

= Too Much Too Soon (album) =

Too Much Too Soon is the second studio album by American hard rock band the New York Dolls , released on May 10 , 1974 , by Mercury Records . The group was dissatisfied with the sound of their 1973 self @-@ titled debut album , so frontman David Johansen enlisted veteran producer Shadow Morton for Too Much Too Soon . Morton had become disenchanted by the music industry , but was motivated by the band 's energy and agreed to work with them as a challenge . They recorded the album at A & R Studios in New York City .

Although the New York Dolls shared an affinity for Morton , they produced little original material with him . To complete Too Much Too Soon , they covered older songs and re @-@ recorded their past demos . Johansen impersonated different characters on some of the novelty covers , while Morton incorporated many studio sound effects and female backing vocals in his production . For the album , lead guitarist Johnny Thunders wrote and recorded " Chatterbox " , his first lead vocal track .

Too Much Too Soon was released to poor sales and only charted at number 167 on the Billboard 200 . After a problem @-@ ridden national tour , the New York Dolls were dropped by Mercury and disbanded in 1975 . The album received positive reviews from most critics , who felt Morton 's production highlighted the group 's raw sound and made it a better record than their first . Like their debut album , Too Much Too Soon became one of the most popular cult records in rock music and has since been viewed by music journalists as a predecessor to punk rock .

= = Background = =

After being signed by Mercury Records , the New York Dolls released their self @-@ titled debut album in 1973 to poor sales . Although it was praised by critics , the band members were not satisfied with producer Todd Rundgren 's sound for the album and had disagreements with him before recording Too Much Too Soon . Songwriting and production partners Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were originally enlisted to produce their second album , while the band 's guitarist Johnny Thunders wanted to produce it himself . However , Leiber and Stoller withdrew shortly before recording was to begin . The group held a single session with Mercury A & R executive Paul Nelson at Media Sound Recording Studios , where they recorded 14 songs , most of which were cover songs .

At the recommendation of Leiber and Stoller , frontman David Johansen asked veteran producer Shadow Morton to work on Too Much Too Soon . Morton was best known for his work with the Shangri @-@ Las , of whom the New York Dolls were fans , and had also been Johansen 's original choice to produce their debut album . Morton had become disenchanted with the music industry and wanted to challenge himself by producing the band 's second album : " The Dolls had energy , sort of a disciplined weirdness . I took them into the room as a challenge . I was bored with the music and the business . The Dolls can certainly snap you out of boredom . "

= = Recording and production = =

With Morton , the New York Dolls recorded Too Much Too Soon in 1974 at A & R Studios in New York City . The album was later mastered at Sterling Sound and Masterdisk . During the sessions , Morton had Johansen record his vocals several times and incorporated sound effects such as gongs , gunshots , and feminine choruses . In a report on the album 's progress for Melody Maker , journalist Lenny Kaye wrote that they were taking more time than they had on their first record , " bringing in occasional strings and horns , following Shadow 's advice not ' to settle ' . " Morton and the band shared an affinity for each other , as he found the group 's energy in the studio refreshing , while Johansen was fond of Morton and the " looser " feel he provided for their music : " That man is completely unpretentious . He doesn 't think he ever did a marvellous thing in his life . "

The New York Dolls and Morton produced little original material together and had to record cover songs and re @-@ recorded some of the band 's earlier demos to complete Too Much Too Soon ; " Babylon " , " Who Are the Mystery Girls ? " , " It 's Too Late " , and " Human Being " had been

recorded by the band in March 1973 as demos for Mercury before the label signed them . They had also recorded demos of two songs written by guitarist Sylvain Sylvain , " Teenage News " and " Too Much Too Soon " , before working with Morton , but neither were considered for the album . Sylvain said he confronted Morton about this decision , recalling he had been in a rush : " He was too quick with me and said that he 'd been told only to listen to David Johansen and Johnny Thunders . He didn 't want to tell me who had told him that but obviously it was the managers . I just walked out , it was all driving me nuts . "

According to journalist Tony Fletcher , Morton would have been more productive on Too Much Too Soon had it not been for his alcoholism and the lifestyles of the band members ? bassist Arthur Kane was also an alcoholic , while Thunders and drummer Jerry Nolan had heroin addictions . Robert Christgau believed the New York Dolls relied more on cover songs for the album because , " like so many cocky songwriters , David Johansen overloaded his debut with originals and then found that record promotion wasn 't a life activity that inspired new ones . " English writer Clinton Heylin said their inability to sell enough records before may have discouraged them from writing original songs .

= = Music and lyrics = =

According to Billboard magazine , Too Much Too Soon was another hard rock record by the New York Dolls but with a more " sophisticated " production . Music journalist Nina Antonia wrote that because of the group 's " untamable wildness " , the record still sounded eccentric despite attempts by Morton to " polish " their sound , such as by subduing their otherwise unrefined guitar playing . The album featured covers of the Cadets ' 1956 hit " Stranded in the Jungle " , Archie Bell 's 1969 hit " There 's Gonna Be a Showdown " , and Sonny Boy Williamson 's " Don 't Start Me Talkin ' " . On the novelty cover songs , Johansen impersonated characters such as the high @-@ stepper in " (There 's Gonna Be A) Showdown " and Charlie Chan in " Bad Detective " , which has lyrics describing a nonsensical narrative set in China . On " Stranded in the Jungle " , he alternated between a comical reject and a lecherous man at lover 's lane . Journalist Ellen Willis remarked that , like the band 's 1973 song " Personality Crisis " , " Stranded in the Jungle " suggested a theme of " clashing cultures and the dilemma of preserving one 's uniqueness while reaching out to others " .

For " Babylon " , Johansen wrote the lyrics as a tribute to the New York Dolls ' following from outside New York City : " [The song] is about people who live in Babylon , Long Island , New York , who go into the city every night dressed to kill . These people have to get home before sun @-@ up , you know , like vampires that can 't get caught by the sun . " By contrast , Spin magazine 's Eric Weisbard and Craig Marks interpreted " Babylon " as a reference to the Biblical city of the same name because of how the song portrayed " the symbol of decadence as a sanctuary " . The song 's subject leaves Babylon for Manhattan , where she is then hired to work in a massage parlour .

" It 's Too Late " was a commentary on nostalgic fashions and made reference to actress Diana Dors in a lyric rebuking drug use . According to Antonia , the song criticized indifferent , decadent people who cannot , as Johansen sang , " parlez New York français " . On " Who Are the Mystery Girls ? " , he scolded those who abuse love , wanting to " kick it on the floor " and " beat it like a scatter rug " . " Puss ' n ' Boots " was titled after an illustrated , podoerotic magazine sold in adult book stores . Johansen said the song was about shoe fetishism , " or as Arthur [Kane] observed , it 's about ' the woofers in relationship with the woofee ' . " Its lyrics depicted adversities faced by the protagonist , " Little Rhinestone Target " , as he tried to change his name in pursuit of his shoe fetish before the music ended with a gunshot , a sound effect inspired by the Olympics ' 1958 song " Western Movies " . Willis interpreted a feminist subtext in the song , citing the lyrics " sometimes you gotta get away someway / and now you 're walkin ' just like you 're ten feet tall ... I hope you don 't get shot for tryin ' " .

" Chatterbox " was written and sung by Thunders , whom Willis felt " uses his voice as a wailing instrument " similarly to rock singer Robert Plant . The song was Thunders 's first time singing lead and featured vocals Weisbard and Marks said were delivered in a quavering but proud New York accent . His lyrics described the narrator 's growing frustration over a crossed @-@ wire phone

connection with a female subject . On " Human Being " , an ode to self @-@ respect and personal liberty , Thunders introduced his guitar playing with a roughly performed variation on Bill Doggett 's 1956 song " Honky Tonk " . Johansen addressed critics of the band in the song , telling them if they found him objectionable they should instead find themselves " a saint " , " a boy who 's gonna be what I ain 't " , and a " plastic doll with a fresh coat of paint who 's gonna sit through the madness and always act so quaint " .

= = Release and promotion = =

Too Much Too Soon was titled after the biography of the same name on actress Diana Barrymore . According to music journalist Jon Savage , the title was " more than applicable to the Dolls themselves " because of alcoholism and other issues among the band members , including Thunders 's heroin use and Nolan 's contraction of hepatitis . A dedication to Barrymore was printed in the album 's gatefold LP . For its front cover , the group eschewed the drag image that their first album had presented and they had developed a reputation for in favor of a fake concert shot . During the shoot , Thunders held a doll in his arm as if to strike it against his guitar to add shock value .

Released on May 10 , 1974 , Too Much Too Soon was another commercial failure for the New York Dolls , as it only charted at number 167 on the Billboard 200 . It performed well below Mercury 's expectations and sold less than 100 @,@ 000 copies . Two double A @-@ sided , 7 " singles were released to promote the album ? " Stranded in the Jungle " / " Who Are the Mystery Girls ? " in July and " (There 's Gonna Be A) Showdown " / " Puss ' n ' Boots " in September 1974 ? but neither charted . According to Antonia , the selected singles demonstrated how " the Dolls were in need of a hit single and their current producer wanted to see them attain it " by accommodating radio audiences with toned @-@ down studio versions of songs the band had performed more rowdily in concert . Joe Gross wrote in The New Rolling Stone Album Guide (2004) that the band 's attempt to garner more airplay by enlisting Morton did not work because , " with a slicker sound , background choruses , and cleaner riffs , the Dolls just sounded skankier " .

When Too Much Too Soon was released in Europe in July , the New York Dolls performed at the Buxton Festival in Derbyshire and the Rock Prom Festival at Olympia in London . They also embarked on their second tour of the United States , which lasted only a few months . It was marred by cancelled shows and conflicts between the band members stemming from their escalating addictions to alcohol and other drugs . Because of their alcoholism , they failed to set up a recording session for a scheduled third album after the tour had ended , and by 1975 , they were dropped by Mercury and disbanded .

= = Reception and legacy = =

Too Much Too Soon received positive reviews from critics . In a review of the album for Rolling Stone , Dave Marsh hailed the New York Dolls as the leading hard rock band in the US and noted what he felt was Nolan 's competent drumming , Johansen 's ability to add depth to his characters , and Thunders 's innovative guitar playing . Marsh especially praised his playing on " Chatterbox " , calling it " a classic " , and believed even the most brazen songs sounded successful because Morton 's production highlighted the group 's more unrefined musical qualities . Writing for Creem magazine , Christgau said the polished sound reproduction preserved the band 's raw qualities , especially in the case of Johansen 's vocals and Nolan 's drumming , and remarked that Rundgren " should be ashamed ? Shadow Morton has gotten more out of the Dolls than they can give us live on any but their best nights . " Robert Hilburn from the Los Angeles Times felt Too Much Too Soon was a better @-@ produced album that proved the band to be " the real thing " , calling it the best record of derisive punk rock since Exile on Main St. (1972) by the Rolling Stones . In The New Yorker , Ellen Willis wrote that she learned to appreciate Too Much Too Soon more than New York Dolls after seeing the band perform songs from the former album in concert , particularly " Human Being " and " Puss ' n ' Boots " , while Ron Ross from Phonograph Record magazine said the group 's "

easy going ironic sensibility " was expressed " far more amusingly and accessibly " here than on their debut album .

Some reviewers were critical of Too Much Too Soon for what they felt was a poorly recorded and overproduced sound . In a negative review for NME , Nick Kent said it sounded cluttered and " shot through with unfulfilled potential " , while Circus magazine panned the record as " cut after cut of annoying screeching " . It was nonetheless voted the tenth best album of 1974 in the Pazz & Jop , an annual poll of American critics nationwide , published in The Village Voice . Willis , one of the critics polled , listed it as her fifth favorite record of the year . Christgau , the poll 's creator and supervisor , named it third best , and in a decade @-@ end list for The Village Voice , he named it the fourth best album of the 1970s . Los Angeles Times critic Richard Cromelin included it in his list of favorite records from the decade and wrote that Morton 's production made it slightly better than New York Dolls .

Along with New York Dolls , Too Much Too Soon became one of the most popular cult albums in rock music . According to AllMusic senior editor Stephen Thomas Erlewine , the group predated punk rock with their " gleeful sleaziness and reckless sound " on the record , which he said was embellished by Morton 's production details and exemplified by " musically visceral and dangerous " songs such as " Human Being " . In 1986 , Sounds magazine ranked it sixtieth on its list of the 100 best albums of all time . After it was reissued by Mercury in 1987 , Don McLeese of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times wrote that Morton 's production highlighted the New York Dolls ' sense of humor and was rendered vividly by the CD remaster . However , he felt Too Much Too Soon was marred by inconsistent material and rated it lower than their first record . In a review of the reissue , Don Waller of the Los Angeles Times said the underappreciated album was just as much an " instant classic " as New York Dolls .

In 2005 , Too Much Too Soon was remastered and reissued by Hip @-@ O Select and Mercury , after which Christgau wrote in Blender that both it and New York Dolls make up " a priceless proto @-@ punk legacy " . He wrote that although Johansen 's best original songs are on the first record , Too Much Too Soon has consistent hooks , clever lyrics , and exceptional cover songs , including " two R & B novelties whose theatrical potential was barely noticed until the Dolls penetrated their holy essence " . That year , rock journalist Toby Creswell named " Babylon " as one of the greatest songs of all time in his book 1001 Songs . In the Encyclopedia of Popular Music (2006) , Colin Larkin felt the band 's issues with alcohol and other drugs affected their performance on the record , which he deemed " a charismatic collection of punk / glam @-@ rock anthems , typically delivered with ' wasted ' cool " .

= = Track listing = =

= = Personnel = =

Credits are adapted from the album 's liner notes .

= = = New York Dolls = = =

David Johansen ? vocals , gong
Arthur " Killer " Kane ? bass
Jerry Nolan ? drums , percussion
Sylvain Sylvain ? guitar , piano , vocals
Johnny Thunders ? guitar , vocals

= = = Additional personnel = = =

Album Graphics ? graphic supervision
Dennis Druzbik ? engineering

Bob Gruen ? photography
Gilbert Kong ? mastering
Hans G. Lehmann ? photography
Pieter Mazel ? photography
Shadow Morton ? production
Paul Nelson ? A & R
Dixon Van Winkle ? engineering

= = Release history = =

Information is adapted from Nina Antonia 's Too Much Too Soon : The New York Dolls (2006) .