



Eric Clapton After the Collapse of Cream

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Unsanctioned Slow Hand through the 1970s

The back cover of *Eric Clapton: The 1970s Review* features the bold, all caps words "THIS FILM IS NOT SANCTIONED BY ERIC CLAPTON" and this fact shows in this documentary at every step. While some impressive players are interviewed for this retrospective of Eric Clapton's evolution throughout the decade immediately following his departure from the band Cream, Clapton himself appears in interview and live footage only in archival footage with no involvement with this project.

That said, *Eric Clapton: The 1970s Review* is a comprehensive film that clocks in at well over two hours and features some excellent and in-depth interviews that, while not from the ground-zero of Clapton himself, are from musicians and insiders who were close enough to Clapton to bear witness to most of the major musical moments that comprise this decade of great music.

This decade (and the film) begins with the aftermath of the collapse of Cream and Clapton's immediate career confusion that led to his brief flirtation with the band known simply as "The Band" (a name that causes as much confusion in this film as it has in real life). The tale continues through the chapter regarding Clapton's short lived supergroup Blind Faith and his defection to the opening act on their tour, Delaney & Bonnie and Friends, where he appeared as an accomplished, if unlikely sideman, only reluctantly taking the microphone and lead instrumental position.

The chapters fill out through Clapton's contributions to George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass* album, his obsession with Harrison's wife Patty and his spiral into drug use as his next project, Derek and the Dominoes, brings Clapton back to the limelight as a frontman. All of this to combat the icon that he had become... the icon that once prompted music fans to graffiti the walls with the words "Clapton is GOD!"

Eric Clapton: The 1970s Review is hardly short on pathos. Clapton's strife and confusion as he finds himself an instant superstar striving for musical integrity and anonymity is explored in-depth by those surrounding him. Clapton's strive to do the best he can in remakes, original songs, lead work or accompaniment is all praised here.

Clapton's love for Patty Harrison and his disturbance over this love especially relating to his deep friendship with his best amigo George Harrison is explained by many close to them. On the other hand, while Clapton's voice, guitar and lyrics (and occasional archival interview statement) provide a glimpse into the real Clapton, the real Clapton is hardly present to make this clear.

Then again, the question of "does this matter?" rings out throughout the film's run time. Unauthorized biographies often give a perspective that is unavailable in many more controlled settings and the last documentary I saw about George Washington didn't have a direct interview with its subject, either (though technology is advancing, so we'll see). The answer to this question is... it matters a little. More archival interviews with Clapton (assuming new conversations would remain unavailable) might round this film out into a more balanced and introspective documentary. As it stands, the interviews are dominated by keyboardist Bobby Whitlock (of both Derek and the Dominoes and Delaney & Bonnie and Friends) as well as other key musicians from later in the decade.

Whitlock provides a brilliantly unique insider's perspective into the career of this film's subject and does so with something of an irreverent reverence for Clapton, whom he seems to have considered a friend and co-worker and far from the "GOD" that graffiti prone fans would (literally) paint him as. However, reverence is clearly threaded throughout all 151 minutes of this film with very few criticisms surfacing. Clapton's endorsement of Enoch Powell a Right Wing, anti-immigration English politician is a notable exception, but even this controversy is played down as a minor flaw. This is notable because *Eric Clapton: The 1970s Review* is not a documentary solely about the music, but about the musician himself, his relationships, his beliefs, his struggles and his triumphs. While throughout the '70s, Clapton surely did not think of himself as a "god", the filmmakers here apparently need some convincing.

That said, *Eric Clapton: The 1970s Review* is an infinitely watchable and informative look at one of the world's greatest and most inventive guitar players set against a backdrop of the music industry with both surviving and long-gone musicians strutting and fretting their moments in Clapton's limelight (or, as was often the case in the '70s, he in theirs).

Extras include the bios of the contributors, further interviews on the *Layla* sessions (again with Whitlock) and a "Beyond the DVD" section that feels like a throwback to early bare-bones DVD releases. The feature itself may not be perfect, but it is a very fine rockumentary about one of the most fertile (and even confused) eras of the life of Eric Clapton, with or without his express sanction.



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