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Case Number 24732: Small Claims Court





The Rolling Stones: Under Review (1975-1983)

[MVD Visual](#) // 2012 // 115 Minutes // Not Rated
 Reviewed by Judge Gordon Sullivan // October 27th, 2012

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Note: This is a pre-release review. **The Rolling Stones: Under Review (1975-1983)** will be available for purchase on November 20th, 2012

Scales of Justice

Judgment: 88

Perp Profile

Studio: [MVD Visual](#)

Video Formats:

- Full Frame

Audio Formats:

- Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo (English)

Subtitles:

- None

Running Time: 115 Minutes
Release Year: 2012
MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Genres:

- [Concerts and Musicals](#)
- [Documentary](#)

All Rise...

Judge Gordon Sullivan's been out gathering moss. Well, the Stones won't do it!

Distinguishing Marks

- Deleted Scene

The Charge

It's only rock 'n' roll...

Accomplices

- [The Rolling Stones](#)

The Case

In 1972, The Rolling Stones were threatened on all sides. Keith Richards had a titanic drug habit, Mick Jagger was increasingly caught up in celebrity and his new marriage, and the whole band was decamped from their native Britain to avoid an astronomical tax bill. The phoenix that rose from the ashes of that fire, though, is Exile on Main St., perhaps the band's most brilliant album and a touchstone in rock 'n' roll history. It was also the beginning of the end. Guitarist Mick Taylor, an integral member of the band since Brian Jones' decline and eventual death, was growing increasingly unhappy with his role as Keith descended into drugs and Mick started spending more and more time in Los Angeles and New York City. Goat's Head Soup and It's Only Rock 'n' Roll followed Exile, but their heart wasn't in it, and Taylor left to pursue a solo career. This revitalized the band, and they used their next album (Black and Blue) to audition guitarists for Mick's replacement. As longtime fans know, Ronnie Wood was chosen as his replacement. **The Rolling Stones: Under Review (1975-1983)** looks at the first eight years of his involvement with the Stones and the tumultuous musical landscape of the time.

I'm not the world's biggest Stones fan. I love a lot of their sixties singles, but I think they hit their stride with respect to albums with 1968's Beggar's Banquet and had an untouchable run until Exile. Since then, they've largely become a mega-sized touring unit where new music is secondary. No one can deny the power of tracks like "Miss You" or "Start Me Up," but their output significantly declined for a variety of reasons (at least in this author's not-so-humble opinion). However, because I'm a huge fan of rock 'n' roll history, I know quite a bit about The Rolling Stones and how they tracked throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the period this documentary covers.

The worst thing I can say about this **Under Review** is that I didn't really learn anything new. If you know the potted history of how Ronnie Wood joined the band, and how the Stones weathered the successive onslaughts of first disco, then punk, then you won't be surprised. No great revelations are shared, no startling accusations or even shocking critical judgments (no one says, for instance, that Some Girls is the best Stones record of the seventies).

With that said, this **Under Review** disc is by far the best of the unauthorized band documentary things I've seen. The filmmakers marshal an impressive lineup of critics to talk about the film, including longtime rock 'n' roll writer Robert Christgau. The Stones themselves even show up in a few archival pieces from various promo and news pieces.

Most importantly, what separates **Under Review** from the pack of wannabe music documentaries is the inclusion of lots and lots of music, especially from The Rolling Stones themselves. I don't know what kind of magic the filmmakers pulled—because it's never cheap to license a Rolling Stones song—but the almost two hours of this flick includes dozens of moments of live footage and clips from songs to illustrate what's going on musically throughout the period.

The DVD itself is fine. The standard def 1.33:1 full-frame transfer does a fine job with diverse materials. The more contemporary interviews with critics looks sharp, and the archival stuff shows its age. However, there are no serious compression or authoring problems. The Dolby 2.0 Stereo mix keeps a fine balance between the crystal clear interviews and the rock 'n' roll hijinks of the Stones themselves. The set's lone bonus feature is an extended bit with harmonica player Sugar Blue (whose harp you hear on "Miss You") talking about how The Rolling Stones introduced him to the blues. To hear the story of an inner-city African American learning about the blues from white British guys is funny, poignant, and a fine addition to the film.

Of course, we all wish that **Under Review** had the full participation of the band, and we could get all those guys on camera being honest about what happened and all that. However, the chances of that happening are very, very slim. The show also ends on a kind of downer note; the 1980s were not particularly kind to The Rolling Stones, and the film ends in the middle of the decade, before their triumphant return with Steel Wheels. Given my druthers, I would have ended with Bill Wyman's departure in 1992.

The Rolling Stones: Under Review (1975-1983) does what we would like every musical documentary of this type to do: It reignites a desire to listen to the music in question. Though longtime Rolling Stones fans will likely learn little from this documentary, I was left with the desire to reconsider the Stones' late-seventies output and that's good enough for me.

The Verdict

Not guilty.

Give us your feedback!

Did we give **The Rolling Stones: Under Review (1975-1983)** a fair trial? [yes](#) / [no](#)

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