From start to finish, this film is non-stop music while these scenes are on the screen. A few backstage shots of the Stones preparing for a live concert show that there is nothing cutesy to distract the viewer from the feeling that he is actually there. Some of the more memorable scenes include: the opening shot of a packed outdoor stadium, with balloons the colors of the rainbow ascending over the audience and into the clear blue sky; the performance of “Honky Tonk Women;” during which a bevy of pulchritudinous beauties appear chorus-line style on stage, wearing colorful, and abbreviated, satin dresses that you would expect to see on cocktail waitresses who work in honky tonks; Jagger singing “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” as a hydraulically powered cherry picker lifts him over the audience. The sequence that stands out most in my mind, though, is the rendition of “Time Is On My Side.” During this song, we see a collection of childhood photographs of the band members (what big ears Keith Richards had!), and we also see a montage of old clips of past concerts and TV shows, dating back to the early years and continuing up to the present. This scene, to me, was Ashby’s tribute to the talent and longevity of this amazing group.

There’s a certain electricity in this movie that is fascinating. The performers masterfully hold the attention of the viewer as they parade around the stage. Guitarists Ron Wood and Keith Richards have a knack for firing up the crowd by doing little more than strumming their six-strings. The show, however, belongs to Mick Jagger. I can not help but like this man as a performer. Approaching age 40, Jagger is as vibrant and energetic as a teenager. In a nutshell, he has a certain style and charisma which sets him apart from every other entertainer in rock music today. He constantly plays to the crowd and beckons the audience with his eyes and arms (and his lips) — he even goes into the audience once, surrounded by bodyguards who try with minimal success to keep the fans’ hands away from the star of the show. As I gazed across the theatre, I was amazed to find everyone’s eyes riveted to the screen, waiting to see what Jagger was going to do next. This man is certainly one captivating performer.

Let’s Spend the Night Together, directed by Hal Ashby, an Embassy Pictures release.

The name of the film is Let’s Spend the Night Together, a title which invites us to spend an evening with the Rolling Stones as they perform 25 of their finest hits. A more appropriate title, however, would have been Time Is On My Side, because time certainly has been good to Mick Jagger and company. As the group enters its twentieth year, these five British rockers are enjoying the greatest popularity of their careers. The film captures the highlights of three of the Stones’ concerts from their successful 1981 U.S. tour, a tour which grossed over $35 million. Let’s Spend the Night Together shows us why.

I had high expectations for this movie from the outset. Knowing the director of the picture is Hal Ashby, the talented filmmaker who made Coming Home and Bound for Glory, I anticipated seeing a better than average concert film, which is exactly what I got. Twenty cameras were used to expertly capture the intensity and excitement of these performances.

Part of the reason that this film works is that there is nothing cutesy to distract the viewer from the feeling that he is actually at a live concert. There are no pointless interviews with the band members. There are a few backstage shots of the Stones preparing for the show and of excited girls placing kisses on their idols’ checks, but Ashby is smart enough to stop the music while these scenes are on the screen. From start to finish, this film is non-stop music. No gags or Hollywood gimmicks, just the Rolling Stones doing what they do best — playing good old-fashioned, hard driving rock and roll.

Some of the credit for the picture’s success should go to the Stones, since they are the ones who turn this movie into a true theatrical event. On-stage antics and a clever use of props make this film come alive. Some of the more memorable scenes are: the opening shot of a packed outdoor stadium, with balloons the colors of the rainbow ascending over the audience and into the clear blue sky; the performance of “Honky Tonk Women;” during which a bevy of pulchritudinous beauties appear chorus-line style on stage, wearing colorful, and abbreviated, satin dresses that you would expect to see on cocktail waitresses who work in honky tonks; Jagger singing “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” as a hydraulically powered cherry picker lifts him over the audience.

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Let’s Spend the Night Together opens nationwide on Friday, February 11. The film does have one or two technical flaws, it is a little bit too loud at times, and, at 114 minutes running time, is rather long for a person to sit still while listening to the Rolling Stones. Nevertheless, this picture is a rock concert movie of the finest kind. Be forewarned: after you leave the theatre, your head will spin and your ears will ring, but you’ll have had a lot of fun in the process.

Michael C. Magras

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