



## Do What You Fear Most: The History of the Velvet Underground

**Richie Unterberger**

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Everyone gets their flowers in *Do What You Fear Most*, Richie Unterberger's excellent history of the Velvet Underground, the beloved and iconoclastic New York rock band.

This biography of the influential band includes an exhaustive catalog of their music: four studio albums, live recordings, films, bootlegs, and selected solo work, spanning tunes from "Sunday Morning" to "Sweet Jane." Serious detective work is used to determine who played what, when, including during live shows. The book also highlights how Lou Reed's celebrated lyrics developed.

The Velvet Underground is portrayed as a tight-knit, principled group that wouldn't, or maybe couldn't, conform to people's expectations. In one rediscovered quote, singer Nico declares that the band's original lineup (Maureen Tucker, Sterling Morrison, John Cale, and Lou Reed) felt like a family that she was merely visiting. It's one of hundreds of great insights pulled from articles, books, and original interviews. The band is remembered by insiders, critics, and fans, and in horrified reviews that are a perverse delight in retrospect.

The book also includes rich original interviews with figures including Reed's first music business boss, Terry Phillips, and the funny, grudge-holding filmmaker Paul Morrissey, who worked closely with the band's first manager, Andy Warhol. Quotes from the Velvets themselves are sharp enough to pop Warhol's famous silver cloud balloons, as are insights from guitarist Doug Yule, whose pop knack smoothed out the band after Cale's departure. Band wives Bettye Kronstad and Martha Morrison also add valuable perspectives. The book has a classy, light touch regarding the band's drama and drugs, which are well documented elsewhere.

Some joys are too brief, but the short run of the Velvet Underground is well celebrated in *Do What You Fear Most*, a devout, expansive history of their music worth relishing.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (May / June 2026)

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