



## Mick Vs. Keith: The Strange Case of Jagger & Richards

### The Rolling Stones

*Chrome Dreams* - DVDIS035 (2-DVD box set)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange  
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This boxed twofer is actually a re-box of *The Roaring 20s: Mick Jagger's Glory Years* and *Keith Richards: Under Review*, the former issued in 2011, the latter in 2007, now paired up for almost four hours of a very satisfying wallow in reminiscence, criticism, adulation, and scandal. I'm linking the reader to my earlier review of the Jagger disc ([here](#)), so I can get on, in this critique, with some agreements and arguments with the twin DVDs and their cast of critics, somewhat re-balancing and re-investigating a few matters the discs touch on.

First of all, the Rolling Stones LPs prior to *Satanic Majesties' Request*, as good as they were, were just warm-ups for the real flowering of the composers themselves. Yeah, yeah, yeah, *Satisfaction*, *Little Red Rooster*, and etc. were very good songs, and I have all the early slabs (in fact, the entire Stones catalogue, period; how could one do without them?), but *Satanic*, as much it tends to be cast into critical limbo, was where the ensemble finally caught up to itself, figuring out how to produce truly original work. Though Jagger pooh-poohs the release, the Brit crits presented in abundance here tend to dismiss his dismissals, as do I, and recognize the LP as a very good fish out of water that immediately led into the amazing *Beggar's Banquet*, arguably their finest hour...and there's plenty of dissent on that too.

*Satanic* was almost, if not in fact, progrock and a response to *Sgt. Pepper's*, the Moody Blues, and other farflung efforts of the time. Sure, the Stones weren't flower-power hippies, but they were remarkable rock and rollers, and, within their métier or not, the LP is undeniably powerful, fanciful, hypnotic, and compelling. Then the lads rolled up their sleeves and really got to work, thus the powerhouses: *Beggar's*, *Let It Bleed*, *Sticky Fingers*, *Exile on Main St.*, and so on, afterwards falling back down the ladder but still capable of far better fare than, say, The Who in their mostly horrid later pap, *Face Dances* and beyond. As these LPs are discussed, a wealth of history is trotted out handily explaining that which has confounded many fans for a long long time, the Jagger disc matter of fact, the Richards gig much darker, as would be expected.

I have to say that it's on the order of the hilarious to see and hear Keith, perhaps THE icon of drug abuse in all rock and roll history, refer to Brian Jones' intake as lamentable. He's right, of course, but also co-guilty, and the pronouncement is akin to Steven Tyler making those anti-drug commercials one can't help but cringe at. The Richards half of this twofer, however, which I'd not seen before, gives a needed detailing of his influences and begins to show why the man, whom no one in their right mind would ever refer to as a great technician, exerted such influence, affecting the rock and roll family tree so heavily: he understood the power of great simple riffs and didn't hesitate to employ them. If the hook is the selling point of most songs, then the riff is just as important, in fact often more so, at least once one gets beyond the giddyness purely of chart considerations.

The parade of critics in these DVDs—excepting the hyperthyroidal Robert Christgau, more fanboy than ever in his waning years, rock and roll's yenta (there's good reason his highly questionable "dean of American rock critics" epithet had to be self-applied, as Wikipedia notes) and a ceaseless exercise in on-screen mugging—give incisive and fair-minded remarks, praising here, sniping there, calling into question various otherwise accepted fallacies and dubieties. The Brits have always been more literate and aesthetically motivated than we Yanks, damn 'em!, and it clearly shows in productions like these...as well as in the fact that Brit mags, including *Mojo*, have forever outshone most if not all U.S. trash, *Rolling Stone* included (were that latter rag to apply the discretions to music that it lavishes on political writers - Matt Taibbi, William Greider, the late Hunter S. Thompson, etc. - the face of American music journalism would change forever; don't hold your breath waiting for that, though).

As ever, voice-over artist Thomas Arnold is an industry standard, and would someone please give Sexy Intellectual, MVD, and those too few other labels an award for just going straight into the documentaries instead of presenting 38 hours of prefatory hard-sell adverts like all the other imprints do? Lord, but that's an all too overdue relief!

Over the last couple years, I've postulated that music docs like this may very well replace critical writing, but I'm going to revise that now. Just as the synthesizer, once feared to take over the orchestra and players themselves, was proven to enrich the musical palette rather than replace elements of it, so too will videos, I'm pretty damned sure, show themselves to be gateway instruments to heighten interest in the fullest background, provoking serious audients to seek out chirographic fare in order to expand interests in both the Baby Boomers, who now, as they trudge to the tar pits, wax ever more nostalgic, and the XYZers, the later generations who are quite intelligent, non-enthusiastic, and in whom I strongly suspect a true socio-cultural historic interest will

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generations who are quite intelligent, very enthusiastic, and in whom I strongly suspect a true socio-cultural historic interest will accompany aesthetic fancies. No movement is ever fully appreciated in its own time, and, though I and my era will not be here to see it, the true renaissance the 60s spawned and its ongoing implications in the 80s and beyond will be a source of intense interest, a subject of endless dissertation-making, and much more fascinating then than it was in its own time or is now. Mark my words on that—and, hell, I'll never have to answer for 'em 'cause I'll be long gone (such things have a way of working out).

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