

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

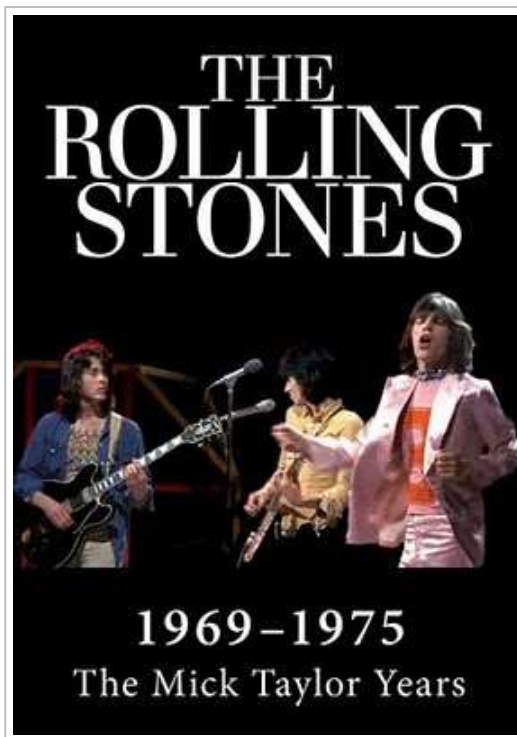
Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2010

DVD Review: "The Rolling Stones, 1969-1974: The Mick Taylor Years"

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Images from the Internet



The Rolling Stones, 1969-1974: The Mick Taylor Years (Limited Collector's Edition)

Directed by Alex Westbrook

Narrated by Thomas Arnold

Sexy Intellectual, 2010

99 minutes, USD \$19.95

Chromedreams.co.uk

MVDvisual.com

The Rolling Stones are a three-act play, all positioned around lead guitar: The first was the Brian Jones early period (1962-1969), the middle were the Mick Taylor years of growth (1969-1974), and then there is the Ronnie Wood time of pop malaise and decline (1974-

Blog Archive

▼ 2010 (116)

▼ September (15)

[DVD Review: "The Rolling Stones, 1969-1974: The Mi...](#)

[Rock'n'Roll Heroes, by Carolyn Lee Boyd](#)

[DVD Review: "Eric Clapton: The 1960s Review"](#)

[DVD Review: "Orlok, the Vampire" in 3D, dir FW Mur...](#)

[Book Review: "A Dead Boy's Tale" by Cheetah Chrome...](#)

[Oh, How They Danced...](#)

[DVD Review: "I Need That Record!"](#)

[DVD Review: "Night of the Living Dead: Reanimated"...](#)

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[Road Trip to Yellowknife, Day 8: Peace River to La...](#)

[DVD Review: "Leonard Cohen's Lonesome Heroes"](#)

[Road Trip to Yellowknife, Day 7: Louise Falls, NWT...](#)

[DVD Review: "F.A.R.T.: The Movie"](#)

[DVD Review: "The Monster and the Ape"](#)

[Road Trip to Yellowknife, Day 6: Yellowknife to Lo...](#)

► August (14)

► July (3)

► June (9)

► May (16)

present). Obviously, from the title, this British telley documentary deals with the center portion.

While I'm more of a Brian Jones era kinda guy, there is no doubt that the Rolling Stones had a growth spurt under Mick Taylor's tenure that was bolstered in part by (and not given enough credit for here) producer Jimmy Miller a nice (though drug addled) Brooklyn boy who was very approachable the few times I met him in Joe Viglione's kitchen in the 1980s.

The difference between the Brian Jones and Mick Taylor phases of the Rolling Stones is sort of like silver-era DC and Marvel Comics, relatively: DC had one issue complete stories with exemplary yet uncomplicated art, while Marvel was into pushing the envelope with story arcs and art by, well, Jack Kirby - the Mick Taylor of comics - at his finest.

During his five-and-a-half years with the Stones, Mick Taylor worked on five albums that ranged from some of the more musically adept the band were to produce to signs of spinning out of control.

Before I jump ahead, I would like to comment that one of the many things I liked about this particular documentary is that when it says it covers the Stones during the Mick Taylor years, it means the focus is on the Stones part, not just the Mick Taylor influence. They use his tenure as a guide rather than a solitary viewing direction. That being said, I recommend watching the extra first here, which is a 6 minute short, hosted by the oft-Chrome Dreams-used writer Alan Clayson and musician extraordinaire, John Mayall, which tells of Taylor's pre-Stones life, with Clayson handling the beginning, and Mayall describing Taylor's influence in the Bluesbreakers. This will set the viewer up nicely for the main feature.

As with many of the Alex Westbrook British bios, this one is well researched and the wide use of clips covers the topic well, including bits by the band (here, mostly live cuts) and some of the other music discussed as influences, or that, say, Keith was into at the moment. There are no complete songs, but that's okay because that's not what this is all about.

The selection of experts here is well chosen, generally, including the aforementioned Clayson and Mayall, and includes guitarist (of the Only Ones and Pink Fairies) and writer John Perry, some music historians like Nigel Williamson, Robert Greenfield, and Robert "D-" Christgau, and *Exile on Main Street* studio musicians Al Parkins (of the Burrito Bros. on steel guitar) and Bill Plummer (bass). Even a puffy Mick Taylor has a recent, if brief interview toward the end of the program (me) concerning his leaving the Stones. What I want to know is where are all the commentary by the women in the Stones' world? Where's Marianne Faithful? Anita "pretty-pretty" Pallenberg? Surely there are female authors or experts on the period? There is a lot of testosterone on this documentary.

- ▶ April (10)
- ▶ March (21)
- ▶ February (15)
- ▶ January (13)
- ▶ 2009 (78)
- ▶ 2008 (70)
- ▶ 2007 (22)

About Me

Robert Barry Francos
c/o 62 Timber Ridge Rd,
Commack, NY 11725. From 1977-88, I used to publish a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). And the beat goes on.

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Okay, getting back to the subject at hand...

The first single Mick Taylor worked on for the Rolling Stones was the killer "Honky Tonk Women." His fretwork sets fire to it. Taylor's first live performance with band was the concert two days after Brian Jones' drowning (recommended reading on Jones's death: A.E. Hotchner's 1990 *Blown Away*). Talk about pressure for the 20 year old guitar wizard.

While recording their LP, *Let It Bleed* (produced by Jimmy Miller), the first with Mick Taylor and their eighth in total, a lot of the ideas were from previous sessions, and Taylor was as much a session man as a key member. At this point, there is a discussion on the DVD about the influence of both Taylor and Altamont on the band (opposite poles, but both substantial).



Here, the documentary veers away from Taylor specifically and into the life of the band, when they realize that they were broke and kicked out Allen Klein, a lesson the Beatles had already learned. They start their own record company, attached to Ahmet Ertegun's Atlantic Records. Their first release was *Sticky Fingers*, on which Keith was heavily influenced by U.S.

country music via Gram Parsons (e.g., "Wild Horses"), much to Jagger's dismay, according to this telling. This record also produced their monster hit "Brown Sugar." Drugs started to make more of an appearance with the likes of "Moonlight Mile." While Keith's (and Brian before him) substance abuse is mention frequently in this, everyone else is left untouched. Whether Taylor (or the rest of the band) was imbibing is not a topic mentioned, but I wondered.

Next up was *Exile on Main Street* (produced by Miller), like the Beatles' *White Album*, sort of a conglomeration as much as anything else, created in the studio. It was started in the south of France, with the full band present, but thanks to a drug raid of Keff's palace (which doubled as their recording studio) and a need to am-scray as ast-fay as ossibe-pay, Keith and Jagger went to L.A. by themselves, and recorded a bulk of the album using studio musicians, such as Parkins and Plummer. The sound ended up being arguably muddy, and many critics were lukewarm to it, but it is still considered by

many to be the Stones' best release. "Tumbling Dice" was the only cut that Taylor was given any writing credit for, on any album, a bone of contention with him (and rightfully so, as any band that has long guitar solos deserves to have the guitarist given writing credit). It's at this point, also noted here, that the Stones - that is Keith and especially Jagger due in part to his marriage to Bianca Perez Morena de Macias (who is mentioned in passing) - became socialite butterflies who were known for, as they state here, "being famous for being famous" as much as being musicians.



Goat's Head Soup, the last Miller produced for the band, is acknowledged by some of the critics here as having less soul, and rehashing of old ideas (one claims that "Dancing with Mr. D" is just a follow-up to "Sympathy for the Devil"), leaning more towards pop than rock, or as one critic here posits, "Where it all starts to go wrong." It was a No. 1 album that had lukewarm

critic enthusiasm, and one big hit: "Angie."

For the *It's Only Rock 'n Roll* LP, Jagger and Richards produced it themselves as the "Glimmer Twins." Many consider this their last album before they hit the skids, including some of the experts here (or, as one eloquently states, "they peaked"). But driven by lack of appreciation through being ignored for songwriting credit and tensions within the band, Taylor left after it was released to join the Jack Bruce Band (good luck with that!).



There are some good still pictures at this point, including one of Taylor jamming with Hendrix, as the documentary closes up. There are lots of good details here, some great live footage of the band, and plenty of anecdotes, that makes this an interesting watch. I was a DC guy, but I - er - Marvel and appreciate what the Stones accomplished at this growth stage. Meanwhile, I think I'm going to go listen to *Hot*

Rocks now...



Posted by Robert Barry Francos at [12:01 AM](#)

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