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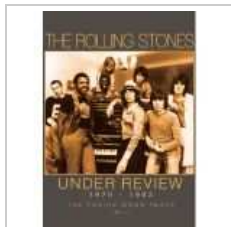
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by John Patrick Gatta



The Rolling Stones - Under Review: 1975-1983 The Ronnie Wood Years (Pt. 1)

Sexy Intellectual

Archive

At the beginning of *Under Review* there's a glimpse of what Ron Wood brought to the Rolling Stones. During a brief concert clip the hyperactive guitarist attempts to jump on Mick Jagger. Instead of landing on the slight singer's shoulders, the shocked front man bends down and sends Wood falling to the stage. Needing a burst of energy after two lackluster albums, Wood's lively and amiable presence and songwriting abilities injected a breath of fresh air into the veteran act right after Mick Taylor's departure and during Keith Richards spiraling drug addiction.

As critic Robert Christgau puts it, "Woody means something. He commits them to that scruffy thing they started out with." Later, when harpist Sugar Blue discusses the "Some Girls" sessions he compares Wood's contribution as "One of the guests at the wedding [anniversary] of 30 years who came and reminded them how much they loved each other. That brought the music and the magic together."

The nearly two-hour documentary starts with Wood joining the Stones in 1975 and on through as assessment of the "Undercover" album in 1983. Its unsentimental approach presents a bumpy ride of artistic triumphs and creatively treading water, drug busts and sobriety, street cred and Studio 54 high life as well as the growing friction between Mick Jagger and Richards that will boil over later in the '80s, which should be covered in the next installment of *Under Review*.

A facsimile of a patented Stones' riff played during the opening 12 minutes gave an indication that this would be a cheaply-made doc that couldn't even get the band's permission to use any of its music. That quickly changed once a clip of "Fingerprint File" from a 1975 L.A. Forum concert displayed not only the talents of tour keyboardist Billy Preston but a taste of the band's funkier side. From then on, original tracks were used.

Although it lacks new band interviews "Under Review" still gets the job done by presenting a handful of writers including Anthony DeCurtis ("Rolling Stone"), Christgau, Barney Hoskyns and Paul Gambaccini who cover the Stones like detectives looking for clues. They don't mince words in deference to the group's longevity and popularity. Their sharpened insights range from commenting that tracks on "Emotional Rescue" were safe choices to questioning Jagger's commitment to songwriting.

Their ability to dissect the Rolling Stones' music and connect it to the members' personal lives and the influences that filtered through them during this nine-year period makes this more than just an unauthorized look at the third era of the band's existence.

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