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## Director Brett Morgen Talks Rolling Stones Doc 'Crossfire Hurricane'



Back in November, HBO premiered [Rolling Stones](#) documentary *Crossfire Hurricane*, and this week, it comes out on DVD and BluRay. Upon the film's initial premiere, *Radio.com* spoke to the film's director, Brett Morgen, about the access he got to all of the living Rolling Stones — [Mick Jagger](#), [Keith Richards](#), [Charlie Watts](#) and [Ron Wood](#), as well as former members [Bill Wyman](#) and [Mick Taylor](#) — and the perks to getting access to their vaults.

*Crossfire Hurricane* isn't the first Rolling Stones documentary, of course. There's been more than a few, from the recently-released documentary of their 1965 tour [Charlie Is My Darling](#) through the perennial favorite, 1972's *C\*\*\*sucker Blues*, and Martin Scorsese's *Shine A Light* just from just five years ago. Though Morgen is a life-long Stones fan, he says that even *he* wondered if a new Stones film was necessary.

"At first I was a bit ambivalent, because there have been a dozen Rolling Stones documentaries," Morgen told *Radio.com*. "And it sort of reeked of 'Best Buy Presents: The Rolling Stones' 50th Anniversary.' Which I didn't have any interest in. To the first point, I realized there was only one documentary that sort of traced the evolution of their story, (the 1993 film) *25×5: The Continuing Adventures Of The Rolling Stones*, which has been out of print for years. That film was a completely different style from what I did... without saying anything bad about it."

As for his vision, Morgen explained: “I don’t think that music documentaries should be history lessons. My goal is to make the film the embodiment of the subject matter.”

And *Crossfire Hurricane* does that. It uses lots of footage shot for *C\*\*\*sucker Blues*, but is leagues more coherent than that film. And from the beginning of *Crossfire Hurricane*, it’s clear that this isn’t a Stones film that doubles as a promotional vehicle for their new album or tour. There’s an early scene where Mick strips naked backstage, and another where he clearly sniffs a powdery substance off of a knife blade. Jagger isn’t known for narcotic use as Richards, Wood and the band’s late guitarist [Brian Jones](#), so it’s kind of a surprising moment.

Morgen says that he and Jagger discussed the latter scene quite a bit.

“One of the things I told him was that it was important that we had to create a covenant with the audience from the beginning; so they would know they were going to see a side of the Stones that they hadn’t seen before,” Morgen explained. “If you establish that up front, hopefully there will be a lot of good will to carry you through the rest of the film. That shot, which has been getting a lot of attention, wasn’t there just for exploitative purposes, it served a larger purpose in announcing the type of film we would be making.”

Another aspect of the film that has been the subject of some discussion, is that the eighty hours of interviews that Morgen did with the band members propels the film. Yet, there’s no footage of those interviews in the final cut. You never see the current-day Stones until the credits roll (when footage from *Shine A Light* is shown). Morgen says that he recorded all of the interviews but didn’t actually film them. By keeping the interviews to himself, the interviewee and a microphone, there was a level of intimacy that couldn’t be reached with a film crew hovering around. Indeed, longtime Stones fans will be hard-pressed to find interviews where Jagger and Richards address such personal topics as their reactions to the disastrous Altamont concert or the death of Brian Jones.

At two hours, there’s only so much history that fit into the film, which ends in the early ’80s with the *Tattoo You* tour. There is an argument to be made, though, that the documentary could have extended at least through the end of the decade, with the group’s reunion and triumphant stadium tour. Morgen agrees.

“In the perfect narrative, we would have taken it to [1989 album] *Steel Wheels*. The problem was, getting from *Tattoo You* to *Steel Wheels* involves ‘World War III,’” he said, referring to the mid-’80s spat between Jagger and Richards. “And that would have taken the film in a whole different direction at a late point in the film. Towards the end, the film already starts jumping years rather dramatically. The reason I think *Steel Wheels* would have been a nice place to land is that the band

were all sober at that point, and Mick was finally able to realize this vision of being able to put on this incredible show. That's where he really wanted me to get to."

However, Morgen points out that as the film's director, he had the final call.

"In my narrative, which is about how the band goes from being outcasts to respectable, they'd arrived at that point in 1981," he said.

So, not only does the film skip three decades of Stones history, it also gives very little screen time to Ron Wood.

"We talked about that as we started getting to the end of production," Morgen said. "Maybe we should call this 'Part 1.' There was a lot of discussion of 'Part 2.' Now that it's all said and done, I really do feel that they need to do a 'Part 2' to give Ronnie his due. Ronnie wants parts two, three and four! It needs to be done."

However, he says that he won't likely be the man to helm a sequel, though he hopes that the band produces it. Morgen's next project is a documentary on the late Nirvana leader Kurt Cobain, which has been in the works for years. But he also may not be up for the challenge: "I feel the second part would be much more challenging in terms of locking down the narrative."