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In Rotation
A&E Section

Lost for decades beneath the weight of longer-lasting and better-selling hit bands of the British Invasion of the 1960s, The Small Faces have recently begun to be re-evaluated as fans of contemporary R&B-influenced pop acts The Killers, Franz Ferdinand, The White Stripes and others have been out scouring record bins and Internet archives for evidence of earlier mentors.

Maybe that's why the 60-minute documentary *The Small Faces: Under Review* (Chrome Dreams) takes a rather scholarly, academic approach to what was, in its time, regarded as a great East End R&B outfit (guitarist-singer Steve Marriott, bassist Ronnie Lane, successive organists Jimmy Winston and Ian McLagan, and drummer Kenney Jones first fashioned themselves as a British Booker T. & The MGs) that sold out to Carnaby Street-styled Mod stardom and paid the ultimate price.

Not so, argue an impressive array of serious British music critics — in the unexplained and noticeable absence of surviving band members McLagan and Jones — on this almost complete DVD doc. According to Melody Maker/NME/Uncut feature writers, editors and credible rock biographers Paolo Hewitt, Chris Welch, John Hellier, Keith Altham and Nigel Williamson, among others who enthusiastically endorse the original, pre-Rod Stewart foursome on camera, the Small Faces were artistically ahead of their time, and victims of tacky management and pop-crazed media types who ignored their natural talent in favour of their diminutive cuteness and sex appeal.

There's plenty of video evidence to support their claims, most of it culled from vintage German pop TV shows, and live performance footage of material from the execrable first hit "Sha La La La Lee" — an outsider's composition forced on them by dodgy manager Dan Arden — to the luminous "Tin Soldier", the bookends to the Small Faces' very short but eloquently remembered career.

— Greg Quill.