

Velvet Underground album swings through many styles

By Dave Whitaker
Staff Reporter

The Velvet Underground, a fascinating avant-garde 1960s underground band is being heard once again. Polygram Records is re-releasing the group's first three albums, plus a record of unreleased material, *VU*, originally recorded for a fourth album.

Lou Reed, the band's singer, songwriter and lead guitarist, is the most well-known member of the band, and still is active in rock today. The Underground's five-year career, though brief, assured them a place in rock history.

REVIEW *D.I.S.C.*

Andy Warhol produced the group's first album, *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, an album that assured them no commercial airplay because of two songs dealing with heroin and sadomasochism. But the music was fresh and inviting with a raw edge to it. Nico, protegee of Warhol, sang on the first album in a haunting, icy voice.

The following album, *White Light/White Heat* pulled the band further from mainstream pop with a primal energy that easily could alienate listeners, but on the other hand could draw them into the Underground's dark, experimental world. The third album, *The Velvet Underground*, is more accessible, the music a little brighter, but still free of commercialism.

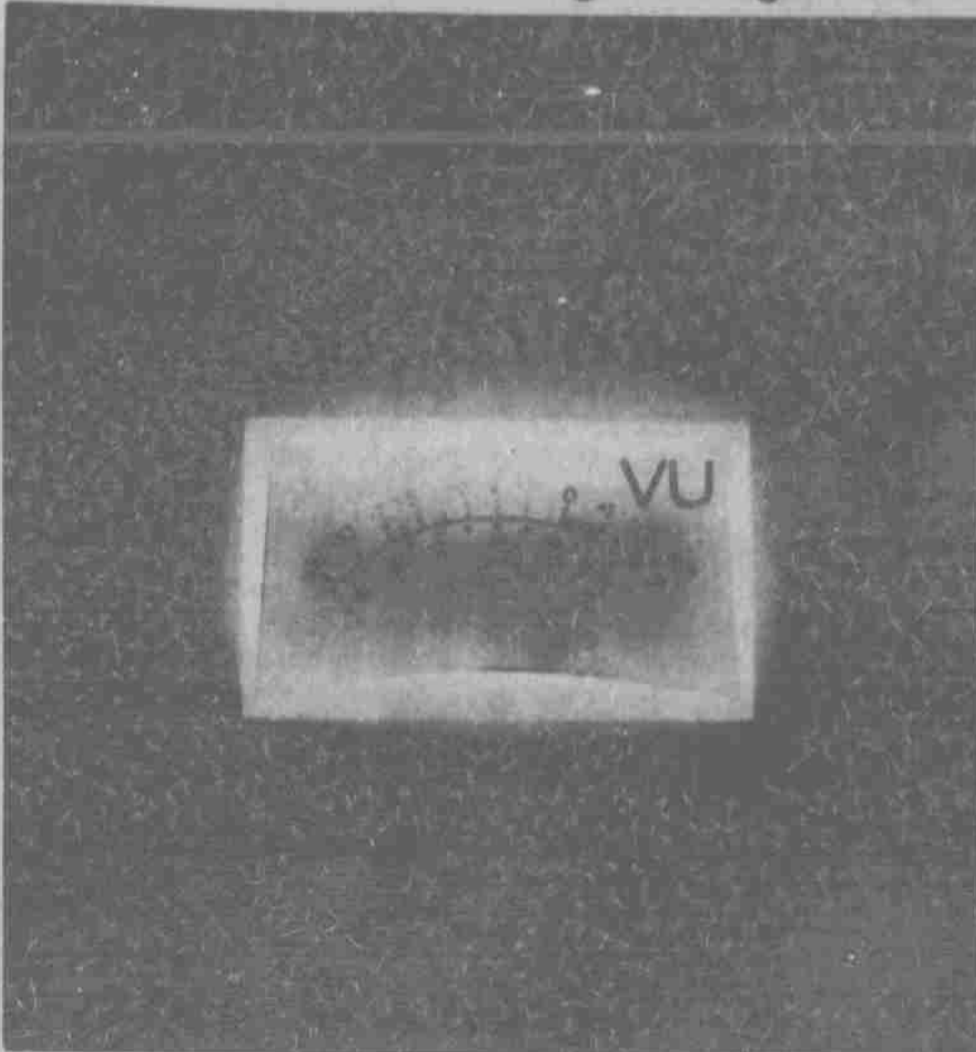
VU comes as a delight to Velvet Underground fans, although Reed already has recorded some of these songs on his solo albums. Following the band's history, the album has not become part of radio airplay. The sound seems to be a little more polished but is true to the Underground's style.

"Stephanie Says," the second song, retreats to a quiet melodic sound, with bells tinkling, and a violin and oboe adding some softness to the background. A lot of the music is folkish, especially the smoke-filled, bluesy "Lisa Says."

The second side of the album moves a little faster and freer. "Temptation Inside Your Heart" contains background bantering and laughter. "Andy's Chest" is one of the best songs, with its playful, nonsensical lyrics. The album ends with "I'm Sticking To You," sung by Tucker and Reed. Tucker adds a school-girl voice. I can imagine a child singing this song, swaying from foot to foot.

Although *VU* doesn't contain work as experimental as the group's earlier albums, the music is still original, fresh and exciting. The Velvet Underground's sound never really could be classified as a particular style because Reed is too much of an experimental songwriter. Listening to *VU* is like taking a trip through musical styles, such as pop, folk, rock, blues, punk and a trace of country.

VU is a refreshing album, compared to some of today's synthesized perfection. Polygram Records made a wise decision in re-releasing the first three Velvet Underground albums and *VU*. This music deserves to be heard.



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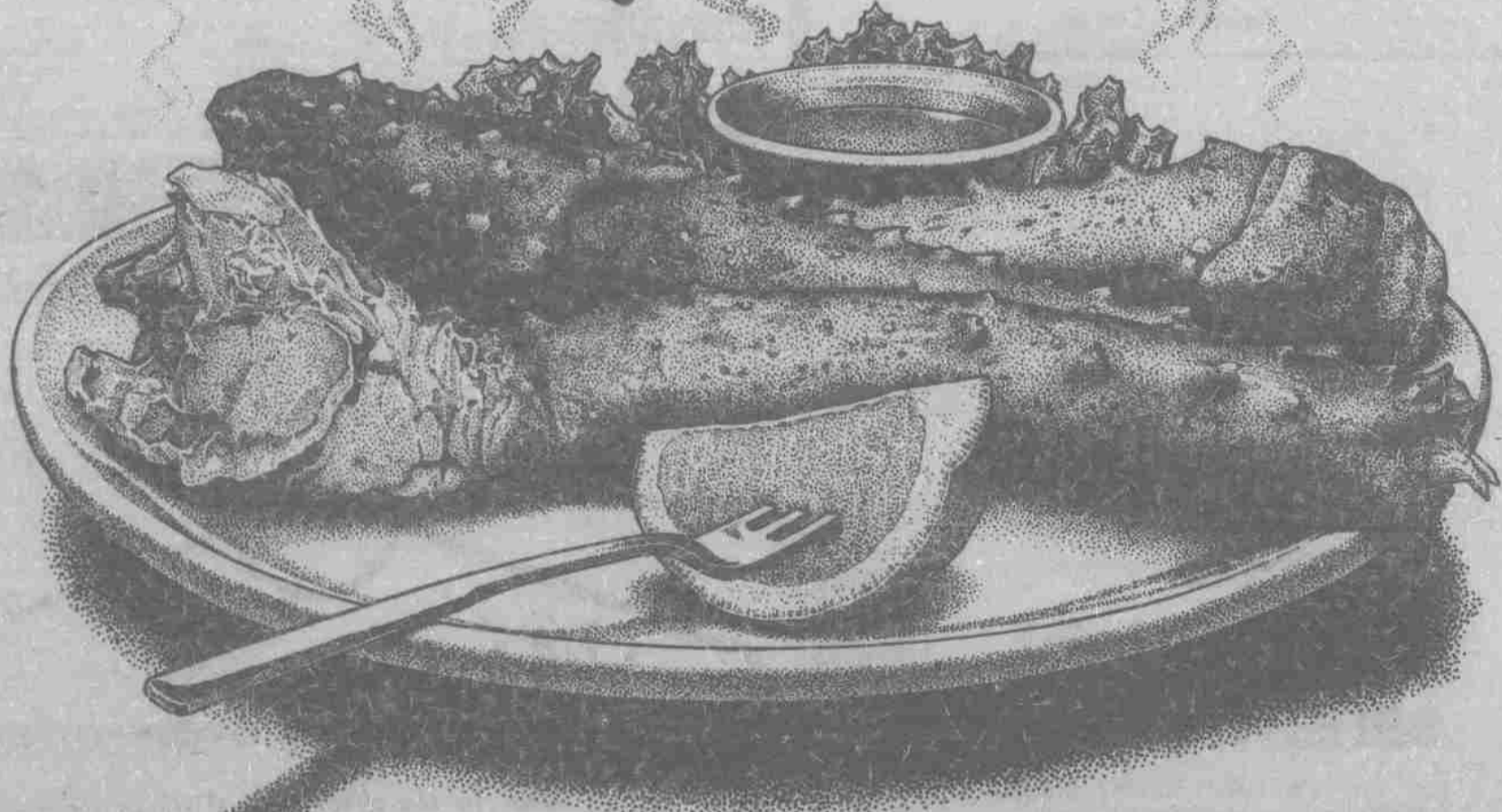
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