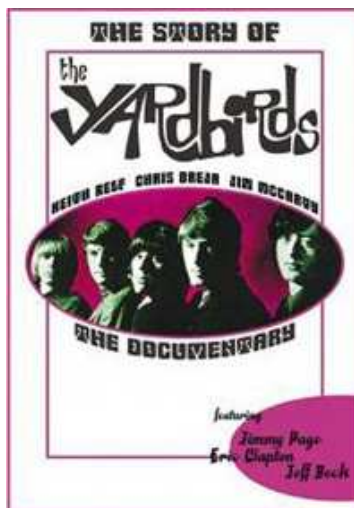


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The Story Of The Yardbirds

The Yardbirds



Out of all the groups that came out of England in the early 60s, it's the Yardbirds who seemed to have flexed the mightiest musical muscle by introducing the world to the likes of Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page. Yet, their story had never really gotten a proper ringing, until an hour-long documentary surfaced in the early 90s. It's made the usual rounds, but now **The Story Of The Yardbirds** DVD brings it back around again. Altogether, you get a neat and efficient documentary that covers the group's run from 1963 to 1968 with lots of great performance footage, along with the requisite interviews with band members and associates.

In the first few minutes, the film delivers a quick overview of the group, who were at one point "potentially the greatest rock and roll band in the world." Then it returns to a more in-depth analysis. The short-lived Eric Clapton years provide insight to the group's beginnings. It was really with the more prolific Jeff Beck that the band found their voice and developed their sound beyond the confines of 12-bar blues. They altered the rhythms and explored Eastern themes while Beck shook and tortured his Stratocaster, producing hits such as "Heart Full Of Soul," "Still I'm Sad," "Over Under Sideways Down" and "Happening Ten Years Time Ago."

Jimmy Page's role falls into place via snippets of "Dazed and Confused" and a second version of "Happening Ten Years Time Ago." The clip from Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* features the fleeting Beck/Page dual guitar line-up at its shakiest. Yardbirds/Led Zeppelin manager Peter Grant, who passed away in 1995, talks briefly about the transitory period that eventually led to Page assembling Led Zeppelin, the super group that grew out of the Yardbirds' legacy. And with the demise of the Yardbirds, comes a tribute to the band's fallen singer, Keith Relf. The band has carried on sporadically with various shifts in personnel, but the true spirit of the Yardbirds died with Relf.

When it comes to the interviews featured in **The Story Of The Yardbirds**, Beck is the most blunt (sometimes, too blunt) about the group's ride, while original rhythm guitarist turned bassist Chris Dreja, original bassist Paul Samwell-Smith and drummer Jim McCarty seem more grateful and honored by the experience. Commentary from Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page is also included, although the clips look as if they were lifted from other sources. Toward the end of the documentary, Samwell-Smith, Dreja, Beck and McCarty are all sitting together, squeezed onto a studio sofa, reminiscing about Relf. This scene alone lends a strong air of authenticity. Adding to the allure of the DVD is a bonus 14-minute clip from *Beat Beat Beat*, a German television program. The show features a 1967 version of the Yardbirds, reduced to a foursome with Page handling the guitar. Fiery performances of "Shapes Of Things," "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago," "Over Under Sideways Down" and "I'm A Man" leave little doubt that the Yardbirds kicked up a storm as a live unit right up until the very end.

~ Shawn Perry

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