

New York Doll

A First Independent Pictures Release

78 minutes. 35mm. Dolby SR-D. Rated PG-13

Press Contacts:

New York

SUSAN NORGET FILM PROMOTION

Susan Norget

Tricia Abate

(212) 431-0090

(212) 680-3181 (fax)

Susan@norget.com

Tricia@norget.com

Music

THE LIPPIN GROUP

Jean Sievers

(323) 965-1990 ext. 339

(323) 525-1929 (fax)

Jsievers@lippingroup.com

Los Angeles

THE ANGELLOTTI COMPANY

Katie Martin Kelley

Danni Pearlberg

(818) 506-7887

(818) 506-8822 (fax)

Katie@angelcopr.com

Danni@angelcopr.com

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

During the course of making *New York Doll* we realized we were more than merely fortunate to be able to chronicle Arthur "Killer" Kane's extraordinary journey. What began as a film about Arthur's personal journey and his pursuit of a lifetime dream to reunite with his bandmates ultimately became a complete story with an unexpected and poignant conclusion. We kindly ask that those who report on and review films respect his story and allow the audience to experience it as we recorded it, and therefore not reveal the ending in your coverage. Thank you.

Greg B. Whiteley, Director *New York Doll*

SYNOPSIS

Mild-mannered, 55-year-old Arthur Kane endures Los Angeles' bewildering public transportation system each day to and from his job at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saint's Family History Center library. Though a tad frayed-at-the-edges Arthur is neatly dressed in a suit and tie. Thirty years later, and a lifetime removed from his former alter ego, "Killer Kane," the one time statuesque bassist of 70s gender-bending, glam rock pioneers, The New York Dolls, Arthur blends effortlessly into his current environment, despite the fact that he's speaking to a camera crew who tags along with him on his daily routine.

The Dolls' outrageous antics belied a ferocious sound that presaged punk and influenced a generation of musicians. Establishing the raucous-rocker template, the Dolls' crashed and burned amidst a flurry of drug and alcohol abuse after their aptly titled second LP, *Too Much Too Soon*. The band broke up in 1975.

Lead singer David Johansen found new success as party-mad "Buster Poindexter," as well as in various film ventures; Sylvain Sylvain continued to play professionally, and guitarist Johnny Thunders and drummer Jerry Nolan would help initiate the rise of punk with The Heartbreakers. But with the majority of the band expanding on those early, hopeful horizons, Arthur Kane faded away into virtual obscurity for almost three decades. Relocating from New York to Los Angeles, Arthur battled alcoholism as he watched the continued imitation of his former band echo in the pop world. He embarked on a troubled marriage as he attempted repeatedly to resurrect his musical career. But the majority of his time was taken up by an obsession with his short-lived fame and an intense longing for a return to the spotlight.

In 1989, his marriage over, Arthur converted to Mormonism and eventually settled into a job at the Family History Center library, assisting in the location of long-lost relatives and the reconnection of severed relationships through genealogical records. It would be a foreshadowing task of employment, and as he rode the bus to and from work every day, Arthur dreamed the fool's dream of rekindling his own broken friendships with the only family he felt he had left, The Dolls.

In early Spring 2004, rock star Morrissey, formerly of The Smiths, and curator of London's 2004 Meltdown Festival, asked the surviving three New York Dolls to reunite for the London spectacular. Caught between disbelief and angst, Arthur was nonetheless ecstatic at the notion of realizing his life-long dream. His friends at the church gave him money to retrieve his guitars from a local pawnshop so he could begin practicing. Rehearsals in New York led to a reunion with the surviving Dolls, Johansen and guitarist Sylvain Sylvain. Arthur finally relinquished long-held grudges and anxieties and got ready to rock after a decades-long slumber. But no one knew how the Dolls might perform after such a long hiatus. No one knew whether it was going to gel or be a total disaster. None of these doubts, however, were shared by Arthur.

The gentle rocker arrived at his five-star London hotel excited to play for what he

considered to be “not an audience, but just a bunch of friends,” and on June 16, 2004, The New York Dolls played to wildly enthusiastic fans at Royal Festival Hall. Critics hailed the show as “a sensational comeback,” exclaiming “the kings of New York...they’ve never played better!” It was a triumphant return not only for The New York Dolls, but for Arthur “Killer” Kane.

Returning to Los Angeles meant hanging up the “Killer” persona and abandoning the luxury rock coach for the city bus once again. All of his friends at the Family History Center were happy and excited to see him again, but they feared a return to his day-to-day life might pale in comparison to the adulation-filled trip from which he’d just returned.

No one, however, could imagine the twist of fate visited upon Arthur next.

PRODUCTION NOTES

“People who’ve really been in the war, but then come out the other end as, for lack of a better word, spiritual beings – that’s the greatest kind of person in the world.”

David Johansen, The New York Dolls

New York Doll is a film that captures one of those rare occasions where life is not only stranger, but better than fiction.

As the founding member of the visionary rock group The New York Dolls, Arthur “Killer” Kane belonged to a select group of musicians widely credited as the definitive proto-glam-punk ensemble. The Dolls pioneered a look and sound that left the rock scene of the 60s back in time and helped pave the way for the punk and glam rock Dolls look-alikes who would follow in the next decade. Musical historians agree that the Dolls directly influenced and inspired many of the most successful music acts of the last thirty years.

After the Dolls’ short-lived success and almost predictable break-up, the next thirty years that were Arthur’s life reflected none of his former glory. As Arthur puts it, he was “demoted from rock star to schlep on the bus.”

Director Greg Whiteley had recently graduated with a Masters degree in filmmaking from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena when he began attending the LDS Church on Santa Monica Blvd. It was there that he met Arthur Kane, whom he’d been told had once been in a band.

Whiteley recalls the first time he visited Arthur in his apartment in 2001:

“Arthur pointed to a poster of a rock band hanging on the wall behind his couch. The bassist in the poster had enormous hair and was wearing a skin-tight leotard, a feather boa and a large pair of thigh-high platform boots. ‘That’s me,’ he said.” He told Whiteley that he had not played with any of the Dolls after the break-up but still held out hope that they’d get back together.

The band formed in 1971 but began falling apart after the release of its aptly titled second LP, *Too Much Too Soon*, ultimately dissolving in 1975. While other Dolls members remained fixtures of the music scene and achieved new levels of success, Arthur was emotionally derailed by the Dolls’ demise and struggled with personal demons. He joined other bands, formed others still, but the combination of drugs, alcohol, and a failed marriage culminated in an incident in which Arthur fell from a third story window. It was a point the increasingly diffident Arthur delicately labeled “rock bottom.”

Meanwhile, the Dolls’ musical and style influences began fueling much of the up-and-coming punk and “hair metal” scenes of the early 1980’s. Bands as diverse as the Sex Pistols, Kiss, The Clash, Blondie and others borrowed the Dolls’ swagger and

outrageous appearance. As former Smiths lead singer Morrissey puts it, “It seems to take the pop world thirty years to really understand a group or an artist” and few seemed to really understand or appreciate the New York Dolls.

In February 2004, Morrissey was named curator and artistic director of the 2004 Meltdown Festival in London. Amidst the flurry of his first hometown performance in seven years, and the release of a new album, Morrissey parlayed his administrative clout in an effort to reunite the Dolls.

A once obsessive follower of the band, and former president of its unofficial UK fan club, Morrissey quite clearly shared Arthur’s own dream. In his first statement concerning the festival, Morrissey said “...this is a privilege and I will rise to it. Curating Meltdown is a great opportunity for me to acknowledge some of the music and words that have excited me over the years.”

When Arthur informed Whiteley of the potential Dolls reunion in London, the director approached Arthur and suggested filming him as he prepared for the event. “We couldn’t believe it. I’m convinced that Arthur woke up every single day *aching* to get his band back together. I think it was the number one thing on his ‘to do’ list every single morning. And here it was finally happening.” The first day of shooting occurred when he asked Whiteley for a ride to get his bass out of the pawnshop so he could begin practicing for the event.

“Arthur had been out of music for thirty years...so no one knew if he could still play.”
Steve Conte (guitarist, The New York Dolls)

This breaking news, combined with the fact that Whiteley’s interviews with Arthur were beginning to “look like a film” emboldened the filmmaker to envision his modest project more ambitiously. What had initially begun as a short profile of Arthur’s strange journey from rock god to lost soul to LDS Family History worker, had become, for Whiteley, a bigger idea. “I was working on some other projects at the same time. Things were coming together, but I thought I should find a way to get to London and film this. None of us had any idea what would become of the film but I thought at the very least I could give it to him as a present.”

Arthur’s dream of reuniting with the Dolls was finally coming true. He was excited, sharing his joy with everyone, and allowing Whiteley to film him all the while. What Whiteley soon began to appreciate, however, was that Arthur was most excited about the prospect of seeing his friends again.

“Arthur was actually more thrilled, and more intimidated about seeing David Johansen and Sylvain Sylvain again. (Dolls members Johnny Thunders and Jerry Nolan died in 1991 and 1992 respectively). He’d ended it badly with the band, and regretted their split ever since. What he seemed to regret even more, though, was that he’d lost touch with his pals. Remember, they were all practically kids when they started. Arthur

came from a broken home and in many respects the Dolls were his family, and he cherished them no matter how disenfranchised they had become.”

It was around this time that Whiteley brought onboard longtime friend Ed Cunningham to produce the film. A former Arizona Cardinal offensive lineman, and currently a college football color analyst for ABC Sports, Cunningham was fascinated with the idea of documenting Arthur’s journey. “I offered to do anything it took to get the film made, including sleep on the floor, or travel in the cargo compartment. I just loved this story,” Cunningham says.

Whiteley then called his friend cinematographer Rod Santiano the night before they were to fly out to New York to film the surviving Dolls rehearse before they traveled to London. Greg then asked his friend Seth Gordon (producer/editor) of whom he had collaborated with before on an industrial film for the Marines if he would like to fly over for the London show. What started out as a guy following a friend around with a camera grew into a much bigger story and – we just kept adding parts,” said Whiteley. I am just grateful that people as talented and in demand as Seth, Rod and Ed made themselves available for what started out as a very small project.”

In New York, Arthur’s reunion with Sylvain Sylvain was effortless, but the longstanding strain between Johansen and Arthur, which Arthur worried might derail the reunion entirely, created a dramatic tension that culminated in a scene in New York where Arthur and David see each other for the first time in twenty years.

More than personal discord, however, it was the daunting task of filming the Meltdown at the Royal Festival Hall in London that really began to concern Whiteley. “We had no business being there. We had no permission from Morrissey to film the Meltdown Festival. We just decided we would keep going until somebody said ‘no’. And nobody did. People loved the Dolls. They loved Arthur. All the big names who never seem to want to be interviewed, you just mentioned Arthur’s name and they volunteered and jumped in front of the camera.”

Whiteley’s interviewees soon became a who’s who of musical canon. Sir Bob Geldof (Boomtown Rats, Live 8), Chrissie Hynde (The Pretenders), Mick Jones (The Clash), Iggy Pop (Iggy and the Stooges), Frank Infante and Clem Burke (Blondie), Don Letts (Big Audio Dynamite), and of course, Morrissey, all graciously cooperated with the filmmaker, leaping at the opportunity to spread their affection and affinity for, in Morrissey’s words, “one of the most raucous and notorious bands in musical history.” More specifically, however, they were ever willing to talk about the quiet and unassuming Arthur “Killer” Kane, “the only living statue of rock and roll” (a reference to Arthur’s infamous wooden posturing on stage).

The Dolls were the undisputed hit of the festival, celebrated by fans and the media. Their reunion was a complete success, and plans were immediately made to get together again for more gigs. A tour was even discussed (The surviving Dolls have, in fact, reunited and are producing a new album).

Many times a struggling young director's first experience behind the camera is riddled with the logistic woes of independent filmmaking. But Whiteley considers the experience of "New York Doll" a fortuitous one.

"Along the way things fell into place, and in many ways it paralleled Arthur's story. We found investors, rented gear, convinced friends to skip work and make our film, and headed off to New York and London to see if Arthur's dreams - and ours - would materialize. It was very serendipitous. And, in the end, very emotional for everyone involved."

"Arthur was finally able to get to that place he'd been trying to get for so many years and we all feel extremely fortunate to have been able to witness it."

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

GREG WHITELEY (Director)

Greg Whiteley, who makes his feature film debut with *New York Doll* was born in Provo, Utah and raised in the suburbs of Seattle, Washington. Whiteley attended Brigham Young University as an undergraduate, initially majoring in political science. On a whim he took the role of Malcolm in *MacBeth*, and immediately switched his major to film studies, though still uncertain of his ultimate ambition. Some time after viewing Truffaut's *400 Blows* for the first time and hearing a lecture given by playwright Horton Foote he decided to become a filmmaker. His short film at BYU *The Village Singer* won the Final Cut Film Festival's Grand Jury Prize.

Graduating from BYU, Whiteley continued his cinema studies by accepting a scholarship to the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, where he earned an MFA. While there he directed two commercial spots, "Egg Test" and "Vegetarian Terrorist" (on which he collaborated with *New York Doll* cinematographer Rod Santiano). Both spots received Clio Awards.

Greg currently lives and works in Los Angeles with his wife and two children and in 2004, Greg started One Potato Productions, which has created DVD and video content for Warner Music, Sanctuary Records, Mattel, the U.S. Marine Corp, Sutter Hospital, and Preferred Freezer.

ED CUNNINGHAM (Producer)

Ed Cunningham graduated from the University of Washington with a concentration in business and finance. As captain of the 1991 National Champion Husky football team, Cunningham's first producing "gig" was making a video of the team's championship season in conjunction with Prime Sports Northwest (now Fox Northwest).

In 1992 Cunningham was drafted by the Arizona Cardinals. He spent four years as a starting offensive lineman with the Cardinals and one year with the Seattle Seahawks before heading behind the scenes as a color analyst for ABC Sports, now entering his ninth year as a college football announcer.

Peripheral to his excursions in the film and sports worlds, Cunningham is on the Board of Directors for Emissions Technology, Inc., a Phoenix-based company that has developed a technology to make fossil fuel burning engines more efficient, and lower their emissions at the same time.

Cunningham makes his home in Los Angeles.

SETH GORDON (Producer/Editor/Graphic Designer)

Seth Lewis Gordon is an honors graduate (architecture) of Yale, with additional training and honors at Oxford and the Harvard School of Design. He has produced and directed documentaries for PBS, the Gates Foundation, and the United Nations.

As co-founder of LargeLab, a full service production company, Gordon writes and directs live action and animated projects for clients including The Dixie Chicks, MTV, Nike, Fox and Ford. Three years running Gordon's projects have been selected for the Sundance Film Festival, including *New York Doll* and two shorts: *Fears of a Clown* and *Squirt*.

Currently Gordon is 2nd unit director, associate producer, and editor of *Cry Wolf*, a feature film for Universal slated for release this fall.

RODERICK SANTIANO (Cinematographer)

From his first venture in film at the age of 14, Roderick has shown diverse talents in the realm of film and visual arts. Roderick found his love for cinematography in high school while learning and excelling in every aspect of the filmmaking process along the way. Always affected by the human relationship in stories, Roderick seeks to lens projects where character and heart are the principle elements of the film.

Born and raised in southern California, Roderick graduated Art Center College of Design in December of 1996 and has since been director of photography on numerous commercials, shorts and feature films. His work includes well over one hundred projects and, of those, many have won several awards in film festivals, have gone on to gain national television exposure and have also won Clio and AICP awards.

New York Doll marks the seventh collaboration with Whiteley. Roderick currently resides in Utah with his wife, Wendy, and his soon-to-be-born son, Indiana.