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DVD reviews: *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Rolling Stones and The Rolling Stones 1969-1974: The Mick Taylor Years* (with video)

October 21, 2010 at 12:55 pm by Steve Seachrist



Earlier this year, I was lamenting the lack of hot, archival video releases from these now-geriatric British rockers. Then, just the other day, I noticed that Best Buy was selling the new-to-DVD concert film, *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Rolling Stones*, for eight bucks. I had never seen it, really, and who has? It had a proper theatrical release back in the day (1974), both in quad-sound and mono, then it sank like a stone(!) for the better part of 36 years and hasn't seen a U.S. release in a home format until now. And I'll just say, it is something of a crime that what could very well be the best live document of this band has been languishing in some vault for all of this time.

It would not be overstating it to say that these guys could be uneven in their live performances. Sometimes they were just plain awful. When you read about their studio experiences, you realize that it took a whole lot of patience to come up with a classic [Rolling Stones](#) recording that would stand the test of time. Of course, they succeeded at that again and again, but these were painful births. Their acknowledged masterpiece, *Exile on Main Street*, came together only through extreme perseverance. So to expect them to deliver the goods consistently in a live setting is silly and guarantees you will be disappointed. The DVD extras from the *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!* re-issue are a prime example. They make you yearn for the dangerous-but-solid band that you know the Stones can be. (And I say "can" instead of "could" because the last time they played Tampa, I was kind of astonished that it was as edgy and iffy as I wanted it to be.)

Well, praise be to whomever decided to finally get this particular document back into public consumption. It rocks from beginning to end, save for a minor stumble here and there ("Tumbling Dice," for example). The film was drawn from four shows played over two dates in Texas in 1972, ostensibly on the *Exile* tour. Only a handful of songs from that double album are played, but the vibe of the band that made that record is there throughout. You'll be astonished at the skill with which Mick Taylor transforms the songs into blues-rock powerhouses. At the same time, Keith Richards is in prime, swaggering form, delivering his unique riffage and raw vocal harmonies on pretty much every song. Charlie Watts looks happier than I have ever seen him, Bill Wyman is his usual stoic self, and the horn duo (Bobby Keys and Jim Price on sax and trumpet, respectively) give the proceedings that perfect *Exile* feel. It's basically the band that made that album, minus the keyboards and the backing singers. It is raw and risky and altogether great. It is what earned this band its superlative subtitle for all of these years.

Jagger and Richards share a vocal mic often, Taylor rips on the leads (and especially on slide guitar, while remaining nearly stock-still), Keys comes center-stage for a solo, and lots of things almost go wrong, but they never quite do. What more do you want? Even "Midnight Rambler" is revived from its boring, slow death-march into a roaring rock anthem.

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