

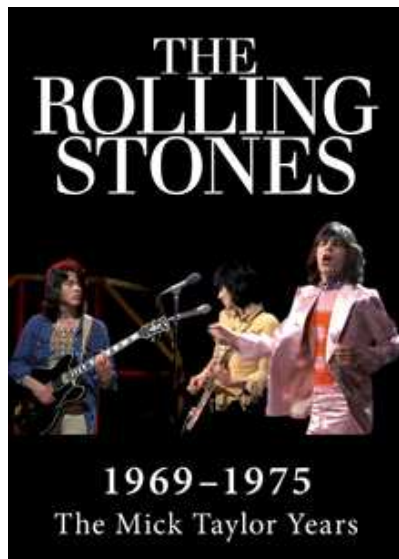
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THE GARY PIG GOLD REPORT, Vol. 30

THROUGH THE PAST, SMARTLY



For those who arrived at the party rather late — meaning the first new **Rolling Stones** record you ever bought had a big red tongue splayed across its label — the five years and 99 minutes contained within Chrome Dreams' fine new [The Rolling Stones: The Mick Taylor Years](#) DVD will serve as a more than welcome addition to all of your recently-acquired *Exile on Main St.* collectibles.

In fact, should you consider yourself a part of the ever-expanding constituency who swear the Stones' best work was done during that half decade between the death of **Brian Jones** and the arrival of **Ronnie Wood**, this is one documentary which absolutely deserves your undivided attention.

Beginning as the 1960s became the 1970s and The Rolling Stones were struggling to grow all the way from "England's Newest Hit Makers" into "The World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band," we hear the entire journey recounted by an impressive list of Stones biographers, historians and even session musicians. Plus, we see the events themselves unfold not only via promotional clips but in newsreel footage from the band's initial, free Hyde Park concert with **Mick Taylor** clear through those landmark 1969 and 1972 North American tours that forged the soon-to-become fantastically lucrative U.S. arena-rock circuit.

The point repeatedly made during this entire film is how key a role Taylor actually played in these remarkable achievements: First, he joins the band at an ideal time, fully prepared to face audiences who by 1969 were expecting to listen to, rather than simply scream at, rock concerts that now lasted much longer than 30 minutes. With this, Taylor introduces to the Stones a new and subtly fluid approach to his instrument — a style that at first challenges fellow guitarist **Keith Richards**, soon perfectly complements him, and by 1973 practically *supplants* him both onstage and in the studio.

Still, most fascinating to me are this film's interviews with *Exile on Main St.* support musicians **Al Perkins** and **Bill Plummer**, both of whom offer rare and insightful glimpses into the Stones' recording techniques and intra-band relationships. Sadly, their stories (not to mention all those involving **Gram Parsons**) were left completely untold in the band's own recently released

Stones in Exile film. I wonder why?

Acclaimed *S.T.P.: A Journey Through America With The Rolling Stones* author **Robert Greenfield** then explains how the tale quickly starts to wind all the way down for the band, creatively at least, as he references the star-studded guest list Atlantic Records chairman **Ahmet Ertegun** assembled for **Mick Jagger's** 29th birthday party in New York City. Rock 'n' roll — and The World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band along with it — now found themselves not only fully embraced by high society but confronted with its accompanying high-stakes corporate dalliances as well. Rock was fast becoming Very Big Business, and Jagger in particular became utterly besotted and seduced by these unforeseen turns of event — at the same precise time his partner Richards was succumbing unapologetically to a degree of drug dependency that rendered him next to useless when it came to writing and recording new material. Again, enter Taylor to pick up the slack — not that it seems he has even to this day ever been given proper (label) credit for his thankless work in these crucial areas.

Perhaps that had something to do with the man's sudden, and surprising — even to some of his fellow band members, it seems! — departure from the Stones in 1974. As Taylor explains most candidly herein, "My role in the Rolling Stones was to play guitar. I think after five-and-a-half years, I'd really had enough. I didn't feel that I could grow anymore. To me, they'd peaked (by) then."

Controversial words, indeed. But one listen to, say, *Goats Head Soup* should prove at least most of his point.

So, to many ever since, the Stones of the ensuing three-decades-plus seem more concerned with creating financial rather than musical history, a band that appears to carry onward if only to prove some sort of statistical point. Be that as it most very likely is, all I will add here and now is *The Mick Taylor Years* certainly deserves an immediate place within your Stones cache (even if you *do* feel more at home with December's children than with Mr. D).

— Musician/writer **Gary Pig Gold** is the co-founder of the *To M'Lou Music* label.

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