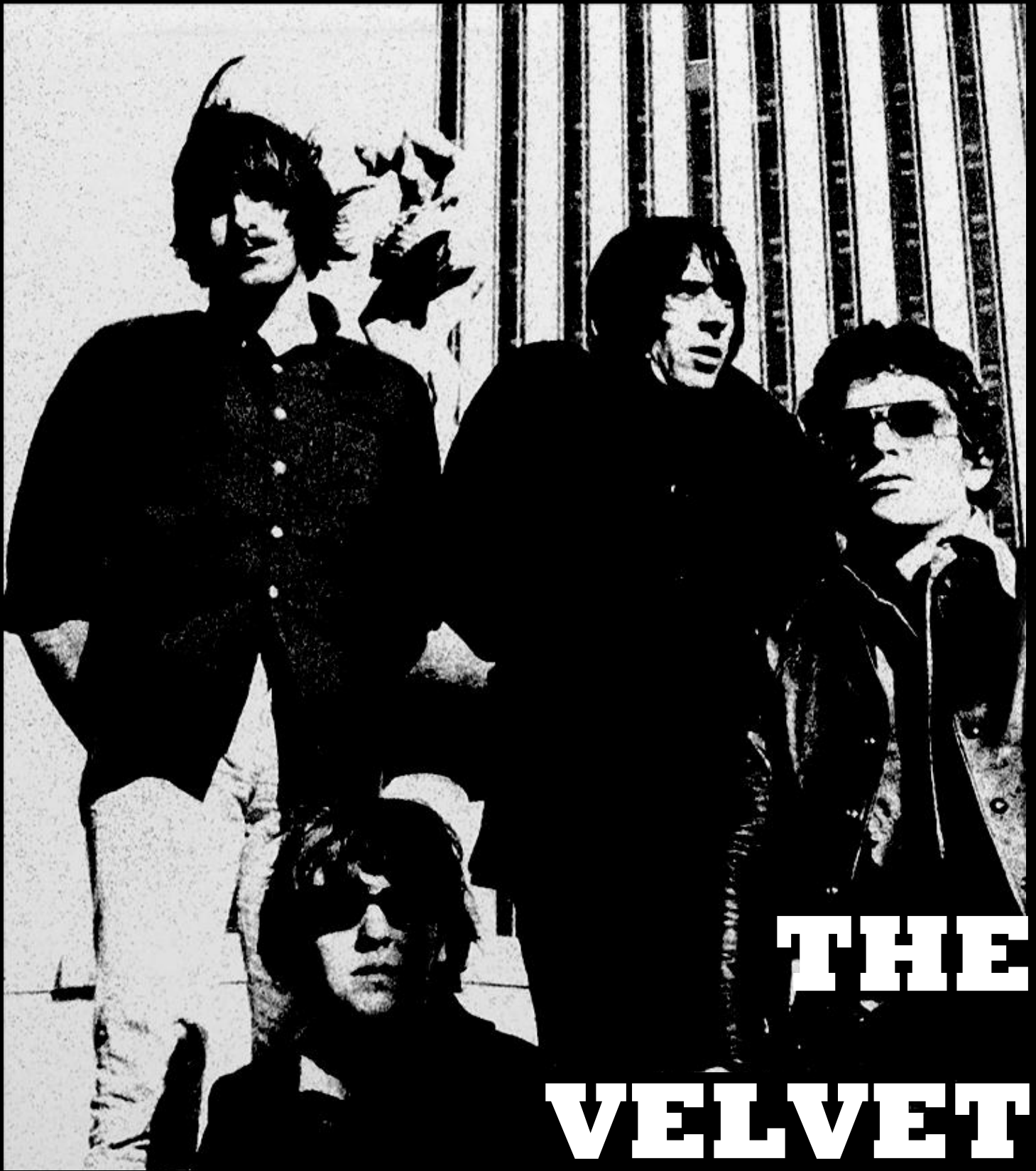
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CONTRIBUTORS

Chris Wade, Moe Tucker, Willie Alexander,
Doug Yule, Walter Powers, Mary Woronov



UNDERGROUND

**CHRIS WADE LOOKS AT ONE OF THE GREATEST AND
MOST INFLUENTIAL GROUPS IN ROCK HISTORY**

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND:

**THE GODFATHERS OF PUNK, THE
ORIGINATORS OF ALTERNATIVE
ROCK, THE VELVET
UNDERGROUND ONLY EXISTED
FOR A FEW YEARS AND MADE
LITTLE IMPACT ON THE MUSIC
SCENE IN THEIR SHORT LIFETIME.
HOUND DAWG TAKES A LOOK AT
THAT GREAT GROUP LEAD BY
THE LEGENDARY LOU REED**



What comes into your mind when someone mentions The Velvet Underground? Well if you are reading this magazine, it will most likely, or hopefully, be a fond feeling of pleasure inside, a warm glow of treasured memories or more likely a perverted sense of fiendish depravity. For some, The Velvet Underground are the most important rock group in the history of popular music and looking at the evidence given from afar, it is very clear why. The influence this band has had on the past few generations is truly astounding and to this day they are lauded as gods to young, hip rockers all over the globe, as well as the old veterans. Jack White, The Strokes, Echo and the Bunnymen, Pixies, David Bowie, Patti Smith, The Stranglers, REM, Television, Roxy Music, Nirvana, Jesus and Mary Chain and countless others have mentioned the band as a major inspiration. Others, like Sonic Youth, have formed the basis of their whole sound on the attitude of the band. Now they are looked upon as the forerunners of punk, the most daring, avant-garde and fearless band of the 1960s. Although The Velvets, as they are known to fans, may have a near unmatched cultural legacy now (nearly of Beatles scale I am sure you will agree), when they were an active force they had very little impact on the music scene and sold very few records at all. Their dark, challenging, occasionally gothic style alienated many concert goers, especially those on the flower power hippy

side of the States, and very few saw them as a major musical force to be reckoned with. Of course, when pop art mastermind Andy Warhol initially showed an interest in the group as far back as 1965, their confidence must have taken a hefty boost after their disastrous stint at the Cafe Bizarre. They believed in what they were doing, which was basically an attempt to knock down those mainstream barriers, challenge the conventional format of a song. While The Beatles were coyly asking a girl to hold their hand, the Velvets were howling about S and M, kinky sex, waiting for your dealer and shooting Heroin. To think they were singing about this stuff so long ago makes it almost impossible to believe they ever existed, although it does go some way as to explain why they perhaps didn't quite make the big time. Over forty years later, it seems that they did succeed in altering the system of commercial music, or at least had a major part in doing so.

The group were formed in New York City in 1965 by Syracuse University graduate Lou Reed. Reed had spent a lot of time with the well known poet and writer Delmore Schwartz at University, and became influenced by Schwartz's philosophies, words and wisdom. In particular he loved a short story by Delmore, In Dreams Begin Responsibilities, which had a major effect on the young Reed. Reed's aim in rock music was always to bring a cutting edge writing style, like that of William S Burroughs or Hubert Selby, into the

three minute pop song; to tell a story, a snap shot of a life in one track. Right from his early compositions, especially the haunting Heroin, Reed showed us a side of urban life no one had ever shown us before in the music world. Reed's writing was way ahead of its time and listening to the first Velvets album now, in comparison to what was going on at that time, really separates the Velvet underground right away as a key force in the gradual revolution of pop.

Of course Reed didn't do it alone; he had the most distinctive, unusual and brilliant band to accompany him in his exploration of these dark, sleazy themes. John Cale was a Welsh born musician who had moved to New York City in 1963. Although he was primarily known as a force in avant-garde experimentation (working with John Cage and La Monte Young), Cale was a nifty bass and viola player. His ambition was to insert the challenging side of his art in to popular music. So working with Reed interested Cale very much. While he was initially disinterested in Reed's songs, which sounded upon first hearing as standard folk fare (a genre that Cale hated), he soon became hooked when he heard the lyrics. Sterling Morrison, a friend of Lou's from University, joined to play guitar and the strange fellow that was Angus MacLise was on drums. However MacLise soon left when he couldn't accept the fact that they had to turn up at a gig for a certain time and play for however long the venue wanted them to. "This was the 60s," joked Reed later. Cale also said that Angus was living on Angus's calendar. He was soon replaced by Maureen Tucker, a drummer whose style can perhaps be best described as tribal. While the band loved Tucker's highly tom tom related beats, Lou also liked the fact that she looked like a dude, finding the confusion which people expressed about her sex to be entertaining. Tucker has to be one of the first ever important female rock drummers and certainly the most unique.

The band began gigging to mostly negative results in and around New York City, where the audience occasionally attacked them with tables and chairs (according to Reed's recollections). Basically people thought they were horrendous. But Andy Warhol had been looking for a music act to accompany one of his new experiments and had been advised to check the band out. He had famously admitted he didn't



really believe in painting anymore and was keen to try out his latest idea; the multimedia show. When Warhol visited one of the band's shows in 1965, he knew they were the perfect fit. The Exploding Plastic Inevitable was the weirdest show in New York City; the Velvet Underground provided loud and challenging music with a revolutionary light show and film projections going on around them. Before the band, dancers Gerald Malanga and Mary Woronov wailed each other with whips to the sound of Venus in Furs, the great S and M anthem. Having Warhol's name attached to them ensured the band a record deal with MGM Records, who were signing a few off the wall groups around this period. But tensions appeared very soon when Warhol suggested the band recruit German star Nico as their singer. Reed hated the idea of having Nico in the band, but agreed to let the chanteuse appear on a couple of tracks (namely the ballads like Femme Fatale and I'll Be Your Mirror as well as Warhol's favourite Velvets track, All Tomorrow's Parties). Their debut album, the Velvet Underground and Nico is perhaps is one of the most iconic and

influential records ever made. Featuring the famous Warhol banana cover, the contents within were very dark, eclectic and revolutionary in content. But with a lack of advertising on MGM's part, the album flopped, selling very few copies in America. Frustrated, the band, or should I say Reed, decided on firing Warhol and Nico was ordered to leave the group too.



Angry with the difficulties of the mainstream music business, the band went into the studio and made a follow up album, *White Light/White Heat*. Totally different to their debut, this was an angry, noisy, occasionally tuneless exercise in feedback, totally freeform and experimentation; for me the ultimate Velvets album. Once again the album was a flop, barely dinting the Billboard Top 200.

Cale, frustrated with the direction of the band and with Reed himself, who was becoming increasingly monstrous, left the band to pursue other musical horizons. He was replaced by former Glass Menagerie member and Velvets admirer Doug Yule. The third album, simply titled

The Velvet Underground, is a clear attempt at breaking the band; it contains some sublime ballads, showing the band were far from a bunch of noisy feedback junkies. Cale's departure meant a real lack of experimentation and the third album has little of the flare of the first two albums, in my opinion, although it is still a bloody good LP. That said, the songs are of a very high quality, but once again the band failed to get a hit record.

1969 was spent touring relentlessly; many bootlegs and official releases exist of this era, and the band sound in very fruitful form, musically and spiritually. In 1970, the band moved to Atlantic records for the fourth instalment, *Loaded*. Arguably their finest album, it features such classics as *Rock n Roll*, *Sweet Jane* and *Head Held High*. The band is on rocking form throughout and the songs are unbelievably catchy. But once again, the label failed to get the record properly out there and the album failed to chart. Reed said he had given them an album loaded with hits (hence the title, *Loaded*!) and they had failed to break the band. And so, after a residency at the famous New York haunt, Max's Kansas City, Lou left the Velvet Underground to little dramatic effect from the music press or the public alike.

Surprisingly, the band limped on with a new line up. Then Sterling left, to be replaced by Willie Alexander, while Walter Powers was recruited as the bassist. Moe Tucker stuck with the group for a while, who toured the UK and US to little success, until late 1971. In 72 Yule weirdly released a new record under the Velvet Underground's name, called *Squeeze*. It was critically mauled and sank without a trace. But one thing can be said about this record, it is NOT a Velvet Underground album; in fact it is basically a Doug Yule solo album.

In all honesty, Yule is perhaps one of the least appreciated men in rock. Joining one of the most iconic bands of the last 50 years after the departure of John Cale, he did in fact stay with the group for 5 years, carrying it through the wilderness years and appearing on three albums bearing the name *The Velvet Underground*, one more appearance than John Cale.

While on *Loaded* and the third album Yule provides some great vocals, he also has to be applauded for carrying on playing after Reed's departure, the man who had written all the



band's songs and was seen as the driving force of them. While he kind of slipped into Reed's shoes, he brought in other band members; as mentioned, Walter Powers and after Sterling left, Willie Alexander. He gets a lot of stick for recording the Squeeze album under the group's name, but as he once said, it wasn't entirely his fault. After a 1972 tour, the band's manager at the time, Steve Sesnick, told Yule to stick around to do some recordings. Yule said "Great, is Maureen gonna do it too?" Sesnick replied with a "no, she's going back." A studio drummer was brought in, Deep Purple's Ian Paice (who has no recollection of the recordings at all) and Yule basically played the rest of the instruments on all the tracks, which were all his own compositions and based on some ideas by Sesnick himself. Some might say Yule was tricked into making the record and then slapping the name The Velvet Underground on it was the ultimate piss take. Maureen claims to never have listened to the album and Yule puts it all down to him being young and naive, doing whatever the management told him to do. The cover art was similar to that of the previous record *Loaded*, an obvious attempt at making the public associate it with Reed's swan song. It was released in 1972 and sank without a trace, over shadowed by the release of Reed's first solo record and his breakthrough, *Transformer* and *The Velvet Underground Live at Max's Kansas City*, a gig recorded in Lou's final days with the band.

The legacy of the Velvets had already begun to increase in importance and so a new line up was slapped on to the road. It consisted of Yule, George Kay, Mark Nauseef and Rob Norris. Yule recalled getting to London to see no one there to meet them and no equipment at all for the shows. They ended up crashing at a friend's houses. This aside, the gigs apparently went quite

well in the UK and Rob Norris also said that no one even seemed to care there was no Cale and no Lou Reed. Though Yule did admit this was "a cash in trip."

Lou was not happy about the band carrying on like this after his departure, seeing as he was carrying the legacy of the band with his solo shows, playing many old Velvets numbers alongside his own solo tracks. Asked in a 1972 interview about where Doug Yule was, Lou replied: "Dead I hope." He also said "there is a version of the Velvet Underground now, in London," in response to the suggestion of the group ever reforming. The mentioned tour that the Velvets were undertaking was supposed to be much bigger, but apparently the whole thing just fell apart. And seeing as *Squeeze* was seen as a poor album (to some an insult to the band's legacy), the band broke up soon after, slowly dissolving with little notice taken by the public. By now Reed was a solo superstar, scoring a top ten hit with *Walk on the Wild Side* and becoming a cult icon to a generation, thanks largely to the *Transformer* LP. Yule's efforts were seen as a desperate plot to make some money.

Either way, it is sad that the latter days get ignored completely and I was interested to explore these times within the pages of *Hound Dawg*. Everyone knows about the classic Cale years, but I wanted to tell the other stories too.



AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIE ALEXANDER

Guitarist for The Velvet Underground,
1971 – 1973

To most part time admirers of The Velvet Underground, the band consists of those four iconic band members: Cale, Reed, Tucker and Morrison. Some are unaware of the post Factory Days. Of course, Cale was sacked from the group in 1968 by Reed and replaced soon after by Doug Yule, a young musician and former member of The Glass Menagerie. While this line up released two great LPs, namely The Velvet Underground (a creative name for an album eh?) and the brilliant Loaded, neither were remotely successful and it seemed the Velvets were just seen as that band that used to hang with Warhol. They seemed to not matter at all to the public and critics alike in the new decade. When Lou left the band after a stint at Max' Kansas City, no one mourned and the "split" went largely unnoticed. But Yule was eager to continue the group, somewhat influenced by his management. Yule later noted that there wasn't a feeling of "what do we do now? It was a different entity," he said. "It was like 'Lou's not here. Well, let's keep playing.' So we did. We got Walter Powers to play bass and we played a fair amount of time after that, with Walter, Maureen and I." While playing in Texas though, and when the band were set to return home after a weekend of gigs, Sterling stayed behind. He left the group there and then without any prior warning. Almost immediately Willie Alexander was drafted in. But who is Willie Alexander? Has he ever been interviewed about his time with the band before now? The man toured the UK as The Velvet's new guitarist and stayed with them until the unit finally dissolved in 1973. There are bootlegs of some of this line up, where the group play mostly Willie Alexander tracks and a few classic Velvets tracks thrown in for good measure. So he is kind of important in the final chapter of The Velvet Underground, yet he hasn't really spoken much about his experience as a Velveteen. Until now...

I decided it was a great idea to find this man, to get a bit of information on a time that hasn't really been documented all that much in



the story of The Velvet Underground. Surprisingly he wasn't so hard to find and has a website of his own, where people can keep up with his own career post Velvet Underground. Willie has actually had a long and varied career, with The Boom Boom Band and other projects to his name. Anyway, I asked him a few questions about time with the group.



What were you doing before you joined the Velvets, music wise?

I was writing songs on my piano or playing drums. I had been in The Lost and the Bagatele and The Glass Menagerie.

So how did you end up joining The Velvet Underground?

Doug called me up and asked if I wanted to do a tour and I said sure but you better change the name of the band. I didn't own any of their records yet.

Were you aware of their history at all?

I saw the band at The Boston Tea Party once and one other time after Doug and Walter were in it in Revere Beach.

You replaced Sterling Morrison in the group, which were surely big boots to fill.

I never really learned the songs. I did 3 of my own songs after I joined.

How did people at gigs react to the new line up when you went on the UK tour with the Velvets, after Walter Powers replaced Moe Tucker?

People were just happy to see any Velvet Underground it seemed. In one place in England someone thought I was John Cale. I had dreams about being in this GHOST BAND. I was pretty buzzed most of the time. I heard Hot Love in Holland on a juke box. We lived for a week in Vancouver, and played at a place called Gassy Jacks in Gastown. We had fun playing there, getting drunk. It was a beautiful city and we had a great afternoon looking at fossil trees at Stanley Park. Once at a gig in England, we started the show by introducing ourselves as the Andrew Sisters and sang Chapel of Love.

Did you play on the ill fated Squeeze LP?

I'm glad I wasn't on Squeeze. I went home and did my own thing, though at the time, I thought we were gonna record together again. I didn't get along with the management.

After leaving the Velvets you started the Boom Boom band among other things. How do you rate your time in the Velvets to the rest of your career?

I got a lot of mileage out of this brief period because people had high regard for the band's records. People would say "Oh you were in the Velvet Underground?" and I would groan because they didn't care about anything else.

What are you up to these days?

I am still recording and playing; check out my stuff on line, some of it is there.

FIND MORE OUT AT WILLIE'S SITE:

<http://mysite.verizon.net/arearick/htm/press.html>

AN INTERVIEW WITH

MOE TUCKER

We've had a few legends dropping by at Hound Dawg in the past few issues; Hugh Cornwell, Chris Difford and a few others for example. But few come close to the legendary status of Maureen "Moe" Tucker, the drummer for the iconic group The Velvet Underground. One of the first recognised female drummers in rock, Lou actually liked having her in the band for her tribal percussion style and the fact that no one could tell whether she was a man or a woman, as she was always lurking in the shadows, wearing the same sort of garb as the guys, as well as the obligatory black sun glasses. Anyway, here, I got the chance to hear some words from one of the most unique musicians of the 20th Century and her take on the story of The Velvet Underground. One thing that is clear from this interview is that Moe seems to be a sincere and very warm person.

WORDS: CHRIS WADE

You replaced the eccentric Angus Maclise in the Velvets when you joined back in 1965. Who was it that recruited you and what did you think of the band primarily?

Sterling suggested me because they had a show booked in the high school in Summit New Jersey and they needed a drummer FAST! I was totally enthralled by the music - it was so different from anything I'd heard and I loved it!

How did you develop the famous tribal style of drumming?

I didn't think a "regular" r & r style fit the music. We did a lot of improvising early on and I would try to match the mood of whatever was going on and to be steady and add to the music rather than interfere with rolls and cymbal crashes!



How did you find Lou's songs in those early days? I read once that you never really heard the lyrics due to the volume of the music.

I listened most intently to the music, the mood of each song. Sombre? Happy? Angry? Eerie? I couldn't hear the full lyrics, just words here and there on many songs. In those days there were no monitors!

Early reaction to the band was bad wasn't it, especially very early on? What was the scariest of the gigs you did that got hostile reaction?

I wouldn't say reaction was bad but more like "what the hell is this" and certainly not from all listeners! There was never a "scary" reaction. We played places like art galleries when we first were with Andy and the reaction would be more of indifference from many, interest from some, leaving the room from others!

What was it like first meeting Andy Warhol when he took the group under his wing?

It was exciting-- he was a STAR and I was duly impressed!

Of all the Velvet Underground albums which is your favourite?

The first!!

How did you ease between John Cale (founding member and bassist/viola player) leaving and Doug Yule joining? Do you think it affected things on a grand scale and how did it affect you personally?

I know I was not happy Cale was out but I don't think I had the sense to realise what a difference it would make musically.



When Lou reed left after Loaded do you think that would have been the right time to stop?

To be honest I was enjoying playing music and of course I knew the music would be very, very different but wanted to continue playing.

You lasted a year or so before after Lou had left, with the new line up and left the Velvets didn't you?

I guess it was about a year. I finally left when I realised it wasn't fun anymore.

How did u feel about Yule carrying on with the squeeze album?

I was very angry!

You left to raise your family after this. When did you start having an interest in music again?

I hadn't lost interest in music, just in continuing with tings as they were. I started my own band many years later, in 1989, because I found out there would be an interest in my touring in Europe and I could actually make more money in one six week tour over there than I made all year at the job I had at the time.

So, 1993, the band reforms with the original line up. Did you enjoy the Velvets reunion in the 90s?

Very much. It was really, really nice to be together with the four of us. We had some tense moments but 95% was great. Just hanging around with Lou, John and Sterl was soooooo nice.

How does it feel to know the band you were in all those years ago, who made little impact at the time are now one of the most important bands of all time? I mean, in the last issue of Hound Dawg for instance they were ranked in top 5 bands in our reader's poll.

I am glad things turned out as they did rather than having more success back then. It's more important to me to have made an impact rather than to have simply made more money at the time. Also it's really nice to hear young people say how much they like our music. It's one thing to have a nostalgic audience but to have an audience that is mostly made up of kids who weren't even born when we were running around is very, very gratifying!!

Also, as a drummer you have been very influential, especially to women. What advice would you give to women wanting to get into music?

DO IT!

Although Lou has been a far from nice to a lot of people in his time, you were always in his good books. In fact he once said you were the nicest person he had ever met. How do you view Lou now personally and in regards to his legendary status as one of the world's greatest song writers?

Yes Lou can be quite a grouch but we do have a special friendship which I value very highly and I am thrilled he's been so successful. Lou has always been extremely supportive both in words and deeds of my attempts at my solo doings and that means a lot to me. I love him, John and Sterl.

What about now Mo, is there any chance of some more musical activity from you soon?

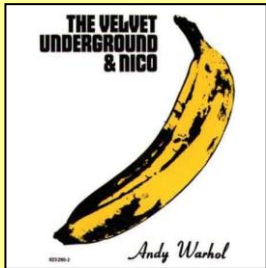
Not really. I'm involved in raising my 8 year old grandson who has high functioning autism and most of my energies are directed towards him. His name is Holden and I'm crazy about him!

VISIT MOE'S SITE:

<http://www.spearedpeanut.com/tajmoehal/>

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND

DISCOGRAPHY OVERVIEW



VELVET UNDERGROUND AND NICO (1967)

Albums don't really get much better than the debut, one of the most unique and influential LPs of the past 50 years. Essential purchase. **KEY TRACKS:** Waiting for the Man, Venus in Furs, Heroin, Run Run Run

WHITE LIGHT, WHITE HEAT (1968)

Personally my favourite Velvets album; a bold, brave and disturbing display of anger and rage, all wrapped up in a pre punk feedback frenzy. Definitely one of my favourite albums, if only for the nightmarish 18 minute closer Sister Ray. **KEY TRACKS:** White Light White Heat, Sister Ray, Lady Godiva's Operation,

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND (1968)

The ballad album, containing some of Reed's finest sweet tracks, some sung by new recruit Doug Yule. A lovely album, sad and haunting, in parts purely beautiful. **KEY TRACKS:** Candy Says, Murder Mystery, Jesus, What Goes On, Pale Blue Eyes

LOADED (1970)

In parts, as commercial as The Stones and clearly Lou's attempt to break into the mainstream. The fact it failed says more about the label than the material as this is a real cracker. **KEY TRACKS:** Sweet Jane, Head Held High, Rock and Roll, I Found a Reason, Oh Sweet Nothin'

SQUEEZE (1972)

OK, so not strictly a Velvets album, but it has the name on the sleeve so it counts to me. Never released on CD and very hard to find, I have listened to it and frankly it isn't all that bad, just unimaginative and very straight forward, in other words, not the Velvet Underground!

LIVE AT MAX'S KANSAS CITY (1972)

Thank god this was captured and although the tape recording is flawed, it still is a great album and shows the group on top form, just before Reed was to bugger off on to his solo career. Well worth getting.

1969: LIVE (1974)

Another great live record, this one captured on the band's 1969 tour, with some great versions of What Goes on and Femme Fatale sung by Lou Reed in fine voice. I love the album and also the tacky charm of the sleeve.

LIVE AT THE GYMNASIUM 1967

One of my favourite bootlegs of all time. This one only surfaced in recent years and contains a rough and storming rocking set from the Velvets, still with Cale shortly after the end of the Exploding Plastic Inevitable shows. The recording caused quite a stir when it was found and it is easy to understand why. Not only does it feature some excellent versions of well known tracks like Waiting for the Man, but also versions of unheard numbers such as Guess I'm Falling in Love and I'm Not a Young Man Anymore. Also, the recent pressing has a great sleeve with the band done up as the cast of Peanuts, with Lou as Snoopy. Love it!

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

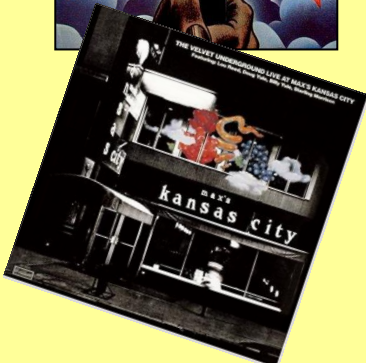
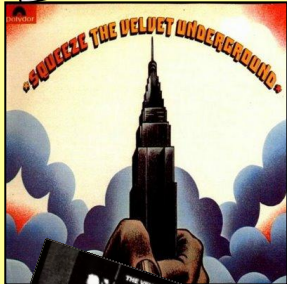
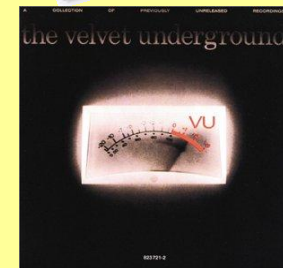
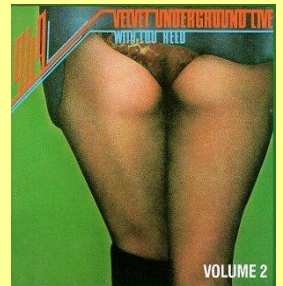
Another great bootleg, featuring early demos from the very early days. There's a great versions of Prominent Men (a Dylany ballad) and an, um, interesting take on Waiting for the Man. All tracks now released in the Peel Slowly boxed set.

VU (1985)

A disc containing unreleased Velvets tracks, intended for the lost 4th album. A truly great set of songs here, some of the band's finest, including the infectious I'm Sticking With You (sung by Moe).

ANOTHER VIEW (1986)

More rarities soon followed after the excitement and positive feedback from VU, sadly these ones are nowhere near as good. Ferryboat Bill is funny, but this is just scraping the barrel of the vaults really. There is a reason most of this was never released.



DOUG YULE INTERVIEW

The following is reprinted from Hound Dawg Issue One to tie in with this issue's theme. This took place weeks before Lou, Doug and Moe appeared together at The NYC library for an extended chat with David Fricke. As you can see, he was less than enthusiastic with me, although he was hardly talkative at the strange reunion with Reed (who walked off when Yule was speaking).

So what were you playing music wise before the Velvet Underground?

Church music (voice), marching band music (tuba), concert band music (tuba), folk music (guitar), bluegrass and old time music (banjo), old standards (piano), electric blues and rock (guitar, organ, bass).

You were a fan of the VU, did you feel overwhelmed by playing Lou's songs and singing some of them?

I only saw the band once before I joined. Jennifer gave a good answer to this: "You were a fan of the VU, did you feel overwhelmed by playing Lou's songs and singing some of them? This is a weird question (the use of "overwhelmed") that sounds like a present-day superfan of Lou's asking a question that wouldn't have relevance in 1968. Were you that big of a fan? I mean, you're no Jonathan Richman, that's for sure (as far as fandom goes). When you joined there wasn't this kind of legendary mystique that's been acquired over the last 40 plus years or at least it was in its infancy. I wouldn't imagine it would be overwhelming to play Lou's songs. The whole band was playing songs Lou had written. I would imagine you were just happy to be asked to play in a band that was booking shows and recording—a steady gig." Today, if a 20 year old were called and asked to play for Lou, he (or she) might feel as if they'd arrived. It could also have been an intimidating situation. When I was asked to join the VU, it felt like a step up to new things, not arrival at a destination. I'm still waiting for that.

The third VU album has a lot of sweet vocals and melodies thanks to you. What are your recollections of recording this album?

I had a fair amount to do with the vocal harmonies but the melodies are Lou's. The sweetness was always there, it's the way he writes. Listen to Sunday Morning or Femme Fatale. Even the tunes that are set in chaotic distorted guitars have nice melodies, with the possible exception of the Murder Mystery. My recollections have been documented elsewhere.

The extensive tour of 1969 is a legendary period. Which gigs were the most fun with the VU?

Seattle, Washington and Eugene, Oregon—because of people I met. In Seattle Chrissie Hynde came to see the group, something I never knew until fifteen years later when I read a piece she wrote where she mentions that show. In L.A. playing at the Whiskey and meeting Jimi Hendrix and Jim Morrison and a psychic and Miss Christine, one of the GTOs.

Do you think the Loaded album should have been a hit?

No, I think Loaded was a mistake. The group should have waited for Moe to be available instead of going ahead without her.

I think commercial success was never in the cards for the group. It was too far out on the fringe.

When Lou left and you took over, did you feel it was important to keep this group going?



It was a band, not Lou and a backup band. We had commitments. We just kept going. I wasn't in charge although I was singing most of the leads.

Squeeze is a lost gem. How did recording this come about and how come it has become so obscure over the years?

This has been talked to death.

Fair enough. What have you been doing since the VU? Tell me a little about your current band if you could...

Red Dog is a trio; fiddle, guitar/banjo and mandolin. It's the most fun I've had in the last 30 years. Check out www.reddogseattle.com. There's also a video of the band playing on YouTube.



Doug, seated on the right, at the NYC library interview in 2009

11 QUESTIONS WITH **MARY WORONOV**

**EXPLODING PLASTIC INEVITABLE
DANCER, FACTORY GIRL AND ARTIST**

You grew up in Brooklyn NYC. What was your childhood like?

The strict upbringing of a step child - I was always on the outside.

You were studying art at University. Had you always wanted to get into art?

Yes, even when I am in it, it is never far enough.

How did you meet Andy Warhol and get into the Factory?

Through Gerard. He brought most of the girls up to the Factory

What was it like being around all those creative people in such a great environment?

Great. They liked me and didn't want to fuck me so I believed them

You danced with Gerald to Velvet Underground in the Exploding Plastic Inevitable show. What were reactions like on a personal level?

Fear, disbelief, erotic attraction.

The San Francisco and the hippy scene didn't really get what you guys and Andy were doing did they?

Oh they got it. It was hard to miss. They didn't like it.

Do you think it was because you were more about reality and the harshness of it, with the velvets singing about real city things and problems?

Yes, Lou Reed's songs more than match it.

What were Lou and the band like in those early days. Did you get on with them?

Lou liked me; none of them hit on me. I think Maureen was afraid of me. In LA we all stayed at a rented castle and Moe and I had to share not just a room but the bed in the room and she slept with her clothes on.

Of course, after Chelsea Girls and the Warhol connection you went on to star in a lot of classic movies: Cannonball, Death Race 2000, House of 1000 Corpses. Have you achieved so far what you wanted to achieve in your film career?

Never. Minx films are doing a documentary on me and suddenly my life seems different than what I experienced.

Do you ever see any of the old Factory lot nowadays, and Velvets members included?

I see Bridget (Berlin) when I go to New York - otherwise I see them on lecture tours.

What is in store for you in the future?

Death



AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER POWERS

When I thought my little Velvet Underground special was done and dusted, an e mail came into my inbox. It was from Walter Powers and he said that Willie Alexander had told him about my quest to track down the Velvets that time forgot. He told me he would be happy to answer some questions if he could remember those days, as they were so long ago. In case you forgot or skipped past the first bits, Walter was recruited as a bassist in the post- Lou Reed line up lead by Doug Yule.

What musical experience did you have prior to the Velvets?

I played bass in a band called the Lost (with Willie Alexander); we put out 2 singles on Capitol Records. When the Lost broke up, a band formed called The Grass Menagerie with Willie playing drums, and eventually Doug Yule on lead guitar. After that I was in a band called Listening who put out an album on Vanguard Records. All of these bands were based in Boston/Cambridge.

How did you end up joining the band?

After Listening, I took a break from playing for a while. In 1970, Doug Yule called me from NYC. I had gone to see him and the Velvets a couple of times at the legendary Boston rock club, the Tea Party. Steve Sesnick, who was to become the manager of the Velvets, had been the manager or assistant manager at the Tea Party, so I knew him as well from having played there with all the aforementioned bands. Doug told me that Lou Reed had left the band, that the Velvets were on the verge of releasing an album and had a lot of gigs booked to support the release, and that they needed a 4th player. Doug proposed that he would be moving into Lou's frontman singer-guitarist position, and I would take over on bass and back-up vocals, Doug's former position in the band. I had mixed feelings about moving to New York, but Doug and Steve flew up to Boston and convinced me to get with the program.



Did you feel strange playing in this new line up, when the Velvets legacy was now getting bigger?

Well, not strange exactly. I had a job to do, essentially as a sideman, and I did it. I was aware that this new configuration of the band might disappoint some of the fans and critics. Doug was sincere about wanting the band to evolve, and that seemed like a positive thing to me.

Do you remember your first gig with the band?

Not really. After consulting Olivier Landemaine's VU website, it might have been the Main Point near Philadelphia. I do remember playing there at some point, but not necessarily as my debut gig.

What was it like playing in the group with Sterling Morrison and Maureen Tucker for that brief period?

It was just fine. Sterling was a guitarist with exceptional restraint and taste, and I really enjoyed Moe's straight-ahead drumming style; it enabled a lot of approaches for a bass player. And just as much as their playing, I liked hanging out with them. They were both kind of funny Noo Yawk wise guys, but sensitive and thoughtful as well. I also had an affinity with Sterling in that we were both English lit major types, except he really was one. One thing that surprised me when I joined the band was how wholesome and athletic everybody was - not the dark decadence I was expecting. I think I might have been the most decadent element at that point.

You and the Velvets recorded two Yule tracks in late 1970, Friends and She'll make you cry. What did you think to them in comparison to older Velvet Underground material?

Those titles sound familiar, but I really don't remember.

You ever listened back to the bootleg boxed set, The Final VU? What are your thoughts on the sound of the group?

Yes, I have heard those. The sound is pretty bad, as one might expect of a bootleg from that far back. I recall, though, that we were playing tight on that European tour, which may not have come across on the bootleg. The sound of a keyboard, rather than a second guitar, may have been a shock to some overseas fans.

When Sterl left, how did you feel?

I felt bad. He was a buddy. He felt bad too, about leaving the band; he underwent some serious soul-searching when he found out he had been accepted in a position teaching at UT.

Whose idea was it to recruit new band members, like Willie Alexander?

It was Doug's idea.

When and why did you end up leaving the band?

After the European tour, I just didn't feel like playing anymore. There were a lot of problems by then with manager Steve Sesnick who would actually make a very interesting interview. He is routinely demonized in the saga of the VU, but the complete story will never be written without input from Sesnick. I think everybody had had enough by then. At some point, after a break, I think Dougie sounded me out about going back to Europe, but I said no.

You toured with Willie in the 80s didn't you? Did you find him a good musician to work with?

Yes. He is a very charismatic and talented performer (and song-writer) and a good guy, besides. The French tour with Willie Alexander

and the Confessions is one of my best rack-and-roll memories.

What have you done since?

Ha ha not much since WA and the Confessions! But between the Velvets and the Confessions, I was in 2 very interesting bands, one of



which was a soul/show band called Roxbury Crossing, at a time when there was a lot of trouble between the races in Boston - that band's manager was, briefly, former Red Sox outfielder Tony Conigliaro; the other band was the Marc Thor Band, which leader Marc put together just when the Boston punk scene was busting out. That was a very exciting time in Boston rock history.

What are your thoughts on Yule, Sterling and Moe as people and as musicians?

I am glad I knew them and got to play with them. I was very sorry to hear about Sterling's death. Doug is a very talented songwriter who was, in the Velvets, in a tough position taking over from Lou Reed as the frontman. His bright, pop outlook didn't exactly jibe with Lou Reed's dark and transgressive conceptions, which were the argument and the daemon of Velvet Undergroundism.

How do you look back at your era with the Velvets? Do you think it is a shame the era got swept under the carpet and kind of lost in the history of the group?

No, once Lou left the band was more or less just a placeholder. What is a shame, though, is the the amazing album Loaded hasn't gotten its due in the Velvet's canon, because I guess Lou has disavowed it, and because you can hear the beginnings of Doug's influence on the sound. The thing is, that influence made it a better album, certainly the most accessible of the VU albums, and, in my opinion, the strongest from beginning to end.

HOUND DAWG MAGAZINE

THANKS FOR READING Y'ALL

