

Four Flicks

What more, really, could a fan ask for? More than 50 songs, recordings at three different-sized venues - following the Licks formula - sharp sound, no overdubs (we reckon) and a whole host of extras and bonuses. Four Flicks is a truly excellent record of the tour and a worthy addition to the collection.

Just reeling off the albums from which the songs are drawn is instructive: The Rolling Stones, The Rolling Stones No 2, Out of Our Heads, High Tide and Green Grass, Beggars Banquet, Let it Bleed, Sticky Fingers, Exile on Main Street, Goat's Head Soup, It's Only Rock 'n' Roll, Black and Blue, Some Girls, Tattoo You, Still Life, Steel Wheels, Voodoo Lounge, Bridges to Babylon and 40 Licks, not to mention the few songs which have never previously been recorded by the band (**The Nearness of You, Can't Turn You Loose, Rock Me Baby**). And, as for the others that weren't included on Four Flicks (I would have loved Love in Vain) well, we all know where we can get hold of decent recordings.

Of course, watching the band on a little screen - or even a wide screen - can never replicate the excitement of being there at the moment. But you do get the benefits of seeing them up close, and the producers of the DVD have gone to great lengths to vary and mix up the style of shooting in keeping with the size of the venue at which the band is being recorded. So you get big sweeps for the Stadium show but tight-in-close shots for the Club show.

Given the quality of the images, and the excellence of the editing - particularly on the Arena disc - the DVD makes compelling viewing. Mick is always absolutely watchable and becomes more so with each passing year. Compare his lithe movements with his stilted, stuttered dance moves from the 1960s and you will see what I mean. Mick really only got going with the 1969 tour. The others make for far less

interesting spectacle. Charlie, you don't really need to see to appreciate. Ronnie too often looks gormless and ridiculous, guitar between the legs and contorting his face into grimaces. And even Keith, whom I absolutely worship, strikes too many poses for my liking. You feel like shouting, 'Get yer heads down, boys, and concentrate on playing!' Keith once said that whenever he jumped up and down on stage was either when something was going drastically wrong or drastically right, sentiments with which I entirely concur.

I doubt, however, that many fans will watch the tour documentaries more than once; they smack too much of a PR exercise without giving real insight into what makes the band tick. So Mick has a personal trainer, the band stay at the fanciest hotels imaginable, Mick is clearly the man in charge, and so on. I am sure I am not alone in believing I would have liked far more from the rehearsals and how the band went about choosing the songs for the shows. As for the studio jams, couldn't they have done better than the two profiled? What happened to all the other two dozen songs the band had in the can?

TURN OFF THE PICTURE, AND LISTEN UP!

However, all this matters little if you concentrate on the music of the four discs. This really is the live album we have been waiting for years. I have recorded the shows onto CD and find that listening to the shows in this way, letting my mind conjure up the images, is actually by far the best way. That way, you can really hear the best - and occasionally the worst - of the band.

The best? The sumptuous groove of **Monkey Man** for one. **Respectable** really does recall the excitement of *Some Girls*, while **No Expectations** shows the real soul of the band when they put their minds to it. The opening three numbers on the Stadium disc make the band sound 40 years younger than they are: listen to the attack of **You Got me Rocking** and compare it with the lacklustre version on *No Security* and you may be tempted to consign the latter to the

bottom of your Stones CD pile (but don't throw it out!). There are terrific versions of **Worried About You** - and I like Mick's falsetto, even if Jaap doesn't - and **Stray Cat Blues**, propelled by Charlie's outstanding drumming (he even manages to get exactly the same sound as the drum sound as on the Beggars Banquet version). Keith sings his heart out on **Slipping Away**. **That's How Strong My Love Is** is a perfect showcase for Mick who emerges from all four discs as the real star of the show, singing as well as he has ever done, holding the band together and keeping the audience spellbound throughout. What a man he is! Special plaudits for Darryl Jones, who turns in some great bass playing: listen how his bass propels **Starfucker**, for instance and turn that sucker up loud!

And how about the worst? Not really that much, it is fair to say, but the B stage section of the Arena disc is pretty chaotic and **Everybody Needs Somebody to Love** suffers from rather too much guitar doodling. **Love Train** is a mess and clearly under-rehearsed. However, these do not detract in any way from the overall quality of the playing. It is also quite nice that not all the mistakes have been edited out - the one glaring change being Keith's fluff before the second verse of **Can't You Hear me Knocking** at Madison Square Garden. If I have a more general criticism it is that too often the guitars take a back seat role, and the music is held together by Charlie, Chuck, Darryl and the brass players.

So what we are left with is a fantastic memento of an extraordinary tour. I can hardly believe myself when I recall that almost my favourite show of the tour was actually a stadium show - the second Twickenham show - which was totally memorable: a gorgeous late September evening, warm but dark, a great set list and the band and the audience completely at one. I thought then this might be the last time I would ever see the band live, but, if our information is correct, there is plenty more to come. The only question remains: how are they going to top the Licks tour?

* While we are the subject of DVDs, special mention should be made of the **Gimme Shelter** DVD, which is definitely worth acquiring. The commentary by Albert Maysles is moderately interesting, about how they worked with the Stones but there is rather too much patting themselves on the back about how brilliant the film is. There are some still photos from Altamont.

But by far the most interesting bonus is the material not included in the film, including performances of **Carol**, **Little Queenie** and **Prodigal Son**, as well as some fascinating shots of Mick, Keith and Glyn Johns mixing Little Queenie. Keith's look of thunder at the cameramen getting in the way of the speakers as they are listening to the playback is almost worth buying the DVD on its own.