

DVD Ladies and Gentlemen The Rolling Stones

So here we have it at last, what many fans have considered the missing link in their collections - the DVD of the 1972 tour, the tour of all tours, the glitter, the mirrors, Keith and Mick Taylor locked in, the estimable horn section, the Stones at their very best. Heavily bootlegged over the years, we are told that the Stones 'acquired' the rights to the film, and it has duly been given a spit and polish for its 2010 release.

What is it like? What is on it, by way of bonus material? And is it worth buying? The answer to the final question is, yes, but ironically enough not because of the pictures but because of the sound. More of that in a minute.

The bonus material contains interviews with Mick (on the Old Grey Whistle Test, in 1972, and in 2010, to mark the release of the DVD). He is typically evasive in both interviews. When asked whether he preferred performing with the Stones in their 1972 line up without the "bells and whistles" (i.e. huge stage show), he responds with an answer about how the film was shot. Huh? He feigns not to remember which Exile songs they played on that tour. But he does, at least, acknowledge, that the shows were energetic and the band was on form. And he does tell us that *Rocks Off* was not included because they, the band, and he, were out of tune.

There are the clips from the Montreux rehearsals, which we have all seen before (*Shake Your Hips*, *Tumbling Dice* and *Bluesberry Jam*). Quite nice to see, but not essential.

But, mostly, the DVD is the film. A close-up, as we know, of the band on stage. You hardly know there is an audience there at all. For the musos, it is unmitigated joy to watch them up close and personal. Mick Taylor's fluid guitar lines? Check. Charlie attacking his kit as never before. Check. Mick whispering sexily into the mike. Check. Some of the best songs in the Stones' catalogue being played by the greatest rock and roll band in the world in their own inimitable way. You want to know why the Stones are so damn good? Just crank up the sound and get lost in the music.

Above all, it is truly life-affirming to watch Keith, the human riff, leading the band, being rock and roll's greatest rhythm player and concentrating on what he does best instead of playing one chord and then gurning at the audience, leaving the sidemen to carry the song

(as is his wont these days). Listen to his playing, for example, on Street Fighting Man and that is the Keith he was and should be. Oh, and then he could toss off great solos as well. And sing in tune.

So why is it that the pictures are somewhat disappointing? Probably because it was filmed to be shown in the cinema, so it does not work quite so well on the small screen. When I first saw the film, I was in a cinema in Monterey, California where they did not have seats but cushions on the floor, plenty of wacky backy, beer in hand, an enormous screen and fantastic sound. Watching at home pales by comparison, even if it is on a huge flat screen.

Then, there is the quality of the filming. The focus is mostly on Mick, although you do see the others from time to time. Ian Stewart does not feature at all except in the credits as “Mystery Piano”, and I am not sure you even see Nicky Hopkins. A great song and dance was made about Chip Monck’s giant mirrors, but you don’t really get a sense of them in the DVD, expect perhaps from the red glow that suffuses the stage during Midnight Rambler. A thought occurred to me: they should have had Martin Scorsese film that show not the Beacon Theatre a quarter of a century later.

So should you buy it? Definitely. The DVD is the lost live album, the missing link between Ya-Yas and Love You Live. Listen to it, without the pictures on - well, maybe occasionally. Or, if you have deeper pockets, you can wait until November and buy a box set of this DVD, Stones in Exile and a bonus DVD (comprising 40 minutes of interviews, including footage from the Dick Cavett TV show, and footage of interviews with Keith, Charlie and Mick Taylor filmed during the Australian leg of the tour).

All of which is well and good but nothing like as good as the package that Bruce Springsteen is releasing, also in November. The Darkness on the Edge of Town re-release includes 3 CDs (including a double CD of outtakes, The Promise) and 3 DVDs (including a 1978 show in its entirety, three hours’ worth). Some day, the Stones will open their vaults properly and then that will be something to celebrate.