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Here we are. Now, entertain us.

**The Small Faces***Under Review: An Independent Critical Analysis*

Chrome Dreams

www.chromedreams.co.uk

The most amazing three years in the history of rock and roll music.

Unlike most rock and roll DVDs these days, *The Small Faces: Under Review* is more a documentary approach to the history of the group, and a critical analysis of their singles and albums. From "What Cha Gonna Do About It?", with its riff stolen discretely from **Solomon Burke** to the wickedly rollicking "The Universal", this brief history of one of the finest of the mod scene's bands is informative and highly entertaining. It seems from the very second that **Steve Marriott** and **Ronnie Lane** formed **The Small Faces** with **Kenny Jones** and **Jimmy Winston** that there was an extraordinary spark that aimed the band toward stardom, not only in the East End of London, but across the rock'n'roll world. The band had its own unique style, pulled from various musical and social sources, and the amazingly mature and growly voice of Steve Marriott.

The obvious parts of the early history of the band are spoken, such as the dramatic influence of American R'n'B music, and **Booker T And The MGs** in particular. In the view of those around them, and their biographers, for the first four singles and the first record, they were just a London version of Booker T, playing pop numbers - with the notable exception of their second single, the dark and headily psychedelic "I've Got Mine", which drew nothing but disparagement from their manager at the time, **Don Arden**. In reality, this track was a bit ahead of its time, as the **Yardbirds** would go on to record music of this sort in just a few months time. The breakout track "All Or Nothing" is well represented here, with stories from many folks who witnessed the band move to the next level of musical freedom and expression.

The psychedelic year is freely explored with the amazing "Here Comes The Nice" and the oft-misunderstood "Itchycoo Park". The critics view of the band's swing from R'N'B pop group to hippy psychedelic group is enlightening, and in retrospect sheds a bit of light on the other bands that were happening at the time. The glory of "Tin Soldier" is brought out and lit up in a way that most listeners wouldn't really get to on their own. Let's not forget the maniacal absurdity of "Lazy Sunday" or the obscure thoughts behind the band's final single, "The Universal".

As well as revealing some insightful stories about the band, the DVD shows some amazing archival footage of the band performing, including an amazing version of "What Cha Gonna Do About It?" from Studio Hamburg when the band was only a year into their career. Another of the highlights of the DVD is listening to **Keith Altham**, NME journalist and editor from 1963 to 1971, talk about the various characters on the mod scene, from the managers to the artists. Also included on the DVD is "The Hardest Small Faces Quiz In The World Ever", as well as an



exhaustive discography featuring singles, albums, DVDs, guest appearances, and Steve Marriott's solo recordings.

-Embo Blake

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