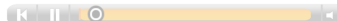


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'Yardbirds: Making Tracks' Will, Indeed, Have You Making Tracks

By [Jedd Beaudoin](#) 1 January 2013

Those Yardbirds. First formed circa 1963, the band became one of the most influential of the British Invasion bands if not one of the best selling on the American shores. Fusing elements of American blues--which was sweeping and swaying all over Great Britain at the time--with the best of rock 'n' roll, these cats were as dirty if not dirtier than the Stones and certainly came with a better pedigree--Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, and Eric Clapton all passed through the ranks and the group managed to find a more convincing and serrated take on psychedelic sounds with tracks such as "Heart Full of Soul" and "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago"--even ahead of The Beatles and aforementioned anti-moss gatherers.

By 1968, the group was over and Jimmy Page recruited a new group of lads including Robert Plant and John Bonham to tour as The New Yardbirds before shedding the moniker entirely and seeing his new outfit become you-know-who. The intervening years were not entirely kind to the Yardbirds. Never an albums band the group's singles, although powerful and influential--without these fellas there would be no Aerosmith and KISS's rougher edges would have been much duller--became ephemeral to many in the rock market.

Everyone knew the story of the band probably better than the band's actual music. Which is too bad, because there are some real zinger's in the group's oeuvre. "Train Kept A Rollin'" ain't the kind of thing your average lad can whip up and "Over Under Sideways Down" remains unparalleled in its pre-emptive punch and pow. Sure, there were covers by the score and the group never really found an identifiable Jagger-Richards/Lennon-McCartney formula on which to build its house. No matter. You can't take nothin' away from that first era and you'd be almost downright damned foolish to try and add to it.

Yet the band has existed once more since 1992, steered by original rhythm guitarist Chris Dreja and drummer Jim McCarty, plus an endless parade of mostly faceless players. Vocalist Keith Relf died tragically in the 1970s and the hotshot guitarists who moved through the ranks are, er,



Making Tracks: On Tour 2010-2012

(MVD; US DVD: 12 Dec 2012)

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unavailable. But musicians have to eat and, really, what could be the harm in putting together a pack of players, calling it Yardbirds, and taking the music to the streets?

The outfit coughed up a new record in 2003 with a guest spot from Jeff Beck, although the material was mostly old stuff reheated for the digital age with new players and a couple of new tracks that were not up to the Birds of yore standards also got paraded out. That release (called *Birdland*) mustered a few sympathetic ears and some even flocked to hear the reconstituted unit live and thought highly enough to pass the word along.

So, here we are now, round about 2010 when some of the tracks on this DVD set were recorded (other material comes from 2011 and 2012) and nothing's really gotten better. It's a good old band playing at being a good old band with some lads in the ranks whose mothers weren't born when "Shapes of Things" first showed up.

It's not that the lads are bad or that the performances are spotty, it's just that it doesn't have the gas. The elder members are too much in the background and the new kids are too much in the forefront. And, if you didn't catch it its more subtle iteration, this sounds like a covers band having a go at being Yardbirds for an evening. McCarty and Dreja, bless 'em, have a noble goal in mind here, no doubt, but that doesn't matter. It's all a little depressing to watch and while the Birds certainly have an audience willing to hear material such as "The Nazz Are Blue", this writer isn't part of that group.

One disc is taken up by live performance whilst the other consists of a tour documentary, an interview with Dreja, an interview with McCarty, a few bonus cuts, performances from the Jim McCarty Band and one or two things you really don't care about. If you want Yardbirds, drop some coin on past material.

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7 Jan 2009

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