

## FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

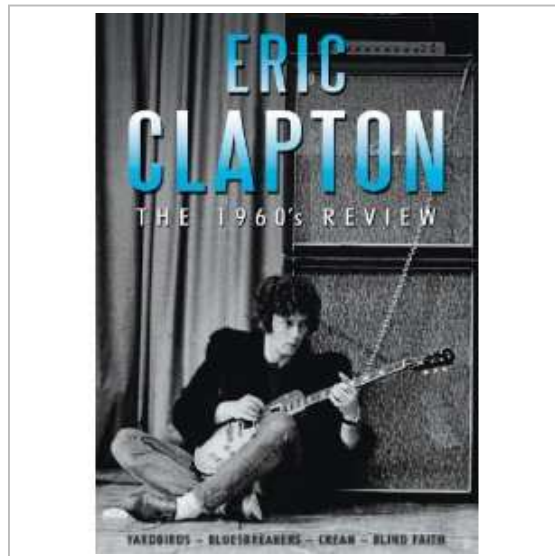
Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2010

### DVD Review: "Eric Clapton: The 1960s Review"

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Images from the Internet



#### Eric Clapton: The 1960s Review

Directed by Alex Westbrook

Sexy Intellectual, 2010

120 minutes, USD \$19.95

[Chromedreams.co.uk.com](http://Chromedreams.co.uk.com)

[MVDvisual.com](http://MVDvisual.com)

When I was in school during the early '70s, there was some standard bathroom graffiti, such as "Frodo Lives", "I Grok Spock," and "Clapton IS God." At the time I wasn't into Middle Earth, being a Stranger in a Strange Land, or music that much (that would start in 1975), so they were all lost on me back then.

Over the years, I have come to understand all of them (and even appreciate some). Which leads me to another anecdote: during the '60s, while I was in a 3-week long sleepaway camp as a tyke in the '60s, the only record anyone thought to bring was the 45 of Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love." When we had a social, it was all we played that summer (I don't remember them ever playing the other side the entire time). When we wanted to slow dance, it was played at 33-1/3.

#### 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"...](#)

[Road Trip to Yellowknife, Day 9: Lac La Biche to S...](#)

[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)

When we wanted to let loose, it was at 78 rpms. For sing-around-the-campfires we vocalized to social justice songs by the likes Phil Ochs ("Draft Dodger Rag") and Buffy Ste. Marie ("Universal Soldier"), but when we wanted to dance, it was always "Sunshine."

Eric Clapton was the guitarist in some of the most outstanding bands of the late '60s British music scene, which went from being blues based to full-on rock, from the Yardbirds in 1966, to Bluesbreakers, then Cream, and ending the decade with Blind Faith. All of them relied heavily on Clapton's wicked fretwork. He could do a solo for more than 20 minutes (especially when stoned out of his gourd, as he was frequently toward the later part of the decade).

This two-hour British documentary starts off with his childhood where he discovered American Blues 78s (first acoustic Delta, then electrified Chicago), and quickly learned to play them as a young teen. He joined a loose band of fellow Blues fans known as the "Roosters," before meeting Giorgio Gomelsky (whom I have met more than once in the 1980s, while working at a recording studio in Manhattan; he was licensing out Yardbirds cuts) and then joining the Yardbirds. Whichever one of the Yardbirds' three top-notch guitarists you think is best - Clapton, Jeff Beck, or Jimmy Page - Eric started it off. Of course, he quit after recording their biggest hit, "Heart Full of Soul," as he felt it was not *pure* enough blues. As time went on into other bands, he would become more commercial sounding, leaning towards pop more than Blues. Thankfully, this documentary addresses that peculiarity (you'll have to see it to find out which side it comes out on).

The whole "God" thing started, though, when Clapton joined John Mayall and the Bluesbreakers. It's kind of ironic that he was associated with being a god when he was so influenced during this period by Robert Johnson, who supposedly sold his soul to the devil (Clapton would later do the song "Crossroads" about Johnson, while in Cream). He left that band due to lack of moneymaking potential. He definitely was ambitious.

My interest in Clapton's career, for reasons stated above, is in the Cream period, where he had a contentious relationship with his two other band mates, bassist Jack Bruce and drummer Ginger Baker. While I found this era to be my favorite of his career in general, to me his best song is still "Layla," but that was in the '70s while being in Derek and the Dominos, so it is not covered here (therefore, I digress...). This band would be short lived, though, because they quickly found they just did not get along, even with pharmaceuticals (according to Pattie Boyd's whiney autobio, *Wonderful Tonight*, he was often in an alternative state).

One of the more fascinating points in the documentary discusses in some length the relationship between Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, who came to England and jammed on stage with Cream, basically blowing Clapton away. I've heard two different versions of Clapton's feelings

- ▶ 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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about Hendrix, one being jealous and the other being admiring. This documentary leans towards... well, again, you'll have to see it.

A point of interest in seeing this documentary at this moment comes with the timing of having just read Cheetah Chrome's new autobio, *A Dead Boy's Tale*. Both the Dead Boys' second LP and much of Clapton's Cream material were both recorded by the same producer, Felix Pappalardi, with opposite results. The material of Cream was certainly more suited for Pappalardi's style, as he worked on the likes of "Sunshine" and "Strange Brew."

By the time Clapton got to Blind Faith, with Steve Winwood, I still found the storyline interesting in the documentary, though musically I found the band to be an utter bore (the Ramones explained to me why). Clapton went from Blues to pop to sheer masturbatory guitar noodling (Jimmy Page would suffer the same fate with Zepp).

Narrator Thomas Arnold takes the viewer along on the ride, and fortunately does so by keeping our interest. As with other Chrome Dream documentaries, there is a lot of pieces of music, so we get to hear Clapton's changes over time, and there are even a few brief interviews with him, from 1968, 1991, 2005 and 2006.

There are many talking heads explaining just who Clapton was, what he accomplished, and what he was like in person, such as Yardbirds members Top Tophan and Chris Dreja (whom Clapton replaced, and constantly looks like he's pained by the experience), John Mayall, Manfred Mann's Tom McGuinness and Paul Jones, and the irascible Neil Innes, who was in the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band (not to mention the lead Rutle). Other associates include the Cream road manager Ben Palmer and Bill Haverson, the engineer for many of Clapton's work at the time. Of course, rock journalist Alan Clayson, who not only wrote the bio for Cream and its members, but it seems is on just about every documentary put out by Chrome Dreams. They all paint a picture of the man of that time.

I find some of the people *not* interviewed kind of interesting, such as the aforementioned Pattie Boyd and Giorgio Gomelsky, Robert Stigwood (who managed Blind Faith), or even Steve Winwood (who I would rather hear talk than play). Also not addressed is his substance abuse (did you *see* how stoned he was in the film *Tommy*, singing/stumbling through "Eyesight to the Blind"? Yes, I know, it was the '70s again, but it started in the '60s).

The two hour length was just the right amount of time, and amazingly I found myself engaged straight through. The balance of clips and interviews kept the pace going nicely, and I definitely learned something about Eric Clapton, and his musical process of the period.

There are three interesting short documentaries as extras. The first one is about the lead up to the Yardbirds backing up one of their idols, Sonny Boy Williams, at the Crawdaddy Club in England. Another is Paul

Jones discussing Eric Clapton's Powerhouse, a studio group formed in 1966 that really deserved more attention as my knowledge of them is pretty limited. The last is engineer Bill Haverson's amusing tale of a missing guitar foot peddle while recording Cream's "Badge."

While not authorized by Eric Clapton, this documentary is fair and seems somewhat comprehensive (other than bits I've mentioned above). Certainly he comes across favorably, and as he is a major musical figure of the time, apparently deservedly so.



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

Labels: [1960s](#), [Blind Faith](#), [Blues](#), [Bluesbreakers](#), [Cream](#), [Eric Clapton](#), [FFanzeen](#), [Robert Barry Francos](#), [Yardbirds](#)

Reactions:    interesting (0)    cool (0)    informative (0)

## 2 comments:

**ronfrankl said...**

Great piece. Would never have given DVD a second thought but now I will. I don't have much use for Clapton's post 1970 work, but the early years were wonderful.

May I pick a few nits? "For Your Love" was the Yardbirds biggest hit as well as the song that prompted Eric to quit. Clapton replaced Topham, not Dreja, and Yardbirds backed Sonny Boy Williamson (actually Sonny Boy II, but that's another story).

Wasn't Giorgio involved with Club 57 at one point?

Love your blogposts, please keep them coming.

[September 24, 2010 12:22 PM](#)



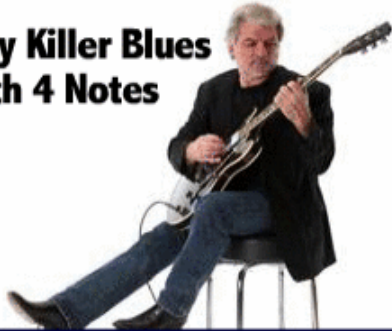
**[Robert Barry Francos](#)** said...

Hey, Ron, thanks for the kind words. And I also appreciate any corrections or additions, as I know I'm not infallible. The "For Your Love" / Clapton leaving the Yardbirds was actually covered in the DVD, pointing out the irony of his own pop postulations later in the decade. As for the Tohpam / Dreja mix-ups, well, I can't always read my own handwriting, hahaha. No idea about Giorgio, only the parts I mentioned. He was sort of involved with some cable access show in the '80s, but I can't remember the exact circumstances now, only that I was there and so was he. 8)

[September 24, 2010 1:34 PM](#)

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