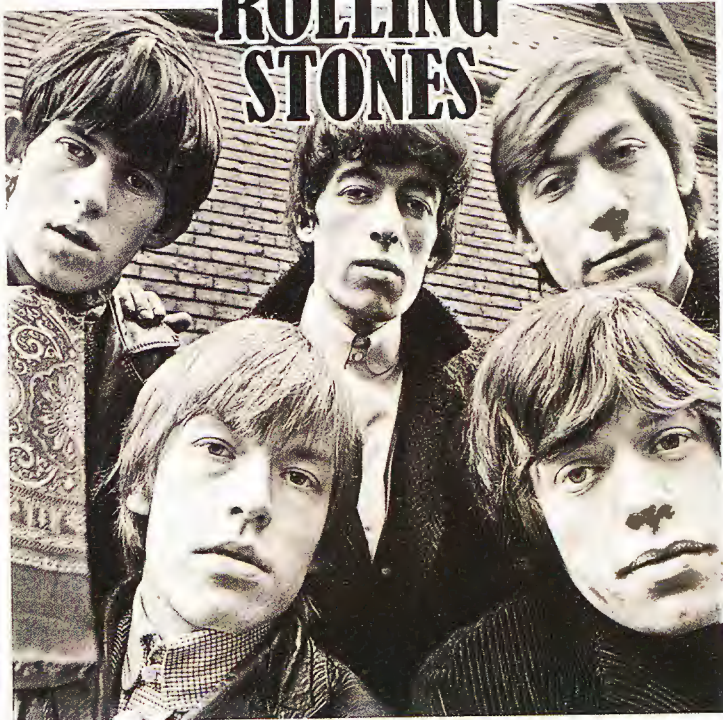


THE ROLLING STONES



in mono



The Rolling Stones: Blues, Mono & The Sixties: One afternoon in July, 2005, I stood behind a low wall of amplifiers, just to the left of the drum riser, in a prep-school gym in Toronto, Canada and watched the Rolling Stones go to work right in front of me.

Singer Mick Jagger, guitarist Keith Richards and drummer Charlie Watts, with eternal new boy Ron Wood on guitar, were in early rehearsals for another world tour – with a difference: drawing across four decades from the truly revolutionary era loaded into this landmark collection. The Stones had passed the 40th anniversary of their official debut as a recording group with guitarist Brian Jones and bassist Bill Wyman: at London's Olympic Studios on May 10th, 1963, when that lineup – only a few months old – cut Chuck Berry's "Come On" and Willie Dixon's "I Want to Be Loved" for its first single, issued by the Decca label in Britain. But the effect, from behind those amps, was like hearing the Stones as you get them here: a locomotive turbulence of deep-blue roots, crossfire guitars and British-outlaw bond, drilled and propelled with integrated depth and force. It was the Greatest Rock & Roll Band in the World in living mono.

Among the nearly 100 titles written in colored marker on large white boards behind the band were the cathartic blitz and psychedelic noir of the 1966 singles "19th Nervous Breakdown" and "Paint It, Black"; the 1965 U.S.-breakthrough cover of the Valentinos' "It's All Over Now"; "The Last Time," also from 1965 and the first A-side by the composing team of Jagger-Richards; and "Flight 505," a crackling Side Two cut from 1966's *Aftermath*. There were some Ray Charles covers, evoking the inspirational blues and R&B repertoire – Bo Diddley, Slim Harpo, Jimmy Reed – that filled the Stones' formative club sets and their '64 and '65 LPs as Jagger and Richards forged their writing empathy.

At one point in Toronto, the Stones rolled into the title track from 1969's *Let It Bleed*, their first album with guitarist Mick Taylor – who replaced Jones shortly before his death that summer – and the last to be issued in mono (in Britain). Jagger and Richards stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Wood at the foot of Watts' kit, facing the drummer and charging through the song's finale like a single, clenched fist. Much



had changed – for the Stones, on their records – since the end of the Sixties. This had not: that tight, forward swing, grounded in blues and soul ideals, pressed into my old mono copies of *The Rolling Stones, Now!*, *Aftermath* and even the motley 1967 American compilation, *Flowers* – the first Stones LP I ever bought.

The Rolling Stones in Mono is the full studio account of that first decade, newly remastered with unprecedented fidelity and revelatory detail. The Stones made these records – 14 albums, including British and U.S. variations, plus the non-LP tracks on the bonus anthology *Stray Cats* – amid a parallel upheaval in the sophistication and complexity of multi-track recording and stereophonic reproduction. They took full advantage of those creative options as writers and performers.

But it was the concentrated dynamics and visceral intimacy of mono – the single-channel playback of transistor radios and inexpensive portable phonographs – that magnetized and transformed young America and teenage Britain at rock's birth in the Fifties and well into its mid-Sixties adolescence. "You felt you were in the room... listening to exactly what went down in the studio, no frills, no nothing," Richards wrote in his autobiography, *Life*, remembering how he was struck, as a boy, by the store-front mono lightning of Elvis Presley's 1954 and '55 sessions at the Sun Studio in Memphis.

That was how the Stones heard themselves and wanted to be heard on these records. "Rock was a completely new musical form,"

Jagger explained in a 1995 *Rolling Stone* interview. "It hadn't been around for ten years when we started doing it... You felt like one of the chosen few, one of the only ones in the world who would get to play with this new toy. We had evangelical fervor."

In his memoir *2Stoned*, Andrew Loog Oldham, the Stones' precocious manager-producer during that volcanic time, recalled a September, 1964 recording date for the band's pivotal cover of Howlin' Wolf's "Little Red Rooster," the Stones' first Number One British single: "They played it with so much love and flair that you could hear the passion and ease in every groove... The whole process had been an audio dream."

The Rolling Stones in Mono is the dream as it came true, as you've never heard it before. You are now in the room, listening to exactly what went down.

In the beginning, then for the next half-century of recorded music, everything was in mono, and everything was live: crooners, comedians, opera singers and jazz bands; children's ditties, preachers' sermons, folk songs and down'n'out blues. Columbia Records' cover art for the 1970 Robert Johnson collection, *King of the Delta Blues Singers, Vol. II*, was an imaginary portrait of the Mississippi legend in a San Antonio hotel – facing a thick-pancake microphone connected to a shellac-disc recorder in an adjacent room.



The illustration was, in fact, documentary, based on a real 1936 session and emblematic of the makeshift way many of the itinerant, working-class ghosts and poets of early American blues, jazz and country music were caught for posterity. Johnson's version of the anguished "Love in Vain," revived by the Stones for *Let It Bleed*, was cut in 1937 in a Dallas office building. Muddy Waters – the Chicago-blues buddha from whom the Stones took their name, lifting it from his 1950 Chess 78 "Rollin' Stone" – made his first recordings in 1941 for folklorist Alan Lomax on a Mississippi cotton plantation, in the cabin where Waters lived before moving north.

"We were slowly going back," Richards told me in 2008, recalling the Stones' empowering late-Sixties turn to Southern country blues: the vigor and confession of that Johnson song and, on 1968's *Beggars Banquet*, "Prodigal Son" a/k/a "That's No Way to Get Along," as Robert Wilkins called it on a 1929 Brunswick 78. "When I was into Chuck and Bo," Richards claims, "I wanted to know what they were listening to." What he and Jagger found, as fans and writers, was the virtuoso expression of embattled, formidable human spirit – pure, direct and, of course, in mono. One example of the many, connecting roads in this story: Wilkins' debut 78 in 1928, on the Victor label, was a two-sided blues called "Rolling Stone."

Stereophonic recording predates the Robert Johnson sessions. Alan Blumlein, a British engineer at EMI, patented what he called "binaural sound" in 1931; the first stereo discs were manufactured



in Britain two years later. But stereo was a rare, prohibitively expensive phenomenon when the founding Stones were schoolboys in the early Fifties: Jones in the provincial town of Cheltenham; Jagger and Richards in the London suburb of Dartford, casual friends living a street away from each other.

In 1961, the latter two reconnected as teenagers, running into each other at the Dartford train station where Richards noticed Jagger carrying rare-for-Britain copies of Chuck Berry's 1960 LP, *Rockin' at the Hops*, and *The Best of Muddy Waters*. "We started to go to each other's house and play these records," Jagger recalled in 1995. "And then we started to go to other people's houses to play other records."

In America, the music-trade weekly *Billboard* was coping with the social and list-price gulf between mono and stereo by publishing separate best-seller charts. The magazine consolidated the two in 1963, just as the Stones arrived on record in Britain. But the band would, in effect, have separate careers for the next four years not only in mono and stereo but on each side of the Atlantic as Decca in the U.K. and its American franchise, London Records, issued the Stones' studio work in different forms and combinations – the U.S. releases overseen by Oldham and sequenced with an emphasis on recent hits to compensate for the lack of singles on the British LPs.

This was arguably the moment the Rolling Stones were born: when Jagger and Richards, in the spring of 1962, saw Jones play slide guitar with Blues Incorporated, the pioneering collective led by singer Alexis Korner, at Korner's club in London. "Suddenly," Richards told Stones biographer Stanley Booth, "there's fucking Elmore James up there, 'Dust My Broom,' beautifully played." That summer, on July 5th, Jagger, Richards and Jones made their live debut as the Rollin' Stones at the Marquee in London with a provisional rhythm section that included pianist and future tour manager Ian Stewart. By the spring of '63, Watts, an accomplished jazz drummer, and Wyman, an older, experienced hand on bass, were the backbeat, and Oldham – brash, ginger-haired and 19 with a PR resume that included working for the Beatles' manager Brian Epstein – had sidelined Russian émigré Giorgio Gomelsky, taking over the Stones' career direction (with early partner Eric Easton).



Oldham acted on the advice of his idol and mentor, American producer Phil Spector – stay independent – when he signed the Stones to his own production company, Impact Sound, which leased the Stones' recordings to Decca. That arrangement gave Decca, eager to correct its legendary rejection of the Beatles, a fresh stake in the new British pop while allowing the Stones and Oldham, as producer, full creative control and the freedom to record outside the label's facilities and oversight. Even the Beatles – tied to the grandfatherly patronage of EMI and forced to work in the slow-to-evolve bureaucracy at Abbey Road – didn't have that luxury

After recording the first single, "Come On," at Olympic, Oldham took the Stones to different studios in the summer and fall of 1963 before settling on Regent Sound, a perfectly basic facility – mono tape machine, a four-track mixing desk – where the band made its first album. Released in Britain in April, 1964, *The Rolling Stones* – boldly issued with no print to mar Nicholas Wright's cover photo of the group in silhouette and scowls – was a snapshot, mostly in blues and R&B standards, of the band in rapid, feral growth: the aggressive tensions in Jones' tremolo picking and curt slide licks on Slim Harpo's "I'm a King Bee"; his double-guitar tangle with Richards in Chuck Berry's "Carol." "Tell Me" was the first song on a Stones record officially credited to Jagger-Richards (a partnership engineered by Oldham). It hinted at an already expanding palette too: Richards' brisk, opening arpeggio on 12-string acoustic guitar; Jones' surf-treble solo; the fraught vocal exchange in the chorus, Richards unhinged bray hanging over Jagger's shoulder in crypt-like echo.

The quality and detail of the mono mixes from Regent Sound didn't make it to stereo copies of *The Rolling Stones* in the U.S., subtitled *England's Newest Hitmakers*. London ran everything through excess reverb, with ham-fisted panning and separation, creating a truly fake stereo. It was an industry-wide sin. American labels often disregarded the priority and precise intent of mono engineering on British Invasion releases, callously remixing them to feed their booming stereo market. There are no more distressing words on the front of a London-label Stones LP from the mid-Sixties than "Stereo – Electronically Re-processed".



But America was where the Stones grew up in the studio, between the summer of '64 and early '67 – at the Chess Records studio in Chicago, working with resident engineer Ron Malo in the same rooms where Berry, Diddley, Waters and Wolf had laid down their cornerstone blues; and more extensively at RCA Studios in Hollywood, where the Stones made turning-point friendships with engineer Dave Hassinger and arranger-pianist Jack Nitzsche, the right-hand man at many Phil Spector sessions. “They knew how to get good sounds,” Jagger said of Malo and Hassinger in 1995. “That really affects your performance, because you can hear the nuances, and that inspires you.”

Oldham, in *2Stoned*, cited Nitzsche as an essential spirit in the genesis of the Stones' mid-Sixties run of masterpieces, including the 1965 singles “(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction” and “Get Off of My Cloud”; the 1966 LP, *Aftermath*, the first Stones album fully comprised of Jagger-Richards songs; and the L.A. beginnings of 1967's *Between the Buttons*: “Jack gave us an understanding of tone. Which tones fits the universe? Which thing is hummable in the street?”

“Tone was key in those days,” Oldham noted, “because we were, in a way, only one step from direct-to-disc recording. Everything was down to placement and miking.”

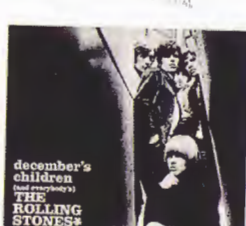
The Stones made *Aftermath*, in December, 1965 and March, 1966, as Jagger and Richards were driving forward as writers and Jones, a frustrated composer, instead colored their songs with an explorer's verve and acute touch on sitar, marimba, Appalachian dulcimer and koto. The technical facilities at major American studios like RCA, giant steps ahead of most British operations, encouraged overdubbing and sharpened the drama in stereo mixing.

But in one of his final interviews, Hassinger (who died in 2009) told Greg Prevost, co-author of *Rolling Stones Gear*, that he mixed his work for the Stones in mono first – stereo was an afterthought. This was a band that, as late as the RCA sessions for *Between the Buttons*, essentially recorded live in the studio. "They always played together at the same time," Hassinger said. "They would run the parts down, work out the changes here and there, nail it down, then start recording."

With *Between the Buttons*, the Stones hit the rough seas of their late Sixties, as they confronted the psychedelic challenge of the Beatles, fought the British legal system, split with Oldham, watched Jones slip into a fatal haze of drugs and emotional breakdown and were reborn, with Mick Taylor, as the world's biggest, modern blues band, launching their superstar march through the Seventies.

But this, in Hassinger's words, never changed: In the studio, "once they got it together, bang, 'Let's take it.'"





In the fall of 1968, Jagger opened his first, major interview with a new magazine named in part after his band by looking back at the Chicago blues, contemporary R&B and Fifties-rock & roll songs that filled the Rolling Stones' first albums and were still half of the action by December, 1965 – on *December's Children (and everybody's)*, a hasty roundup of singles and errant British tracks issued in the U.S. to capitalize on the Stones' second Number One hit there, "Get Off of My Cloud."

"We were kids, you know, just kids," the singer told Rolling Stone's Jonathan Cott. "We did everything, and it was a groove." Many of the covers spread out over the eight British and American LPs released in 1964 and '65 were "hit records in the States that nobody knew about here," Jagger noted. A high percentage were new to White Teenage America as well, like "Down Home Girl" and "Oh Baby (We Got a Good Thing Goin')," both on the early-'65 U.S. album, *The Rolling Stones, Now!*.

The former single was a 1964 B-side by the New Orleans singer Alvin "Shine" Robinson with comic, sexual coding ("Lord, I swear the perfume you wear/Was made out of turnip greens") and references to Crescent City culture ("I'm gonna watch you do the second line/With an umbrella in your hand") that would have sounded like a foreign-language to sock-hop kids. "Oh Baby," written and sung by the black East Texas fireball Barbara Lynn, peaked at Number 69 in *Billboard*, only going higher after London Records put it on that Stones LP, which went Top Five.

"It's All Over Now" was a brand new record by the Valentinos – singer Bobby Womack and his brothers – when New York DJ Murray the K handed a copy to Oldham after the Stones landed in New

York in June, 1964, ahead of their U.S.-debut tour. According to Oldham in *2Stoned*, the disc jockey told him, "I just gave you your first American hit." It was at the Valentinos' expense. Their version, produced by the R&B star Sam Cooke and issued on his SAR label, died at Number 94 in *Billboard* as the Stones – who recorded "It's All Over Now" on June 10th, their first day at the Chess studio in Chicago – rushed their cover out in July.

"I knew their record was going to go far, and our version was going to quit," Womack said later. But his Cooke, assured Womack that he would do fine in the end: "You'll be glad because you'll be the writer whose song broke 'em in this country." Then there were the publishing royalties and the lasting, mutual admiration. Womack, who died in 2014, became a lifelong friend of the Stones, contributing to later records and solo projects.

"We didn't want to do blues forever," Jagger insisted to Cott. "What's the point in listening to us doing 'I'm a King Bee' when you can listen to Slim Harpo doing it?" The point, across the apparent chaos of the Stones' album releases in '64 and '65, was in hearing the urgent, original writing that emerged from and, in time, transcended its sources. The 1964 U.S. package *12 X 5* was mercenary genius: a fattened takeoff on the British EP *Five By Five* issued that October to coincide with the Stones' second American tour.

An immediate gold record, it also caught the Stones at an early crest of transition, combining the AM-radio momentum of "It's All Over Now" with an extended range of covers ("Confessin' the

Blues," a 1941 hit for the Kansas City-swing pianist Jay McShann) and the escalating output of Jagger-Richards. Credited to the group pseudonym Nanker Pheige, "Empty Heart" was a circular frenzy of bone-dance tremolo guitar, steeped-in-reverb harmonica and brash, colliding vocals. It was the future too, a primitive, unmistakable stirring – in retrospect – of the Stones' trademark menace: the churning blitz of blues and shadows launched, to immediate perfection, on the 1968 single "Jumpin' Jack Flash."

The whirl of Stones life in the mid-Sixties – tours, sessions, interviews, TV appearances – meant that Jagger and Richards learned to be songwriters on the run, between commitments. Richards first played the seismic, three-note motif in "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," the Stones' greatest 45, on an acoustic guitar as he fell asleep in a Clearwater, Florida hotel room. A tape recorder caught two minutes of the riff, then the sound of Richards dropping his pick and, he claimed, "snoring for the next forty minutes." A first take of the finished song at Chess in May, 1965 was set aside.

Two days later, at RCA in Hollywood, the Stones recorded the version that went to Number One in America in July, driven by that guitar line and its gnarly coat of distortion. One of the strangest and most familiar sounds on Top 40 radio that summer was the audible, punctuating click, on the mono single, of Richards stepping on his Gibson fuzz box as he hit that lick in the chorus. The title was also Richards' invention and more blues tribute – his inadvertent nod to Chuck Berry's 1955 Chess single "30 Days" ("I can't get no satisfaction from the judge").

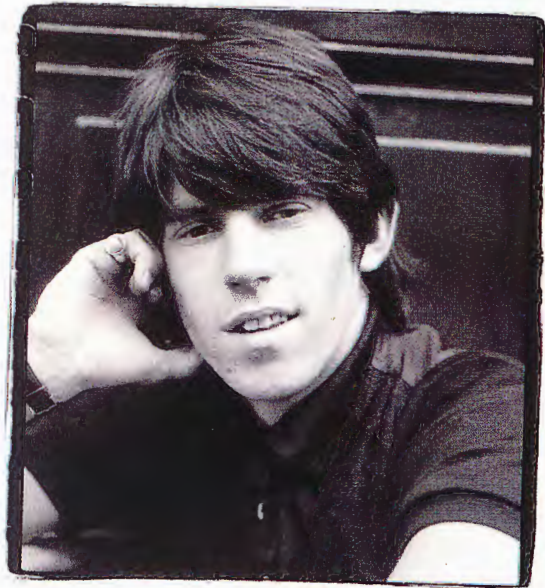
In the '68 *Rolling Stone* interview, Jagger confessed to blurring the lyrics as he sang on the Stones' records, including "Satisfaction." He cited advice he got as a teenager from an article about Fats Domino: "He said, 'You should never sing the lyrics out very clearly.' Decades later, Dave Hassinger confirmed that when he recorded the Stones at RCA, Jagger repeatedly told him to push the vocals further back in the mixes, equal to and sometimes behind the guitars.

The physical image, in bracing, remastered mono, is of a live band tearing through the mid-Sixties at manic velocity, in excited union; racing to make hungry-record-company deadlines between gigs

on non-stop world tours. There is also the sound of still very young men inventing themselves as a band through homage, such as Wyman's wooden Willie Dixon-like bass tone and Watts' juke-joint shuffle, straight as railroad track, in Berry's "You Can't Catch Me." In the version of Muddy Waters "I Can't Be Satisfied" on *The Rolling Stones No. 2*, Jagger's vocal swaggers down a narrow alley between Richards' crisp, strutting guitar and Jones' skidding slide work. That was also the same day, at Chess, that the Stones cut their gift from Murray the K, "It's All Over Now."

"It was important, when we started, to have hits," Richards told me in 2002. "It taught you a lot of things quickly: what makes a good record, how to say things in two minutes, 30 seconds."

"It's been so long since I've made records with the idea of having a hit single," the guitarist admitted. Yet Richards – who quit his formal education at 18 to move into a London flat with Jones and Jagger and start a band – also conceded this: In 1964 and '65, "it was good school."





In London on September 2nd, 1965, the Stones taped a live performance for the weekly pop TV show, *Ready Steady Go!* – four songs broadcast eight days later; all covers except for “Satisfaction,” just issued in Britain. The next day, the band flew to Ireland for what was barely a tour: two shows each in Dublin and Belfast, Northern Ireland in just 48 hours.

The Stones were accompanied by Peter Whitehead, a Liverpool-born filmmaker hired by Oldham to shoot the expected lunacy and stage invasions as a trial-run for a documentary. Partly edited, then abandoned, Whitehead’s footage – dubbed *Charlie Is My Darling*, Oldham’s droll twist on Watts’ endearing, anchoring stoicism – was presumed lost until its restoration and critically acclaimed release in 2012, including a rare scene of Jagger-Richards at work, writing a new song.

In a dimly lit hotel room, the two throw licks and lines at each other as they build a deceptively jaunty folk-rock number, “Sittin’ on a Fence,” about the security in ambiguity – the art of not giving too much away when everyone wants a piece of you. The Stones cut “Sittin’ on a Fence” that December in Los Angeles during the opening round of sessions for *Aftermath*, their fourth studio album by the British count. By the end of recording in L.A. the following March, there was no room for the tune, even in the generous-for-its-time U.K. sequence of *Aftermath* (14 songs, over 52 minutes). “Sittin’ on a Fence” had to wait a year for daylight, in the U.S. potpourri of *Flowers*.

“It’s been a progression from Mick and I sitting face to face with a guitar and tape recorder,” Richard reflected in 2002. He acknowledged the change, after 1972’s *Exile on Main Street*, “when everybody chose

a different place to live and another way of working . . . But I always thought songs written by two people are better than those written by one. You get another angle on it: ‘I didn’t know you thought like that.’ The interesting thing is what you say to someone else, even to Mick, who knows me real well.”

Aftermath was the real beginning of the Stones’ long march – after a three-year rush to success – to the total, unsurpassed victory of the next half-century. The liner note on the back cover of *Aftermath* was notably written not in Oldham’s usual droog-speak but by Dave Hassinger – the engineer’s straightforward admiration of the Stones’ work ethic and permanent shift in powers. Jagger and Richards now effectively produced the band’s records, marginalizing both Oldham (increasingly distracted by the Stones’ tangled finances and his own record label, Immediate) and Jones, who could already see epitaph on the wall. “My future as a Rolling Stone is very uncertain,” he says during a chilling interview segment in *Charlie Is My Darling*.

In the ten months between the December ‘65 sessions for *Aftermath* and the September, 1966 release of the single Jagger later called the Stones’ “ultimate freakout” – “Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing in the Shadow?,” a fried-mind mouthful wreathed in brass and seething with guitar feedback – the Stones shed their literal-blues adolescence, thoroughly integrating those founding inspirations into an original risk and aggression. In a parallel season of breathtaking, historic advance – the Beatles’ *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*; the Beach Boys’ *Pet Sounds* and Bob Dylan’s *Blonde on Blonde* – the Stones veered through the ferocious ascent and bass-lick avalanche of the February ‘66 single “19th Nervous Breakdown”; the gypsy dance, through pills, despair and Richards’ slithering-treble guitar, of “Mother’s Little Helper,” a Top Ten U.S. hit; and the acoustic jump-blues “High and Dry,” executed in the 1930s-78 RPM image of the Mississippi Shieks. The distance the Stones had flown since their 1962 debut at the Marquee club was packed into Ian Stewart’s Chicago-boogie piano intro to the celebrity jet lag in “Flight 505,” soaked in time-tunnel echo with a witty quote of “Satisfacoon” – as if played by Meade Lux Lewis.

Frozen out of composing for the Stones, Jones found refuge and a voice in framing his rivals’ songs in exotic, instrumental atmospheres. Watts remembered how Jones “sat for hours learning to play the

sitar," mastering it enough to write and execute the central modal riff in "Paint It, Black" – then "never played it again." Jones' late-'65 acquaintance with the American folk couple Richard and Mimi Fariña led him to buy a dulcimer which he strummed with soft, courtly poise in the Renaissance-court setting of "Lady Jane," while the limpid, sensual groove in his marimba arpeggios in "Under My Thumb" were a subtle, compelling rebuke of the lyrics' bitter chauvinism.

According to Hassinger, "Brian would be on the 'high' side," disabled by drugs, especially during the second set of *Aftermath* sessions in March, 1966. But in Paul Trynka's 2014 biography, *Brian Jones: The Making of the Rolling Stones*, engineer Eddie Kramer, who worked on *Between the Buttons* and *Beggars Banquet*, cited Jones' "sense of tonal color" in a song "to make it speak." Or as Wyman said flatly of "Under My Thumb," "Without the marimba part, it's not really a song, is it?"

"Goin' Home" (the spelling varies – the U.S. *Aftermath* called it "Going Home") was even less of a tune – Richards' rippled-tremolo guitar, a Watts-Wyman shuffle, Jones' plaintive harmonica and Jagger's homesick lust – until what was "only supposed to be a three- or four-minute song," in Hassinger's account, turned into an epic, jamming incantation. "I was ready to stop the tape," the engineer recalled, "and Andrew told me, 'Don't stop the tape. Let them go, let them go!'" Hassinger remembered only one take, but the spearing lead guitar at the front is clearly a Richards overdub, an ingenious afterthought.

In the original stereo, "Goin' Home" was oddly tipped to one side: the groove and improvising all to the left: Jagger stranded in the center, scating through solitary-confinement reverb. Mono is the defining ride: Jagger at the prow of the band, pressed forward by the more pronounced assertion of Watts' stridently-brushed snare; Jones' harmonica blowing in the rear like the whistle of a train that never quite pulls into the station. Stranded inside the band he started, with no direction home or forward, Jones was a bluesman at his crossroads – still brilliant but increasingly, irretrievably lost.





Home was not what it used to be. In November, 1966, the Stones returned to London and familiar ground – Olympic Studios, the site of their first Decca session – to complete *Between the Buttons*. Everywhere else, for the next year, there was trouble: a daily grind of confrontation and justified paranoia as the police, in eager conspiracy with the tabloid press, mounted a campaign of public harassment, drug arrests and the threat of extended imprisonment.

Records were made, under duress, and they would be judged harshly by the press, fans and the Stones themselves. Jagger called *Between the Buttons* “a good record” that “got rather spoiled” as the band coped with the four track limitations at Olympic, still a four-track operation. In bouncing tape between machines to add overdubs, “We lost the sound of it a lot,” the singer lamented.

The result was an eccentric claustrophobia of angular, slashing guitars, emotionally disillusioned balladry and macabre music-hall jollies – robust and fiercely defensive in the clenched-mix mood. “Deception, vanity” is how Jagger summed up the harsh romantic judgement in songs like “Yesterday Papers” (the first song he wrote entirely on his own, framed by Jones’ agile torrent of vibraphone), the cruel, gorgeous waltz “Back Street Girl”; and “Miss Amanda Jones,” a breakneck putdown of an upper-crust debutante.

“It was all a spinoff from our environment... hotels and too many dumb chicks,” Richards contended in his notoriously candid 1971 *Rolling Stone* interview with Robert Greenfield. He quickly backtracked: “Not all dumb, by any means, but that’s how one got. When you’re canned up – half the

time it’s impossible to go out.” So, Richards said, “one didn’t... You’re really getting cut off.”

Jagger, Richards and Jones were a war zone of their own, complicated by the guitarists’ evolving, romantic competition for the German actress Anita Pallenberg. Jones, less reliant and more vulnerable by the day, was still a key, textural figure in the Stones’ progression – the haunting, feminine air on his recorder, a baroque woodwind, in the January ‘67 single “Ruby Tuesday”; his frantic modal turn on electric dulcimer in “Cool, Calm & Collected.” But Richards was increasing his dominance on keyboards as well as guitar while taking a lead vocal, for the first time, in “Connection” – a song about love as dependence and prescient association for a guitar hero who soon became as notorious for his addictions.

Watts, a commercial artist and graphic designer before he joined the Stones, caught the bind on *Buttons* – a record by outlaw stars under siege by an establishment at once fawning and derisive – in his hand-drawn comic strip on the back cover. In a 2005 interview, I asked him about the last frame: a two-faced gnome who declares on one side that the Stones are on their way out and, on the other, cries, “Hi, Mick! Love your latest!”

The drummer replied with a story about the hypocrisies he saw as a mid-Sixties pop star fame: “I once went on holiday with my wife to Corfu. We checked into the best hotel and went to go upstairs when the manager said, ‘You can’t go up there’ – because of my hair.” Watts laughed with affable disbelief. “In this day and age, people come through the front door in tracksuits and sign for their rooms. And I couldn’t go up the stairs because my hair was an inch too long.”

On February 11th, 1967, the day *Between the Buttons* was released in America, the Stones held a session for their next album at Olympic – according to Wyman in *Riding With the Stones* – then split up for the weekend. Jagger and Richards, with Faithfull and several friends, drove to Redlands, Richards’ estate in West Sussex. The next day, police raided the house, allegedly acting on an anonymous tip but in fact aided by an informant close to the Stones. Charged with drug possession, Jagger and



Richards were found guilty at trial, sentenced to three years and a year respectively in prison, then quickly freed on appeal.

Jones was not at Redlands that night but landed in court twice in the summer of '67 on his own drug charges and spent twenty days at a psychiatric hospital. (He was also the biggest non-performing attraction at the Monterey Pop Festival in California, accompanied by the former Velvet Underground singer Nico and introducing the American debut of the Jimi Hendrix Experience.) It was open season on the Stones in Britain, and they responded with near-total retreat – into Olympic to make *Their Satanic Majesties Request*.

Released in December, 1967, it is no one's favorite Stones album of the 1960s. Oldham was gone; Jagger and Richards' ascendancy as writers, producers and arrangers was complete. They also had no one else to blame for the over-florid galactica and hippie-unity cheese of "Sing This All Together," the flimsy opening anthem; the awkward stop-start writing in "2000 Man" and "The Lantern"; and nutty production tics like the 20 seconds of snoring between "In Another Land," Wyman's first original song and lead vocal on a Stones LP, and "2000 Man." One precious moment of good sense: the decision to hand the string arrangement in the love-child valentine "She's a Rainbow" to the London session musician and future Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones.



with a lenticular-3D photo of the Stones in wizard robes. "We were following them through so many scenes," Richards said of the Beatles. "It took us much longer to get a record out of us; our stuff was always coming out later anyway."

Satanic Majesties is *Sgt. Pepper's* equal in at least one way: Mono is the superior mix, although stereo copies were pressed in much greater numbers, especially in the U.S. (My copy, bought in early 1990, was a London stereo pressing inside one of the company's many leftover mono jackets.) Richards' clanging guitar in "Citadel" cuts through the inky production like hard-rock reveille; "2000 Light Years From Home" is a chilling Mellotron-soaked blues shuffle. And "Gomper," eight vocal lines of haiku-like corn, becomes a ripping iridescent-roadhouse jam for the rest of its five minutes, a fast

"It was the first album we ever made off the road on acid, busted... a total alien way of working to us," Richards explained in 1988. "It's a fractured album." He also admitted, in the 1990 interview with Greenfield, that the Stones made *Satanic Majesties* in the competitive tailwind of the Beatles' 1967 psychedelic milestone *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* – to the point of trying to outdo the latter's extravagant, cover collage

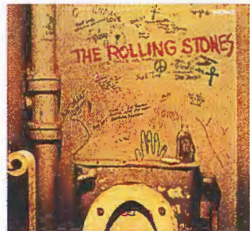
version – in tunnel-like mono – of the long tail in "Going Home" via the Balkans and Aldebaran.

Flowers, released between *Buttons* and *Satanic Majesties*, "was put together in America by Andrew Oldham," Richards told Greenfield, "just to put something out because they were begging for product." Yet *Flowers* and its immediate followup – the August, 1967 pairing of "We Love You" and "Dandelion" (found here on *Stray Cats*) – are a more effective account of the Stones' passage through the mid-Sixties, with a brief stop in day-glo society. You hear the distance travelled from R&B studies (a May '65 take of the Temptations' "My Girl," overdubbed with chamber-soul strings) to Dylanesque folk-rock ("Sittin' on a Fence") and acid's outer limits ("Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby..."). "Please Go Home," pulled from the British *Buttons*, is the Stones' teenage Bo Diddley fixation taken to such a dense, hell-bent extreme it sounds like mono even in stereo.

Recorded two weeks before Jagger and Richards' sentencing, "We Love You" was brilliantly fused with affection and contempt. The uncredited vocal assistance of John Lennon and Paul McCartney evoked the heady optimism of the Beatles' recent promise, "All You Need Is Love". But in the opening sound bite of a jail-door slam, session pianist Nicky Hopkins' circular hammering, Jones' sinister jolts of Mellotron and the medieval-street-gang slang in the bridge ("You will never win we/Your uniforms don't fit we"), the Stones set out the spirit of resistance that would carry them out of 1967, then through subsequent, repeated tests of nerve.

Jagger would later refer to "We Love You" as "just a bit of fun" – in a year of anything but.





The early-1968 birth of the protest-age grenade “Street Fighting Man” – the Stones’ doubting appraisal of the U-turn in underground London from flowers and beads to Marxist rhetoric and ammo belts – was as mono as it gets: the biggest rock & roll band in the world and its new producer American expatriate Jimmy Miller, huddled around a portable cassette recorder at Olympic Studios, trying to recreate the chugging-acoustic sound of a rough demo Richards taped at home some weeks earlier.

“It really is ambiguous as a song,” the guitarist said of “Street Fighting Man” in 1971. “Mick went to all those demonstrations and got charged by the cops.” The basic track was done on Richards’ mono cassette machine “with very distorted overrecording.” Jones, on sitar, was “holding notes that wouldn’t come through if you had a board... But on a cassette, if you just move the people, it does.” The cassette take was transferred to multi-track tape for overdubs, including the additional droning exotica of a shehnai, an Indian wind instrument, played by Dave Mason of the band Traffic. Richards pointed out that “Parachute Woman,” another song on the Stones’ next album *Beggars Banquet*, was also “a cassette track.”

The scene at Olympic – the Stones huddled over a cassette-deck mike, in tight hard-boiled formation – was their renaissance in a nutshell: moving forward again, after the psychedelic dead-end of *The Satanic Majesties Request*, through American blues, country grit and early rock & roll. “That body of work... was the most important time for the band,” Richards said flatly in 2002 of the four studio albums

the Stones made over the next half-decade: *Beggars Banquet*, out at the end of ‘68; 1969’s *Let It Bleed*; 1971’s *Sticky Fingers*, and the grunge-y sprawl of 1972’s *Exile on Main Street*. “It was the first change the Stones had to make after the teenybopper phase. Until then, you went onstage fighting a losing battle. You want to play music? Don’t go up there. What’s important is hoping no one gets hurt and how are we getting out.”

“To compensate for that,” Richards said, “Mick and I developed the songwriting and the records. We poured our music into that. *Beggars Banquet* was like coming out of puberty.”

The first shot of adult mischief was a 45 in the spring of ‘68. “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” started as a phrase Jagger caught Wyman running down at an organ (“Keep playing that, it sounds great – don’t forget it”). With its war-dance beat and classic Richards riff, fired in open-E tuning, the single introduced the Stones’ lyric and stage personae for the next decade: righteous, sardonic devils forged in a world of trouble (“I was raised by a toothless, bearded hag”) with a relish for transgression. The relentless power and swing reflected Miller’s rejuvenating influence. A former drummer, “I was very rhythm-minded,” he said years later.

Born in New York City, Miller came to England in the mid-Sixties, producing the Spencer Davis Group and then singer Steve Winwood’s next project, Traffic, before connecting with the Stones. “We chose Jimmy because, unlike so many other record producers, he doesn’t have an ego problem,” Jagger explained in 1969. “He will do what we want and not just what he wants.” Miller would produce every Stones album from *Beggars Banquet* to 1973’s *Goats Head Soup*. “Most of all, I wanted the Stones to be themselves,” he said in a ‘69 interview, “not my idea of what they should be.”

The slow burn of a reborn-Stones session – the progression from raw idea to purposely rough diamond, through jamming, experiment and detour, typically in long, overnight hours – can be seen in *Sympathy for the Devil a/k/a One Plus One*, French director Jean-Luc Godard’s jumbled documentary of the band hatching the incendiary bravado of *Beggars Banquet*’s opening track.

"I wrote it as sort of like a Bob Dylan song," Jagger claimed – an extended ballad-form examination of the thin line between good and evil. "Keith suggested that we do it in another rhythm" – which became the triple-engine samba powered by Watts, Wyman on maracas and, on congas, the African percussionist Rocky Dijon.

As he filmed the Stones, Godard inevitably caught Jones' advancing plight, ignored by the rest of the band as they found and sharpened the "Sympathy" groove. Jones appeared fitfully at Olympic during the *Beggars Banquet* sessions – a blur of drug use and continuing legal nightmares, flying to Morocco in July to record the ancient ritual music of the *Master Musicians of Joujouka*. The Stones essentially recorded the album as a quartet with Jones passing through: the down-home harmonica in the country lark "Dear Doctor"; the fainter blowing, behind the rest of the band, in the Robert Wilkins blues "Prodigal Son"; the Mellotron lining the creep of "Stray Cat Blues" and whistling along Richards' swooping, electric slide guitar in "Jigsaw Puzzle."

But Jones' last major gift to the Stones in a recording studio was one of his finest and most eloquent: the pining tone and graceful resignation of his slide guitar circling Jagger's eerie farewell in the ballad "No Expectations" ("I got no expectations/To pass through here again"). "We were sitting around in a circle on the floor, singing and playing, recording with open mikes," Jagger recalled in 1995. "That was the last time I remember Brian being totally involved in something that was really worth doing."



Beggars Banquet was issued in Britain in mono; "Sympathy for the Devil," in that format, is one of the great thrills in the Stones' discography with a unique, charismatic mix that favors the torrid, rhythmic undertow. But Decca Records spent more attention and worry on the cover, delaying the album's release for months until the Stones replaced the intended photography: a grotty toilet with the song titles and credits in custom graffiti, shot in Los Angeles by Barry Feinstein. The compromise was a plain, invitation-card design, with the Stones lurching in the inner gatefold like dissolute country squires. Decca, a dowdy firm in a rapidly transforming industry, would pay later. The Stones' next studio album would be their last for the label.

"It was a good writing period," Richards said of *Let It Bleed* in his autobiography, *Life*. "Songs were coming." They were also songs designed and fortified to be performed on stage. When the Stones began recording at Olympic in February and March, 1969, with Miller and engineer Glyn Johns, they had not toured in two years. The harrowing rush of "Gimme Shelter," the bloody rampage-and-breakdown "Midnight Rambler" and the carnal blast of "Honky Tonk Women," all started at the sessions, went right into the Stones' live sets even before the album's release, when the band played American arenas that November. Another gig regular, the sordid-lord romp "Live With Me" (with iconic tenor-sax break by Bobby Keys, a pillar of the Stones' road and studio brass until his death in 2014) was finished in L.A. a month before the tour's first night in Colorado.

Let It Bleed was a record of transitions. Jones made two fleeting appearances, playing congas on "Midnight Rambler" and strumming autoharp behind Richards' wistful vocal in "You Got the Silver." "My last flare from the shipwreck," Richards wrote in *Life*. On June 8th, 1969, he, Jagger and Watts drove to Jones' country farm to inform him that he was no longer in the band. Jones quietly accepted his fate.

The Stones immediately announced that Mick Taylor, a 20-year-old alumnus of John May's Bluesbreakers, was their new guitarist. He made his studio debut on "Honky Tonk Women" (overdubbing guitar) and his live bow at London's Hyde Park on July 5th, two days after Jones was found at the bottom of his swimming pool, pronounced dead at 27.

Let It Bleed's swing in styles – "Country Honk," an exaggerated barn-dance treatment of "Honky Tonk Women"; the respectful, poignant reading of Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain"; "You Can't Always Get What You Want," a grand finale of sober warning draped in Al Kooper's French horn and the London Bach choir – suggested a band jumping at chances, flexing matured strengths. "Honky Tonk Women," Richards contended, "was everything we were good at at the time."

Let It Bleed also came loaded with the dark side of the Sixties youthquake – allusions to hard drugs, moral bankruptcy and civil warfare, detonated by the signature fury and alarm of guest singer Merry Clayton's immortal performance in "Gimme Shelter". "This era and the collapse of its bright and flimsy liberation are what the Stones leave behind," Greil Marcus wrote in his *Rolling Stone* review of *Let It Bleed*, published in the grim wake of the Stones' disastrous free concert on December 6th, 1969 at Altamont Speedway in Northern California.

Marcus said this too: On *Let It Bleed*, "We can find every role the Stones have ever played for us – swaggering studs, evil demons, harem keepers and fast life riders – what the Stones meant in the Sixties, what they know very well they've meant to us."

The Stones' next era was right around the corner. That would be another tale.

While these two albums were not originally released in true mono (with the exception of "Sympathy for the Devil"), they were released in stereo and fan demand required us to include them in this package.



Rolling Stones
Stray Cats

In March, 1966, London Records in America issued the Stones' first greatest-hits LP, a lavish, gatefold package called *Big Hits (High Tide and Green Grass)*. The Stones had been a recording act for less than three years, but there were enough worldwide smashes and U.S. curios to fill both sides, including spoiled-rich-girl gibe "Play With Fire," a B-side that charted on its own in *Billboard* for one week in 1965.

A sequel, *Through the Past, Darkly (Big Hits Vol. 2)*, appeared in September, 1969 in the U.S. and Britain in an octagon-shaped sleeve with different sequences. After the Stones bid less-than-fond farewell to Decca – opening their own imprint, Rolling Stones Records, with *Sticky Fingers* – their ex-label flooded the U.K. four best-of LPs just in '71 and '72.

Stones compilations are an industry and art unto themselves. The best and most successful, such as 1971's *Hot Rocks* and 2002's *Forty Licks*, are defining entrances into the canon and unbeatable listening. *Stray Cats* is in that tradition, with special depth and revelations: a non-LP history of the Stones in the Sixties charting the speed and audacity of their success in stand-alone classics and the tracks that got away, in the dedicated mono mixes that exploded out of AM radios and teenage-bedroom phonographs. The streak of singles in 1963 and '64 – Chuck Berry's "Come On," the Lennon-McCartney bullet "I Wanna Be Your Man," the Buddy Holly romp "Not Fade Away" – were all covers but stamped with defining personality. "I Wanna Be Your Man" was a commercial songwriting gift, finished and donated by the two Beatles at a Stones session, then seared by Jagger's bottleneck guitar.



Even as they mastered the challenge and cohesion of the long-playing album, the Stones did much of their best work in the tension and concision of singles, particularly affirming their bluesy edge and initiative on the flipside: the tender chorus that punctuates the cocky stroll of "Sad Day," the American B-side of "19th Nervous Breakdown"; "Long, Long While," on the back of "Paint It, Black" in the U.K. and steeped in Memphis soul and great Jagger-vocal ache; the acid-splashed jangle of "Dandelion" in 1967 and surprising warmth of "Child of the Moon," on the other side of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" in 1968.

"The media's perception of longevity is 'you're supposed to be able to do this from 18 to 25, if you're lucky,'" Richards said in 2008, reflecting on the high odds placed against the Stones' success and survival in their early years. "In 1956, rock & roll was like calypso – a novelty. They said, 'None of it will last' – without realizing that all of the music behind it was not a novelty."

The first half of *Stray Cats* rounds up the rest of the Stones' bumpy adolescence as an R&B band, including two awkward 1963 stabs at the Coasters' "Poison Ivy". Barrett Strong's 1959 hit "Money" was covered on the 1964 British EP, *The Rolling Stones*. And "Fortune Teller" – the Stones' brisk version of a 1962 B-side by the New Orleans singer Benny Spellman, popular with British beat bands – was a tough find during the Sixties, originally released (with the first take of "Poison Ivy") only on a 1964 Decca compilation, *Saturday Club*. There is novelty here: Jagger gamely singing "As Tears Go By" – his first

composition with Richards – in Italian, for a rare single in that market.

But the Stones' determination to grow up fast is clear in the passage through "Stoned," the wryly titled instrumental flip of "I Wanna Be Your Man"; the admiration and assurance in the 1965 outtake of Otis Redding's "I've Been Loving You Too Long" (freed of the fake applause applied to disguise its studio origin when the track appeared on the 1966 LP *Got Live If You Want It!*); and the ripened swagger on the electric-Chicago B-side "Who's Driving Your Plane." The students were starting to give the lessons.

When he joined the Stones in early 1963, Watts was especially "impressed with the fanaticism of Keith and Brian – their absolute dedication to Chicago blues, to Elmore James, Jimmy Reed and Chuck Berry. They would sit up all night," the drummer recalled, "playing the records over and over. Brian would write letters of protest to music magazines. Keith was just as fanatical, without writing letters."

"That's all we played, until we actually became it," Richards said in *Life*. "The most bizarre part of the whole story," he continued, "is that having done what we intended to do in our narrow, purist teenage brains at the time, which was to turn people on to the blues, what actually happened was we turned American people

Version No. 2.

CHI SI' HA LA

(AS TSARS GO)

Italian lyrics DANPA

Ti vede sta per la
Del bimbi corrono
Visti che meridiano
Ed io son qui
Con le mie lacrime

Con la ricchezza
Comprare quello che
Non la gioia
Perche son qui
Con le mie lacrime

Il solo sta per
Un altro giorno
Tutti si divertono
Ed io son qui
Con le mie lacrime





back on to their own music. And that's probably our greatest contribution to music."

The Rolling Stones in Mono is how they did it, from "Come On" to *Let It Bleed*, in the format where they began – and where the records sounded most honest, dynamic and persuasive for nearly all of the Stones' first decade. This collection is only part of the story, the opening rounds of a history still being written. But it is the best place – and now maybe the only place – to start.

David Fricke, 2016

Essays: **David Fricke**

Restoration Producer: **Teri Landi**

Mastering: **Bob Ludwig**, Gateway Mastering

Sound Restoration: **Steve Rosenthal & Ted Young**

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DSD
Direct Stream Digital

Direct Stream Digital (DSD) technology was employed in the mastering of these albums. DSD uses extremely high sampling rates to reproduce the full range of musical expression, far beyond the capability of ordinary recordings. You will hear the nuance of the original master tapes and the vocal quality as it was originally recorded.





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