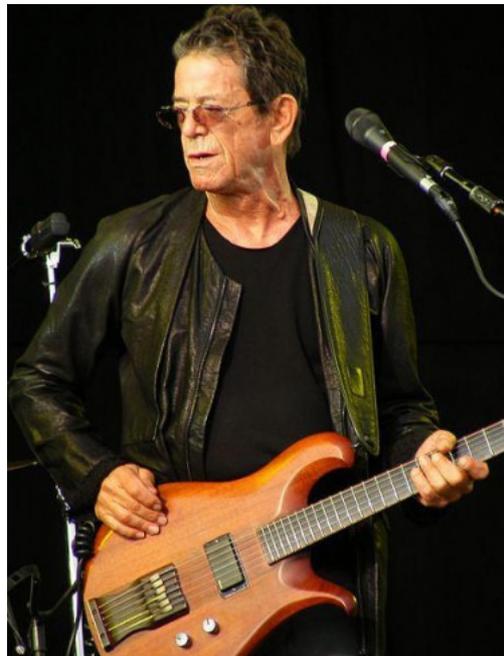


Lou Reed 1942 -2013

By Andrew Glover-Whitley



Lou Reed unfortunately passed away on Sunday after a reaction to a recent liver transplant at the age of 71. Some people were surprised, some were more surprised that he had lived this long, but the one thing that everyone who knew him or his music felt was sadness at his passing away. He was a hard living, hard partying, hard drinking, hard working and caring anti-establishment man. His work has stood the test of time from his early work with the Velvet Underground to his solo work of recent and older times. One thing that ran as a constant throughout his music was one of social realism. He wrote about the things he saw, the people he knew, the experiences he personally underwent.

The outstanding peaks of a career that ran for nearly 50 years were the first Velvet's album "Velvet Underground and Nico" from 1967, and the 1972 masterpiece "Transformer". The famous Velvet's album cover belied an album of harsh social criticism and observation.

The cover was, of course, by the Velvet's producer, friend and enfant-terrible of the art world Andy Warhol and has recently been the subject of a rather complicated **court case**. The album contained the famous tracks "**Venus in Furs**", "I'm Waiting for the Man", "Femme Fatale" and the hauntingly scary "**Heroin**", tracks that spoke of the darker side of life and the human predicament. Especially the drug culture that was growing and gripping the world that the band lived in. The music appeared normal and pop-like until you heard the drones the pungent out of time solos, repetitive rhythms and two chord moves combined with uncomfortable lyrics.

The Velvet Underground were a commercial failure in the late 1960s, but the group gained a considerable cult following in the years after their demise and have gone on to become one of the most widely influential bands of the 60's era. Brian Eno in an interview said that while the Velvet Underground's debut album initially only sold 30,000 copies in its first five years, "*everyone who bought one of those 30,000 copies started a band.*" This may be a slight exaggeration, but it was so influential on players and composers alike as well as the general public that it would never be forgotten.

After the break-up of the Velvet Underground, Lou Reed went his own individual way and produced some of the most iconic pop of the 20th century. Music that challenged, soothed,

cajoled, confronted, stretched and confused. He spent time in Berlin along with David Bowie and others and produced the famous “Transformer” album that made everyone who heard it either fall in love with its sharp edged commentaries or wriggle with an extreme uncomfortable sensation for its honest appraisal of the modern life in a modern dysfunctional world that was broken and divided between Capitalism and Communism, between straight and gay, he wrote about transgender characters and the seedier drug taking world of the undesirable underbelly of society that he saw and experienced. He drank and partied hard and this later took its toll.

The **iconic cover** again is unmissable as well as the tracks such as “Vicious”, a startling portrayal of the homosexual scene he saw in New York, “**Walk On The Wild Side**” again about the new York subculture he had experience of, and the socially subversive “Satelite of Love”. There was also the most beautiful track he ever wrote about a lost lover that became famous again in the mid 2000’s as a charity record with various artists, “**Perfect Day**”.

Reed went on to produce some of the most socially aware music and some of the most movingly political, social and influential music of the time with such brilliant albums as the “Rock and Roll Animal” 1974, “New York” 1989, an album of hard hitting tracks that pared his style down to a small group which was rare for the time of release, and 2003’s “The Raven” based as a concept album on Edgar Allen Poe’s short stories.

One thing that can always be said about Reed was that he was a maverick and an outsider that people loved or could just not understand. There was never a middle ground to be found. If you loved his wayward style, you really gained something that would change your life forever. If you were a straight who didn’t get him, then that was your loss, and so tough! His music may not be the best in the world, but he was one who did it in the world in his own way. Always a leader, never a follower, he will be greatly missed by fans and musicians alike. He was a musicians’ musician. He was a person’s person.