

December 18, 2012

<http://cinemasentries.com/post/viewpost/the-yardbirds-making-tracks-dvd-review-great-performances-from-the-21st-century-edition-of-the-band>

The Yardbirds: Making Tracks DVD Review: Great Performances from the 21st Century Edition of the Band

The Yardbirds are a legendary British band, who will be celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2013. There have been a tremendous number of personnel changes over the years, but The Yardbirds will always best be remembered as the band that launched the careers of Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page. Of the '60s lineup, only Chris Dreja (rhythm guitar), and Jim McCarty (drums) remain. But as the new double-DVD *Making Tracks* set shows, the young guns they have brought in certainly know how to rock.

The first DVD is a 15-song collection of live material recorded during 2010-2012. I hesitate to use the term the "new" Yardbirds, as Jimmy Page once used that moniker for Led Zeppelin. It is what it is though, and besides Dreja and McCarty, this edition of the band features Ben King (guitar), Andy Mitchell (vocals, harmonica), and Dave Smale (bass).

The live disc opens with the Mose Allison song "I'm Not Talkin'." This track was first released on the 1965 *For Your Love* album and featured Jeff Beck on guitar. Those are some big shoes to step into, but Ben King does not seem to be too fazed about it. I am not going to say that he is the next Beck or anything, but he acquits himself quite well not only on this song, but throughout the set.

As the blues boom took hold in England, The Yardbirds were at the forefront. I believe this is one reason they were able to attract such brilliant guitarists as they did. It also led to their eventual downfall, as pressure from the record company to produce hits deeply conflicted with their desire to play the blues. The final '60s incarnation of the band featured Jimmy Page, and the last Yardbirds album for decades was *Little Games*. In homage to one of the band's biggest heroes, they wrote a tune called "Drinking Muddy Water." A new, very hot version of this is the second song on *Making Tracks*.

As I previously alluded to, and as many Led Zeppelin fans know, the final days of The Yardbirds were actually the beginnings of the mighty Zep. As The Yardbirds disbanded, they still had concert commitments, which Page fulfilled with Robert Plant, John Paul Jones, and John Bonham as the "New Yardbirds." It seems fitting that the 21st century Yardbirds would pay tribute to Led Zeppelin with a cover of "Dazed and Confused." They do a nice job with it

too, although King refrains from pulling out the violin bow during the solo section. He does get into a pretty cool guitar/harmonica trade-off segment with Mitchell however.

One of The Yardbirds' biggest hits was "Heart Full of Soul." Interestingly enough, when that song was released as a single, all three of The Yardbirds' famous guitarists were connected to it. Jeff Beck actually played, but when the single was released in the U.S., the Clapton lineup of the band were featured on the picture sleeve. Then in 1968, when The Yardbirds appeared on the British show *Upbeat*, Jimmy Page was part of the group who mimed the ditty.

Other highlights of the set include some very enthusiastic audience participation during "Over Under Sideways Down," and some very tasty blues guitar during "The Nazz are Blue." The closer is "I'm a Man," written by Muddy Waters. Waters called this one "Mannish Boy," so I am not exactly sure why it is listed as "I'm a Man" here. Whatever you call it though, it is one of the greatest blues songs ever written, and again features some furious guitar/harmonica dueling between King and Mitchell.

The second DVD of *Making Tracks* is devoted to extra material, of which there is quite a bit. The main piece is a 26-minute tour documentary titled "Glimpses." During this segment, McCarty and Dreja talk about how much easier touring life has become since the '60s. A performance of the song "Glimpses" from a show in Norfolk, CT is also included.

"Ben Visits Guitar Shop" is an eight-minute bit which provides us with a little insight into the young guitar-gun Ben King, during a visit to the Music Emporium in Lexington, MA. There are also two brief interviews included, one with Dreja (four minutes), and one with Jim McCarty (six minutes).

When not working with The Yardbirds, Jim McCarty leads the imaginatively named Jim McCarty Band. The final two bonus features are performances of "Dream Within a Dream," and "Isadora" from them.

The Yardbirds were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992. As *Making Tracks* proves though, they are not calling it a day just yet. The British Blues Boom was a curious beast, but some fantastic music came out of it. The Yardbirds continue that tradition with the many great performances collected here.