



From left to right

David
jacket *What Comes Around Goes Around*
jeans *Replay*
shirt, boots and rings David's own
Sami
suit *Sinner/Saint*
chains *What Comes Around Goes Around*
shoes and shirt Sami's own
Brian
jacket vintage *Vivienne Westwood*
T-shirt *G-Star*
shirt *Marithé + François Girbaud*
jeans *Replay*
shoes *Converse*
Sylvain
ascot, tie tack and shoes *J. Lindeberg*
shirt *John Varvatos*
jeans *G-Star*
sunglasses *Diesel*
jacket and hat Sylvain's own
Steve
suit *DeHoghton NYC*
scarf *Screaming Mimi's*
T-shirt, belt and shoes Steve's own

One Day It Will Please Us to Remember Even This

BY SEAN CARRILLO/PHOTOGRAPHY TOM FOWLKS

The New York Dolls



David
top Diesel

I had arranged to meet the New York Dolls at a loft photo studio in Long Island City. When I arrived, the shoot was in progress. I had barely entered the room when I felt the tension. Something was wrong. People were milling about urgently, avoiding eye contact and speaking in hushed tones. Apparently, it revolved around a conflict in styling. I immediately felt a surge of sympathy for the young stylist.

With their outlandish, ridiculous theater-inspired, deconstructed clothes and self-styled hairdos, The New York Dolls ushered in a new era of fashion for bands across the globe when they debuted at New York's notorious Endicott Hotel homeless shelter on Christmas Eve 1971. So you can imagine how difficult it would be to style the progenitors of such quintessential rock chic.

The shoot struggled forward, the air thick and heavy with effort. Camera clicks punctuated the silence. The next setup was a two-shot with Sylvain Sylvain and David Johansen. The clicks came even more slowly now. The subjects looked strained as they attempted to follow directions.

Suddenly Johansen grabbed Sylvain with an exaggerated gesture, as if to kiss him on the lips. The room exploded in laughter. The relief was palpable and the shoot continued apace as Johansen and Sylvain playfully mugged for the camera.

The camaraderie and friendship between these two collaborators is deep and genuine. This is how a band endures and evolves, I thought, especially when so many of its original members are no longer living, or, as Johansen puts it, are merely "at Woodlawn," the cemetery in the Bronx.

Last year, The New York Dolls released their first studio album in more than three decades - *One Day It Will Please Us to Remember Even This*, on Roadrunner Records. Despite the self-mocking title, it is a compendium of hard-driving, uplifting, bluesy, honky-tonkin, first-rate rock 'n' roll. From the opening "We're All in Love" to the playful and touching "Take a Look at My Good Looks," *One Day* moves from cut to cut without pause or distraction like a great album should.

Among this garden of delights is the beautiful and elegiac "I Ain't Got Nothin." Like a hopeless plea from the edge of loneliness, it's the soundtrack of the morning after, when the night before has gone terribly wrong... again.

During a break in the shoot, I spoke with The Dolls about music. Sylvain began by introducing me to the newest members of the band: guitarist Steve Conte, bassist Sami Yaffa and drummer Brian Delaney. Our conversation turned to defining moments in music.

Sylvain: When I was a kid... in New York City during the summertime, they had the beer festivals in Central Park. This was 1967 and I went to see the Young Rascals. The opening band is about to come on and the announcer comes out and he says, 'Ladies and gentlemen, for the first time in the United States, here they are from England, Jimi Hendrix and the Experience.' It was the first show they ever played here. They each have one stack of Marshall amps. Now, only one amp, not like this wall with the dummies.

Sami: These were the real things.

Sylvain: Yeah, but they each had one and we saw those and I was with Billy Murcia, our first drummer, and I said, 'Billy look at those fucking amps, they look like they're as tall as the Empire State Building.' We never saw amps like that. We had small Fender amps. He (Hendrix) comes out and does his whole thing and man, we all got up on the seats and we were fucking like nuts. The whole thing had changed in one minute. The Young Rascals come out and I forget the guitar player's name...

Steve: Gene Cornish

Sylvain: Gene Cornish, he starts hitting his Fender amp to try to get feedback. The whole thing had changed right there.

After the photo session, Johansen and the lovely Mara Hennessey, his companion, offer me a ride into the city so we can continue our conversation. The talking points meander from French and Latin to Picasso and W.C. Handy. Then I ask him about the inspiration for a particularly absurd lyric on the new album:

Tommy's got a brother named Thomas and another brother named Tom.

Johansen tells me that it's based on a real person and the names are, in fact, real. After a small pause he adds, "... and his dad's name was Thomas."

On arriving in the city, Johansen offers to continue our conversation over a drink at the local café. We sit at the outdoor tables and indulge our mutual affection for tea and cigarettes. A man at the next table, in typical New York fashion, begins telling us the intimate details of his life and various near escapes from death. One story in particular includes a naked nurse. "I remember once making love to a nurse and we were both having a cigarette and the cigarette started the mattress on fire. We were both naked but we forgot because we wanted to put out the fire," he says. Johansen interjects: "What's the point of sleeping with a nurse if she's naked?"

After a few minutes, another typical New York denizen approaches, a street preacher with a bible in one hand. He makes his way down the street admonishing all sinners and telling them he loves them. Hennessey whispers to me: "Some people think he's a zombie but I think he's a saint. Look at his eyes." Then she yells: "I love you too!" Johansen adds his own sentiment: "You'll never know how much we love you."

Amidst all the distractions, I manage to steer the conversation back to the music, and we make our way to the inimitable Maria Callas. "Callas is like the Janis Joplin of opera," Johansen opines. "I was a camp follower of hers (Joplin's) when I was a teenager. Anywhere in a hundred-mile radius I went to see her. So sometimes I'd see her five times in one week."

Perhaps Sylvain put it best when he said, "The New York Dolls is really a blues band when you take off the lipstick, the *rouge à lèvres*, as we say in French."

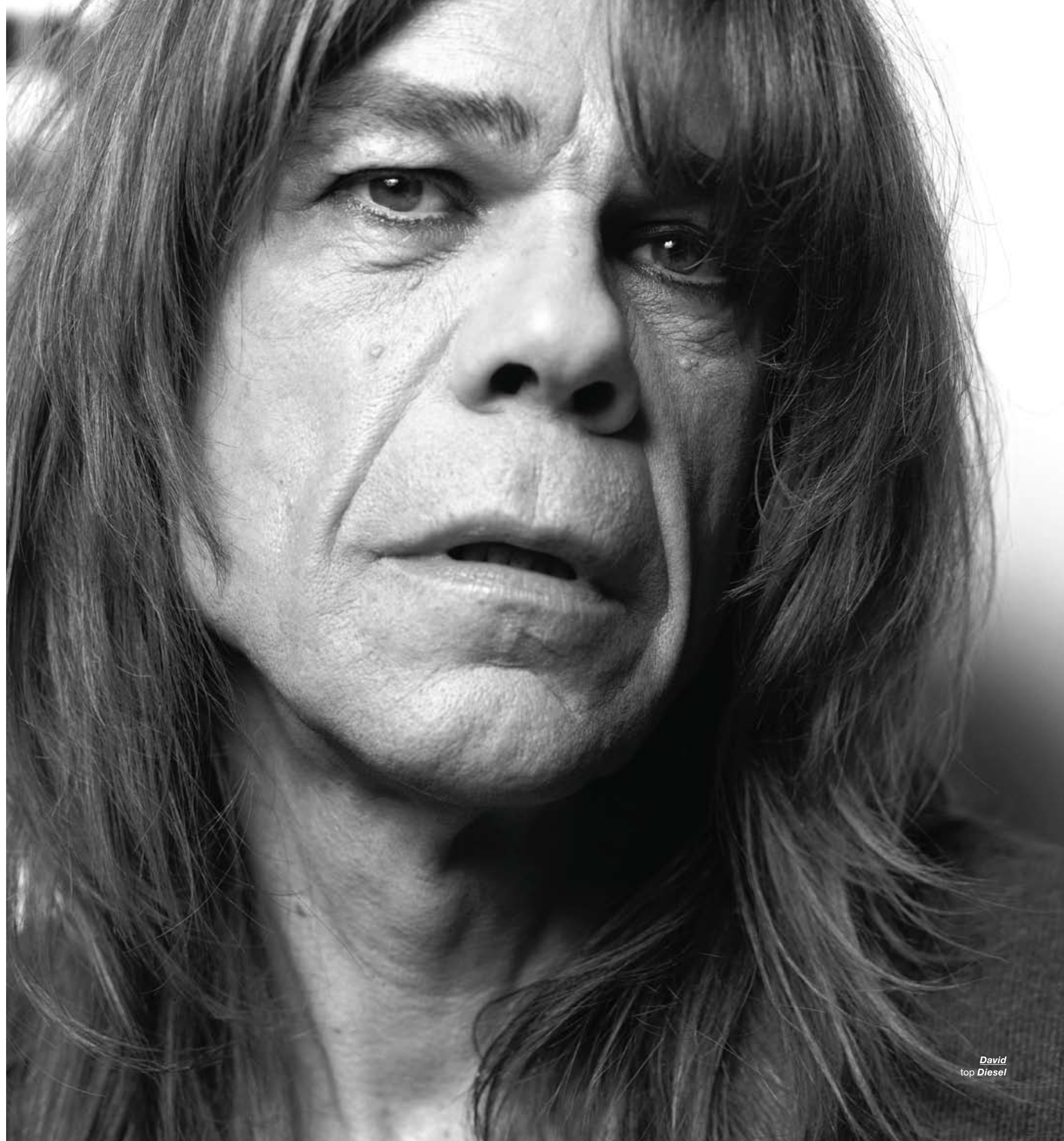
Whatever the basis and whatever their influences, very few musicians or bands can make a record more than 25 years after their first recordings and still create music that is contemporary, profound and beautiful. If it bears any resemblance to music being made today, it's because long ago, The New York Dolls tore down the walls and we are still dancing on the rubble.



Sylvain
ascot, tie tack and shoes *J. Lindeberg*
shirt *John Varvatos*
jeans *G-Star*
sunglasses *Diesel*
jacket and hat Sylvain's own

**“The New York Dolls
is really a blues band
when you take off
the lipstick.”**

Sylvain Sylvain



The New York Dolls Stranger than fiction from then to now:

Malcolm McLaren became manager of The New York Dolls in the mid-70s after Mercury Records dropped the band following disappointing record sales. Everything McLaren would later do with The Sex Pistols, failed miserably with The Dolls. He dressed them in red leather and had them perform in front of the USSR flag to illustrate their communist sympathies. Johnny Thunders and Jerry Nolan left and eventually Johansen and Sylvain fired McLaren before The Dolls disbanded in 1977.

In 2004, Morrissey, once President of Britain's The New York Dolls fan club, invited what was left of the band to perform at London's Meltdown Festival. Johansen, Sylvain and Arthur Kane played, with Steve Conte (from Johansen's solo band) standing in for Thunders, and Gary Powell from the Libertines on drums. The Doll's set was well received by critics and fans (and was recorded for release on DVD and compact disc,) which led to offers for other festival appearances. But a few weeks after Meltdown, Kane checked himself into a Los Angeles hospital with what he thought was a severe case of the flu. He was diagnosed with leukemia and died hours later, on July 13, 2004. He was 55.

The following month, the remaining Dolls—along with Sam Yaffa of Hanoi Rocks on bass—played a hometown tribute to their fallen brothers at Little Steven's International Underground Garage Festival in New York City. And here they are, united again in 2006 for *One Day It Will Please Us to Remember Even This*.

Stephen Thomas Erlewine, *All Music Guide*



Steve
suit *DeHoghton NYC*
scarf *Screaming Mimi's*
T-shirt, belt and shoes Steve's own

top right corner
Brian
jacket vintage *Vivienne Westwood*
T-shirt *G-Star*
shirt *Marithé + François Girbaud*



**“Some bands grab you
and they never let you
go and no matter what
they do, they can never
let you down....
The Dolls were that
for me.”**

Morrissey (The Smiths)



David
jacket *What Comes Around Goes Around*
shirt, scarf and rings David's own
Sylvain
T-shirt *Replay*
top *John Varvatos*
jacket, chains and hat Sylvain's own

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