

Review by Hank

Consummate rock photographer Bob Gruen recently released *Ike and Tina Turner: On The Road 1971-72*, a documentary (without narration) that shows upfront and private moments with one of rock's great musical teams. The 90 minutes video compilation he shot of the famous duo, gives us rare glimpses into the personal side of the exciting live touring act The Ike and Tina Turner Revue, during the early 70's. Gruen became friends with Ike and Tina after shooting an iconic photograph of Tina in 1970. Ike was impressed and asked Bob to photograph more and with his wife Nadya, ended up touring with them, filming the couple at home and in their studio Bolic Sound.

We are all familiar with the notorious ending of Ike and Tina but as Bob says of the documentary, "This shows us why they stayed together for 20 years." Riding on the crest wave of their success with *Proud Mary*, we observe an intimate relationship of The Turners and see why together, they worked so well professionally. Ike was one of the most influential musicians in rock and roll history, writing what is considered to be one of the first rock and roll songs, 'Rocket 88'. He was already a star in St. Louis when he discovered Anna Mae Bullock a.k.a. Tina Turner. Their match was made in soul heaven. The Turner life was comprised of non-stop touring and recording while maintaining a household in CA. The documentary *On The Road* show us what a seemingly, fairly 'normal' life Tina led, fixing meals and taking care of her children. She always said she had two different lives; the hip shaking, wig flinging, red-hot rock temptress ("an act" as she described her stage persona) and then mother of four sons, a woman who was known to be seen by interviewers down on her knees scrubbing her floors, washing her car and picking up her kids after school. This is one of Tina's endearing traits. She was never hung up a being a star and tried to live as normally as she could. We view this first hand in Ike and Tina's house. While comfortable looking and a scene out of the quest for the 'American Dream', their home life didn't seem to be particularly special. Living in an upper middle-class Los Angeles community where anyone would have been able to walk up to the front door and ring the doorbell, The Turner's private life on Olympiad Dr. had none of the trappings or expectations of rock and roll royalty.

Viewers get to see Tina cooking with lots of grease, laughing, making jokes, recording in the studio, rehearsing dance steps with The Ikettes and performing some of the famous Ike and Tina classics. Their life together turned ugly with Ike's increasing drug use (which we fortunately are spared from here) but music artistry, talent and relevance should never be judged on private behavior. After seeing the beautiful, invincible and humble Tina Turner, it's no wonder she went on to become one of the most successful and loved singers of our time. And Ike Turner got his props too, going on to win a Grammy for his solo work.

From the opening scene of the two playfully arguing in car about visiting each other's hometowns to the closing scene in the same car singing to each other, you are keenly aware that Ike and Tina Turner as performers, were pure magic and their music, a powerful fusion of rock and soul, still is.

Review by Alan:

So after a somewhat impatient wait to finally see this release (now on 8th viewing) and without spoiling it for the fans that have yet to see it, I will skim over the surface and give a general review.

Far too often when Ike and Tina Turner are mentioned in the press it is automatically linked to domestic abuse and Ike's mammoth ability to take drugs rather than the music and the better times in their relationship. Ike is typically demonised as the villain and Tina as the ill-treated heroine. However this DVD really shows the other side of their life which is deemed not newsworthy enough for the press, after all, only bad news sells!

Unless you had direct contact with the duo then you would never have seen what is shown in the 81 minutes worth of DVD – a fantastic, fly on the wall look at one of the hardest working acts to ever grace the world's stages. The quality of film is very good, though it may sound raw and look primitive by today's standards we have to remember this footage was filmed 41 years ago on what was high-tech equipment for the time.

Seeing Ike and Tina's interaction, along with the Ikettes and band this DVD shows some surprising and reassuring warmth to their well publicised turbulent relationship. Some key points to watch for are unknown tracks that appear throughout with Tina and the Ikettes rehearsing in the studio. Watch for the backstage exchange between Tina and Ann Thomas who was rather friendly with Ike.

Tina appears to take a motherly role over the Ikettes directing them in their harmonies and dance moves, very similar to the way she works with the dancers from her solo career. There is no doubt Tina was on the receiving end of some horrific treatment but this DVD shows that she was certainly a bigger and stronger presence than many may first imagine.

Tina seems to effortlessly pose with little instruction from Bob who snaps away in the background at their home and during backstage rehearsal. Her mannerisms appear the same, yet her accent is certainly more southern in tone than today. For the die-hard fans many will recognise furniture dotted around the house which appears in her autobiography and latterly the Whats Love film.

If I was to try and make some criticism – and its really hard to do, then it would only be that there was not enough footage on it because after watching, you immediately have a hunger to watch more and of course wonder what else Bob has kicking around his archives and will it be released– lets hope he does!!!

It would be fantastic to see the footage unedited, so we had full length concerts, recording sessions, home life etc which as Sjef mentioned to me, only Tina nerds would be interested in rather than the casual music buyer, maybe an interview with Bob and Nadya reminiscing over the footage or providing an optional voice over. In an ideal world a voice over from the Ikette's, band members and of course Tina though I would imagine it would be doubtful that she would agree, preferring to move on from the past.

The slide show features a fantastic and extensive selection of stunning stills (many unseen) from Gruen's archive of the Turners at home and on stage, a shame no audio was included, but that's a minor gripe. Some of the still photography also features in the enclosed colour booklet which shows Gruen's mastery of the camera and of knowing his subject.

So did the DVD live up to the expectations of a fan of 30 years and who was born the same year that some of this was filmed – then absolutely yes, do we want more – hell yes – because there will never ever be another Ike and Tina Turner!

Review by Marco

Review of the “On the road” DVD

What we need but don't always get from the past...

Most fans of apparently ever-lasting artists have their questions about tours which they could not attend because they were too young or maybe not even born or past private moments where the legendary artist was successful but still only at the doorstep of eternal glory. Perhaps it is especially the digital world we are living in that we take the ubiquitous and unbounded amount of video footage for granted – be it of artists we are interested in or be it of ourselves. In comparison to a world without digital cameras at your fingertips and without platforms and networks to share the material – therefore a world without YouTube, Facebook and other social networks or all kinds of special-interest blogs –, we sometimes miss recordings of the past very deeply and are forced to believe that we won't ever catch a glimpse of situations from the good old days whose today's counterparts, however, are so well – or even too well – documented and being made public.

Treasures from the deep sea

From time to time, treasures from private or semi-private sources, rehearsals or unused TV material appear on the scene and can provide us with answers and deep insights – maybe even with astonishing answers to questions we could not have thought of or new aspects of the music industry which put existing convictions and beliefs in a new light.

The Bob Gruen DVD “On the Road 71+72” is now one of these shining examples where out of a sudden a treasure box is lifted from the seabed and turns out to be a plethora full of remarkable moments. What needs to be mentioned first, is the YouTube-like perspective which the material creates for the viewer. Sadly enough, this holds even true for the quality and won't appeal to everybody but maybe only the deeply interested fans. We can find both material in color and black-and-white but the B/W material is quite dominant and pays its tribute to the many years which lay between today and the time of recording. We can also find many one-angle shots, shots from the TV screen for lack of the original material and situations apparently filmed without much planning or planning at all or other spontaneous situations where the camera was only recording in order to save material which could have been edited or cut later. Especially the YouTube-like effects which many scenes can stir up form a certain magnetic impulse and force the viewer to continue: Tina Turner, more than 30 years ago, in a kitchen preparing a meal for her family while answering interview questions in a chit-chat style and not during a staged press conference with special sound and lighting. Ike & Tina Turner in the changing room with photographers and then in the following scene the band and Ikettes making fun of the camera man like in any recent scene of that kind.

Exactly these two elements are always both impressive and astonishing: First, the abrupt changes in the atmosphere and the thereby provoked feeling of a strange parallelism of absolutely orthogonal situations: on the one hand, the everyday situations as if Ike & Tina Turner were back then an average American family and on the other hand the moments on stage with glittering dresses and a raunchy show style which would even be disputable for today's audiences. Second, the modern or apparently not-so-modern presentation style: on the one hand all the material dates from the years 71 and 72 and therefore should give an impression of being old school and old-fashioned, on the other hand it bears the characteristics of modern internet and private videos with the limited editing and angles, the jokes of people who are being filmed or a certain imperfection of the recording itself.

Private trivia details

Every fan will find his or her private trivia details in the DVD. For me, these were the following simple revelations: Tina still had a strong Tennessee dialect back then which magically disappeared over the following decades. Tina was already more than 30 years ago on the quest of “today's trend” and wanted to “go with the world”. And finally, Tina told us all in 1996 she would “do something on stage which I don't normally do” and sat down for the unplugged versions of a couple of songs, but already 30 years ago, we can see her sitting on a stool and delivering a dramatic version of a song which I won't tell you. You have to enjoy it for yourself.

