

D051.a ROLLING STONE ~ 20 YEARS OF ROCK & ROLL



Rolling Stone magazine first appeared in 1967 and the first conceit of this programme is to give the impression that rock 'n' roll only began with the belated emergence of a publication at last fit to be its journal of record. Thus the opening clip of this huge, near-continuous 90 minute sequence offers the Beatles, aided by some of the Stones, singing All You Need Is Love from the self-same 1967. There then follows a more or less chronological carnival of characters good (John Fogerty, Marc Bolan), bad (Joe Cocker, Johnny Rotten) and ugly (I'm not saying) strutting and prancing through to mid-eighties Live Aid and beyond. Having lived as a callow youth through much of what's presented here (and indeed been an avid, all-too-willing consumer), I've become old enough in the fleeting years since to look on it now through the less impressionable, more knowing (or is that cynical?) eyes of my father and feel as little comforted by what I see as I know he would have been and oft-times was (*Top Of The Pops* our weekly battleground). So the hedonistic late-sixties paean to self-indulgence and irresponsibility that Joni M terms the "hippie ideal" gives way to crass 1970s commercial interests. Tell me about it. I was *there*. Bill Graham soberly spells it out:

... rock 'n' roll basically is no different than IBM, Xerox, Sarah Lee, Chevrolet. Supply and demand - it's the same, same business.

Knowing they need to include him, and with some dynamite late-fifties footage in hand, the producers pull a clever trick by slipping Elvis in with the punks (in his time, of course, exactly what he was). This hints at the intrinsically cyclical form of popular music's constant change, driven by the natural and unstoppable roll-over of successive generations. The time-honoured *Turn-that-down!* / *Hope-I-die-before-I-get-old!* adult / child divide is the yeast in rock's dough, an elemental core component of its rebellious, subversive nature and the reason (along with *love*) why R&R will always remain at heart a rite-of-passage youth culture thing (except that so many of us, being as old as we feel, just never grow up). Here's Grace Slick:

Every five years or so the kids oughta come up and hit you right in the face ... with what it is they have to say and dressing different ... Make 'em [the parents] throw up!

So, which side are you on? In the end, it doesn't matter, for you cling on to whatever it was that made your young years pass easier and let your kids (younger versions of you) re-invent the wheel according to their own.

If you're looking for a wall-to-wall procession of extended clips of headline rock acts between 1967 and 1987, [D051.a](#) is where. I'm giving my copy to a fifteen year old I know, which might be the right place for it. I don't think my dad would ever willingly have given me-at-fifteen any such thing, so maybe there's hope for me yet. Or perhaps not, for you can't unring the bell:

It's already too late to do anything about rock 'n' roll. The damage has been done. We're stuck with it. (Jerry Garcia)

And Bob? Bob doesn't really belong here at all. He's squeezed in between Fleetwood Mac and the start of Disco and the brief clip of RTR Tangled that's played (full take is also included as bonus add-on) is perfectly chosen to suggest in him (because it's the very *best* of him) some sort of unusual, shining integrity. But, intercut as it is with two mordant sound-bites from his 1987 BBC *HOF* interview with Christopher Sykes (see [D010](#), first chapter) the programme underscores the glaring difference between persona and person, between artist and man, such that even RTR Bob seems a mere artifice or façade. Maybe the essential truth of D is that the persona, the artist in him is the dominant force such that he loses, we win, even as Bono, Knopfler, Clapton, Sting and Co. take the money and run. But that too just makes way for the new kids on the block to have their chance at fortune and fame. And if neither are to be what they seem, at least they're *something*.



Bonuses (RTR Tangled, as noted above, plus two other very brief items) are nothing new. If you want this for what it is, then get it. But if you want it for its D-content, then save your time and resources and look elsewhere. Leastways, there ought to be 400 discs minimum in your collection before you start fretting over the lack of this one and, if that's where you're at, it just might be you have more than enough already.

THANKS Pingu

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