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PLAYBACK

By Kevin O'Hare

DVD Spotlight

The Yardbirds, "The Story of the Yardbirds" (HIQ/MVD) 2.5 stars.

This hour-and-seven-minute documentary focuses on the blues-to-psychedelia history of the Yardbirds, focusing on a five-year-span starting in 1963.

The footage, though sometimes grainy, is definitely rare and includes more than a dozen archival performances by the band including "Louise," and "I Wish You Would," from when Eric Clapton was the group's short-haired lead guitarist. As the band evolved towards a more pop-oriented sound, such as what is heard on the classic "For Your Love," Clapton bolted and missed the Yardbirds' heyday. Jeff Beck joined - his first major contribution was the Eastern-tinged guitar work during "Heart Full of Soul" - and is captured on lots of this, which also features latter-day commentary by Beck and fellow bandmates.

Fans will especially savor the 1966 material when the group's lineup included both Beck and Jimmy Page. Beck left late that year, leaving only Page to oversee the final lineup which would burn out before eventually flowering into Led Zeppelin.

Most of the Yardbirds' hits are included in one form or another on this DVD, including "I'm a Man," "Shapes of Things" and "Happening Ten Years Time Ago."

Still, this could have been a lot more professionally crafted. There are plenty of typos on the packaging; the liner notes don't even focus on the DVD, but a latter-day reunion album instead; and several of the players beyond the big three guitar heroes who were interviewed for the film are barely identified.

Rating Scale: One Star (poor) to Five Stars (a classic)