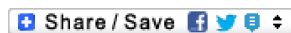


FAME Review: Nadya & Bob Gruen, Photographers - Ike & Tina: On the Road 1971-72 (DVD)




Ike & Tina: On the Road 1971-72

Nadya & [Bob Gruen](#), Photographers

MVD Visual - MVD5276D (DVD)

Available from [MVD Entertainment Group](#).

A review written for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange
by **Mark S. Tucker**
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Bob Gruen had and still has street cred, having been a rock photographer of note in the 70s. He and Nadya, his wife, accompanied Ike & Tina Turner on the road and at home for a couple years, filming this disjunctured but fascinatingly rambling documentary. It's pretty much a universal given that Ike Turner was a jerk, and that's speaking very lightly indeed. This was known at the time to a decent degree, and Tina's later writings and the filmic revelations weren't all that necessary though they certainly amplified the details, so it's wry that *On the Road* opens with vintage footage of her talking about an incident wherein Ike left the group standing on the corner as he drove away...in a fit of pique or to meet a drug connection, one may well assume.

In that interlude, Tina mentions the word 'divorce' and cackles a lot longer than she should have right in his face as Ike's trying to soft soap his way around the issue. The man's change is instantaneous, going from easy-peasy to silently volcanic. A couple years earlier, she would attempt suicide. The road of this duo was one of pure misery, and why she even latched onto the guy in the first place is still a mystery, let alone how she stayed with the bastard those long torturous years, but, sigh! women and their martyr complexes! Nonetheless, the opening shot quickly turns from light and bantering to chilling, and one needs little clue as to the pair's history to catch it.

Going from one vulcanism to the next, things move immediately to a performance, and there's Tina, tempestuous as always, exceedingly easy on the eyes in one of her temptress costumes, the toothsome Ikettes flanking her. As she exclaimed in one of the band's live LP's they "neva evah did anything nice 'n easy", and that's an understatement. Ike's drugs and violence may have overshadowed his musical expertise, but no one ever mistook Tina's force-of-nature on-stage persona for anything but what it was: a troubled and furious goddess come to Earth. Ah, but then the film slips in Nadya running footage of a passel of kids and Tina in the pair's Inglewood home, and everything settles down prosaically, at least for a little while.

There's no narrative to this documentary, it's basically slapdash, but MVD's used the format several times in the past to good effect: you can make of events and the storyline what you will as everything unfolds. When the linearity of such a film is well enough considered, juxtaposition and introspection evoke interesting personal responses. Thus, when the scenario switches to a clip of a Johnny Carson performance, we're right back in that earthy, erotic, sassy landscape amid a well-presented performance exhibiting wit with a New Orleans-ish tunefulness. Listen to the lyrics, though, as they're very telling.

There's a lot of everything here, a sizeable percentage never before seen, including studio work and such, which makes the film become a psychological scrapbook and sometimes a lurid ogle behind the curtain. There's a lot more to rock and roll than carefully crafted PR scams show us, and rock docs like this trot out the warts and blemishes and let you decide for yourself.

Maybe it's just the music-critic/journalist blood in me, not to mention the voyeur, but I love it.

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