

# GenEc DVD Review

**Thursday, October 14, 2010**

## **"Eric Clapton: The 1960's Review" (MVD)**

Sometimes it seems as if Eric Clapton has always been around.. But there once was a time when many rock'n'roll guitar heroes made their reputations putting out instrumentals on 45-RPM vinyl singles. There once was a time when almost all blues recordings were performed by African-Americans. (Yes, one can point to exceptions to both of these assertions.) And there once was a time when Eric Clapton was not yet a "god".

This excellent DVD documentary takes us back to the beginnings of Clapton's career and illustrates how he emerged as a game-changer, the first true Guitar Hero in the pre-video-game sense of the term, and the role model for so many white blues musicians to follow. As the title of the disc indicates, it is strictly dedicated to his most significant and most influential decade, the 1960's. I do not, of course, mean this to denigrate all of his subsequent work. Even so, a large percentage of the performances which made Eric Clapton such a monumental figure took place during this seminal decade. The program includes reminiscences by several of the musicians who worked with him at that time, consistently intelligent commentary by historians and critics, and a gratifying number of video and audio clips to illustrate their theses.

We learn that Clapton's earliest influences were not in blues per se - the genre was just on the verge of being introduced into England - but in the blues-influenced rock'n'roll of Bill Haley and the Comets and Elvis Presley. Then, still at a young age, he heard Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. At age 13 (1958), he was able to convince his guardians (grandparents) to buy him a guitar. From that point on, he was devoted to hearing, learning, and playing the blues, primarily off American records. Finding such records was not an easy task in London in this period, but a "blues underground" was developing whereby fans could meet up with other like-minded Londoners to listen to their music of choice. Many of these fans started to form bands, such as the group called the Roosters, which featured young Eric, Ben Palmer (subsequently Cream's road manager), Tom McGuinness (known for his work with John Mayall and, later, McGuinness Flint), occasionally adding Paul Jones (of Manfred Mann fame). (All three of them are interviewed here.) The Roosters were more of an education, a jamming outlet rather than a "serious" band, though they did play gigs. Right from the beginning, Clapton was noted for building convincing improvisations over several choruses. But despite his ongoing quest for blues authenticity, Clapton would move on to a more non-oriented hand. Casey Jones and the Engineeers.

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