

## *The Small Faces: Under Review*

Contributed by Brent Simon

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For music fans who came of age after the British invasion and mod-rock explosion of the 1960s, it's easy to fall in nodding lockstep with the frequently peddled notion that there were only the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. The Kinks are measured right up there with the market leaders, but four *other*, now more anonymous East End lads also made a convincing case for their own creative genius during the same period.

A sort of celebratory nostalgic piece, *The Small Faces: Under Review* shines a light on those blokes, probably the best English band of the era never to truly hit it big in the States. Comprised of lead singer/guitarist Steve Marriott, bassist Ronnie Lane, drummer Kenney Jones and Jimmy Winston on organ, Small Faces were driven by a rollicking and theatrical take on American R&B and rock 'n' roll often somewhat at odds with their dandified look. (They also lacked the photogenic appeal of the Beatles or extant charisma of the Stones, two big strikes against them.) A string of mid-'60s chart-toppers left them poised for something more, but what really doomed them was a too-heavy tour schedule and – the old industry bugaboo – increasing experimentation with drugs, which eventually bent their unique sound more toward psychedelic influences.

Independent review and criticism from a roundtable of talking heads lends *The Small Faces: Under Review* its academic-leaning title, and it's true that mod expert and Marriott biographer Paolo Hewitt, 1960s *NME* editor Keith Altham, former *Melody Maker* contributor Chris Welch, musical historian and Small Faces biographer John Hellier and *Uncut* features editor Nigel Williamson, among others, provide a backdrop of valuable aural and historical context. Still, it's the rare performances of "Ichycoo Park," "Lazy Sunday," "Hey Girl," "Tin Soldier," "The Universal," "All or Nothing," "What'cha Gonna Do About It?" and more that make the title such a boon for collectors and old school music fans. Archival promo material, TV clips and interview footage give a comprehensive view of Small Faces at the top of their game, the only real strike being the friendly, occasionally fawning prism through which this unauthorized documentary still filters the group's break-up and demise.

Running roughly an hour long and presented in full-screen format, *The Small Faces: Under Review* is of marginal but acceptable quality visually, and its stereo sound mix is similarly tolerable. DVD special features include an interactive quiz that will surely stroke the egos of cultish fanatics, a comprehensive digital, illustrated discography and additional biographical information. *The Small Faces: Under Review* is not necessarily for mainstream tastes, but definitely of value to musicologists. **B- (Movie) C- (Disc)**

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