

# THE STASH DAUBER

RANTS OF AN UNRECONSTRUCTED MUSIC GEEK

TUESDAY, JUNE 18, 2013

## "Tribute to Ron Asheton" DVD

I don't make pilgrimages to see bands anymore, but I know a few people who were at Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater for this show, and they all say it was something special. This DVD bears them out, and is a huge improvement over the *In the Hands of the Fans* disc from a couple of years back. If you want to see the Stooges with James Williamson on video, this is the way to go. But there's more...

Ron Asheton -- groundbreaking guitarist on the first two Stooges albums and bassist on *Raw Power*, B-movie actor, and raconteur extraordinaire -- shuffled off this mortal coil at the beginning of 2009, aged 61. Before he left, he got a nice victory lap, touring the world with the reunited Stooges from 2003 to 2008, playing to many times the number of folks that got to see the band in their initial 1967-1974 trajectory. His sister Kathy put together this hometown show in the spring of 2011 to salute his memory and benefit the foundation that bears his name, dedicated to supporting animal welfare and musical endeavors. Henry Rollins served as master of ceremonies and provided guest vocals on the opening song in the Stooges' 19-song set, which was augmented by an orchestra (!) and Ron's friend and fellow Ann Arborite, Radio Birdman guitarist Deniz Tek, on a handful of Ron-era numbers.

I'll admit that I dig Henry Rollins' writing and spoken word more than his music; as an intelligence and a presence, the cat is undeniable. He speaks eloquently and at length about Ron's legacy to start things off, then cedes the mic to normally taciturn drummer Scott Asheton, who thanks Iggy for letting his brother realize his rock 'n' roll dreams ("and that goes for the drummer, too"). Rollins fronts the band on its opening number, "I Got A Right," then Iggy explodes out of the wings as James kicks off "Raw Power." The Stooges play the set they've been performing since James returned to the fold in the wake of Ron's demise, a mixture of songs off their three albums along with a couple from Iggy and James' post-Stooges release *Kill City* and one song -- "Open Up and Bleed" -- from the never-officially-recorded, post-*Raw Power* period.

Iggy seems to be conserving his energy more than he did earlier in

ABOUT ME



THE STASH DAUBER  
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WHERE THE WEST  
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STATES

I've written about music for publications (hard copy and online) including the Dallas Observer, Fort Worth Weekly, I-94 Bar, First Church of Holy Rock and Roll, Polish Jazz (Poland), Shindig (UK), Funhouse (Italy), and The Big Takeover. I played guitar in Stooageophilia and made banging and scraping noises in Hentai Improvising Orchestra (see links).

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the reunited band's trajectory, but he's all about connecting with the audience in this relatively intimate theater setting. The show is beautifully shot, with a good mix of group, individual, and audience views that gives a good feel for what it felt like to be there. The stage invasion on "Shake Appeal" is the most insane and absolute of any of the post-reunion Stooge shows I've seen -- there must be a hundred people onstage, jammed asses to elbows, and you can imagine the black-clad security dudes had their work cut out for them protecting the equipment and the musicians. But unlike, say, the crowd in the James Brown show in Boston the night Martin Luther King was shot, these folks know their role in the drama, and clear the stage at the end of the song with relatively little fuss.

I don't know what the live mix was like, but to these feedback-scorched ears, there's way too little of Mike Watt's bass in the DVD mix -- particularly striking in light of Rollins' comments on the primacy of the rhythm section. "Funhouse" sounds sparse in this version. With Iggy cuing them like a soul singer, the band shows they have a good sense of dynamics, and Steve Mackay's sax provides most of the instrumental mania. "Open Up and Bleed" is a high point -- for my money, the best song the Williamson-era Stooges ever did -- and the version here is damn near definitive. (I wish I still had the version from, I believe, Isle of Wight 2010, when Scott Thurston was briefly on board again.) Things really pick up from there, with "Your Pretty Face Is Going To Hell" leading into a big block of Ron-era songs.

When I heard "Stooges with orchestra," I was initially skeptical -- things like this tend to be either good or very, very bad. "I Wanna Be Your Dog" is an encouraging start, with the strings playing the telegraphic high note that John Cale's one-note piano played on the studio version. Deniz Tek takes James' place onstage for the sequence "TV Eye"-"Loose"-"Dirt"-"Real Cool Time." Again, the band sound here is more spacious than in the studio versions, and the orchestral arrangements are unobtrusive and supportive. At one point in "Loose," Iggy careens into Deniz and then goes to the floor in an echo of his more dissolute past, and he wrings every ounce of drama out of "Dirt." He makes a few brief comments before "Ron's Tune," the new original that evolved into something more considered as "The Departed" on *Ready To Die*, but here is raw emotion. And they take it out with a rousing "No Fun." You get the feeling that somewhere, Ron was smiling (when not trying to flick cigarette ashes on Iggy's head).

Special features include the opening set by a band called the Space Age Toasters, and interviews (shot by Tony D'Annunzio, director of *Louder Than Love: The Grande Ballroom Story*, recently reviewed here) that include Rollins (getting his spiel together the night before the concert), filmmaker Jim Jarmusch (whose own Stooges doco we

nothing to see here

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#### ELECTRONIC RESUME OF MY WRITING

jimmy recca (stooges) interview  
 james williamson (stooges) interview  
 ron asheton (stooges) interview  
 sonic's rendezvous band bio  
 scott morgan 1998 interview  
 rationals bio  
 mc5 bassist michael davis  
 original mc5 bassist pat burrows  
 iconic photographer leni sinclair  
 interview with journeyman detroit  
 bassist ron cooke  
 mick farren interview  
 roy loney (flamin' groovies) interview  
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 tim hurley  
 the owl and the octopus on blogspot  
 the grubbermeister  
 ritual runes  
 jeff liles in the dallas observer blog

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#### INSPIRATORS

anxiously anticipate), and Deniz Tek (who speaks of Ron with the real affection of a close friend).

They've come a long way from their beginnings as the ultimate outsiders to this once-in-a-lifetime performance, but like my buddy Geoff from Philly (who was there) is fond of saying, "The Stooges always win."

POSTED BY THE STASH DAUBER AT 9:48 PM




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## 2 COMMENTS:

 John E. Epiphone said...

Spot on review, Ken!

1:28 AM

 Fast Film said...

I'm glad others now can share this dynamic (as usual) and emotional (uniquely) performance by Iggy and The Stooges as well. Ken as usual nails the appeal in his article. I might however, defend "In the Hands of the Fans" for its accurate reflection of Stoooge zeitgeist in its unchoreographed cinematography. To have filmed them a la music video formula with its juggernaut of 4 second cuts betwixt closeups and waving hands crowds a some generic festival would have been sacriligious!

8:57 AM

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