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The Tokyo Concert

Mick Taylor Band



Mick Taylor is one of rock's great conundrums. Since leaving the Rolling Stones in 1974, his career has been a series of off-beat sessions and on-offs done to fill in time between his wavering solo catalog. It's this sort of activity (or lack of) that's left many wondering why Taylor left the Stones in the first place, especially at a time when they truly were the greatest rock and roll band in the world. That was ages ago and, despite what tales you may have read about the guitarist being down and destitute, he seems no worse for wear; in fact, during a May 2009 show— filmed in high-definition at Billboard live in Tokyo, and issued as **The Tokyo Concert** on DVD and Blu-ray — Taylor seems


agreeably longer in the tooth and crustier than he was at Hyde Park in 1969, Taylor can still lay down those tasteful, fluid lines he's so well known for. He scratches out the somber notes of "Secret Affair" on his Les Paul, then steps up and delivers a serviceable vocal to sweep the blues away. Four of the seven songs on this set are from Taylor's 2000 release *A Stone's Throw*. Mostly, the music cruises the blues lane, straight down the middle of the road — nothing too adventurous or wild at this stage of the game.

However cautious the material may be, you can't help but appreciate Taylor's guitar work throughout. The slide on the last stretch of "Twisted Sister" is sublimely luminous. "Losing My Faith" and Willie Dixon's "You Shook Me" find Taylor and the band's other guitarist, Denny Newman, a popular British bluesman, respectively trading licks and ceding the spotlight. Newman is later featured on his own original blues number, "Burying Ground." The rest of the five-piece band includes Max Middleton, famous for tinkering the keys for Jeff Beck, bassist Kuma Harada, and drummer Jeff Allen.

The set concludes with Bob Dylan's "Blind Willie McTell" (which segues into short hop through "All Along The Watchtower") and "No Expectations," a Stones classic from **Beggars Banquet** Taylor did not record with the band. A rather languid rendition with a tiny pinch of "Brown Sugar" thrown in toward the end, and the sentiment is sincere, ending the show on a heady high. What really brings this collection home is *On The Road With Mick Taylor*, the bonus 25-minute documentary. The guitarist tells his story, touching on his time with John Mayall, the Stones and Bob Dylan, in between performance clips, some of it more intriguing than Tokyo. This glimpse into the mysterious musician's historical past and positive outlook on the future, along with the rest of **The Tokyo Concert**, may change the opinions of anyone who thought Mick Taylor was nuts for leaving the Rolling Stones.

~ Shawn Perry





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