

# THE BIGGEST BANG

The Stones' latest DVD offering is out now and well worth the purchase! Whether you were dancing in the aisles or standing out in the cold 'cos you couldn't shelve out the astronomical ticket price of one of the live stadium events as they happened, this neat little digital quartet offers hours of Rolling Stones first-row fun and enjoyable backstage imagery that makes up either a great tour souvenir or a great chance to catch up with what you missed out on. Either way: slip it in, turn it on, turn it up (way up!), sit back and ... enjoy!

A few words and phrases for starters after viewing this DVD set: crystal clear, unpretentious, charming, slightly surprising, some overdubs/question mark?, nice pace, nice spread, nice package. So...where do you begin when at first glance this DVD offers not more than a few glimpses from the less -more popular- trodden parts of Stones World Inc.? In other words, my first impression was that this DVD offered too much mainstream: recordings from Argentina... Japan...first time China...the US-dawn saath.... It all seems like an easy option for the band where crowd enthusiasm and popular song choices are concerned.

And, in a way it is. No hard core fan will find anything new here. But over the years I have learned not to look at products like these as a hard core fan and see the package for what it is on its general release. And once you're doing that, you'll see things in a totally different light and then you realise that what's on offer isn't that bad at all. Even when the band are revisiting yet again those over-popular 'homestretch' anthem runs...

DVD One is the southern US recording of the Austin, Texas gig and in my opinion steals the show as far as the 'live' gig recordings go - and I know, for us fans it really is Disc Four with the more intimate shots. But, the first disc does do the job in covering sufficient ground in terms of surprises alongside a handful of classics. The eclectic across-the-years first quartet of *You Got Me Rocking*, *Let's Spend The Night Together*, *She's So Cold* and *Oh No, Not You Again* kinda indicates we're in for something special... and that happens with the next song *Sway*.

All hopes are up of course, as the song gets its rare outing. It's tender, soulful, true to the original but when we all bate our breaths for Mick to deliver his classic 'hey..hey..hey now' – vocal, it just doesn't happen and

the song comes to a somewhat stuttering halt. Bit of a shame there and it makes you want to put on the original Sticky Fingers version straightaway. I guess certain special moments cannot be easily revisited...

But all is forgiven when the band taps into their Hillbilly roots and churn out *Bob Wills Is Still The King*. An amazing feat seeing the band as this extremely well-oiled Nashville-bound combo. They're having fun, Mick is in top form, the band is *so* into this track! C'mon, Stones, one whole country album, live or otherwise please! Also Keith's solo country stint *Learning The Game* - his tribute to Buddy Holly - further on has this great charm. I love it when the band goes C&W! Having said that, what made me really sit up was a fan-tas-tic rendition of *Ain't Too Proud To Beg*. Soul, blues, country, ballad, rock ...disco, even – when this band kicks in, they kick ass! Amazing. The first DVD is full of great moments like these yet shows some lulls where you expected more of the band. *Get Off Of My Cloud* is electric, strutting stuff, whereas *Under My Thumb* is stripped of all menace and vitriol with Mick on a Kate Bush-style head-mike.

But nevertheless it is an overall nice spread with some great surprises. (Humphrey wants me to say that he particularly liked *Streets of Love*, one of Mick's best ballads in years.) And yes, of course there no doubt will be some overdub and editing questions on the side. And also the audience shots seem (as Alan Dunn would probably say) “very much manufactured”. But, hey, it's enjoyable nevertheless. So on to Disc Two we go...

I love the intro bit when you load each disc where the Stones 'shine out' all across the world (as they do!). And it's Rio de Janeiro this time...part documentary, part show. Six days 'till show time and the clock is ticking ... as it emerges, it's one massive hell of a beach gig! Even Mick seems phased! This disc truly captures a Stones-style gladiatorial event in a city that has rarely seen the band. Disc four similarly covers another rare event: the half-time proceedings at the Super Bowl. Both documentaries are fascinating stuff and the music is great! On disc two, after a power pack triple whammy we get treated to a brittle -very close to the original!- *Wild Horses* with the band excelling themselves, soon to be followed by a lashing *Midnight Rambler* showcasing Mick on his best harmonica and the band locking into this tight mean groove. Such a shame Mick's belt-wielding routine has gone... And what is the point of having two versions of *Get Off of My Cloud*??

Disc three is billed as “Rest Of The World” and samples rare performances in Japan, China and Argentina with the band joined by various guest artists. *Wild Horses* – guest man Eddie Vedder sums up the band nicely after having joined them on stage: “It makes you feel young again. It’s as if youth continues.” And that’s exactly what the Stones experience is: youth captured and continued. And of course a live gig emphasises that more than anything else! I’m pretty sure I told you all one of the best Stones experiences I’ve had -ever- and that was a photo pass in New York Giant’s Stadium. In front of me (elbows on the stage, camera in hand) *the* band, turning around *the* audience...for miles! Put the two together and there it is... The ultimate celebration of music and youth – life, death and living on; gains and losses; acceptances and rejections; crossing times, cultures, personalities, inner feelings, souls, antennae – even, all wrapped up in song and dance. And that’s why the band is still here. And that exactly is why the band still plays a different kind of gig every night and will never be classified as ‘programmed’ in any way. And that is how reappearing support man Dave “Let It Bleed” Matthews is seen on this DVD reduced to a blushing, almost gibbering school boy in the presence of Mighty Mick Jagger. To sum it all up: the show excerpts are interspersed with press conference, airport arrival and other hospitality Stones shenanigans. The duet with the Chinese guy sadly is a bit of a disaster..no more said...

And finally, disc four.... the one we’ve all be waiting for... This one has all the insights, all the ins ‘n’ outs. And, yes...it’s ace. Simply a great window to all the logistics of all the special gigs, events and special treats plus a handful of one-off covers such as *Get Up*, *Stand Up* and *Mr. Pitiful*. Go for it, buy it....enjoy it. - JH