

Ziggy Stardust global premiere

Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars, Everyman, St James Quarter.

Edinburgh's Everyman cinema situated in St James Quarter was the perfect place to enjoy the global premiere of D.A Pennebaker's concert film from July 3rd 1973. The comfortable red seats fitted the 1973 atmosphere as we were transported back in time 50 years to the night Bowie killed off his much-loved character Ziggy Stardust.

Fans gathered at cinemas around the globe to see a brand new print of the film with restored footage featuring a guest spot from Jeff Beck, remastered in 4k with a 5.1 audio mix by long-time Bowie producer Tony Visconti. The sound is much improved, especially on the backing vocals for tracks such as Time, which was stunning. Teenagers who were there in 1973 posted pictures of themselves attending the 2023 event at Hammersmith which featured Bowie's pianist Mike Garson, Spiders drummers Woody Woodmansey and backing vocalist Geoff MacCormack.

Ken Scott who also produced Bowie's Ziggy Stardust and Aladdin Sane albums (amongst others) was also in attendance. Garson delivered a stunning piano introduction as he had in 1973, he told the audience Bowie was more nervous for him than himself. It's clear from early in the film why it has become one of the most influential concert films of all time and would be a catalyst in creating subsequent generations of fans as it does to this day.

The power in the music and theatre is undimmed, when the Spiders launch into Hang Onto Yourself it sounds as potent,

raw and dangerous as it did fifty years ago. The first dramatic costume change before Ziggy Stardust takes everything to another level. The film first premiered in Edinburgh at the city's International Film Festival back in August 1979 and it was there fans first had the opportunity to see Bowie's stunning acoustic performance of My Death, under stark blue light with the sweat dripping down his face we witness the bewitching effect on fans.

Fifty years on it has the same impact on the audience, no one flinches, talks or dares reach for a piece of popcorn. As Garson suggests, Mick Ronson is an "unsung hero" of the piece. Just listen to the crunch of his Gibson Les Paul on Cracked Actor or his solo on Moonage Daydream and you can understand why Garson feels Mick deserves more credit. I would also add that Trevor Bolder and Woodmansey deserve further kudos, Trevor behind his monster side-burns is a driving force on the bass throughout locked into Woody, who hammers the kit gloriously.

The band is on fire and is a well-oiled machine by the time of this last show of the tour. Undoubtedly that's why it's still something of a shock when Bowie retired them onstage, the moment has lost none of its dramatic power. Watching an artist take a gamble with his career live on stage is nothing short of mesmerising all these years later.

What a joy to finally see the cut footage of Jeff Beck on The Jean Genie in the context of the film now restored to how it should be, Mick Ronson shoots out a hand and points his finger; the sorcerer's apprentice pays homage to the man who set him on course. Bowie once remarked "I've found my Jeff Beck"; Ronson, would create his own style and become as important to guitar players around the globe. A snippet of Love Me Do and Around and Around are important additions now restored before the grand finale and for me the film's most moving moment, Rock N' Roll Suicide.

It was after Bowie's death that I thought repeatedly about this performance and why it continues to mean so much to people all these years later.

Bowie is asking us to give him his hands and telling us we're wonderful.



Ziggy Stardust The Global Premiere – Mike Garson PHOTO Scarlet Page

