

*According to*



# THE ROLLING STONES





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**THE  
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**EDITED BY DORA LOEWENSTEIN AND PHILIP DOD  
CONSULTING EDITOR CHARLIE WATTS**

WEIDENFELD & NICOLSON



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# PREFACE

by Dora Loewenstein and Philip Dodd

With the announcement of the *Forty Licks* album and tour, there was no question that, at last, the Rolling Stones were ready to acknowledge the full extent of their history, their back catalogue and their influence. The album, released in Autumn 2002, brought together highlights from the previous four decades of the band's music-making, songs that had punctuated the many moods of that period and each of which held a particular memory for those of us who grew up listening to their music. But significantly, *Forty Licks* contained four new tracks. For the Rolling Stones, as conscious as they might be of the past, remain equally and resolutely a band of the present and the future, a true working band. There is no one else out there who can claim the same duration of commitment, energy and success.

It seemed like a good time for the Stones to tell the history of the band the way that they see it, the way that they remember it. The new generations of fans coming to the shows on the *Bridges To Babylon* or *Forty Licks* tours are often impressively familiar with the Stones' music, but may well be far less aware of the band's history and pre-history. That was the impetus for *According To The Rolling Stones*.

Here was a chance to get beneath the surface and understand what makes the Stones operate so well as a group of musicians who can still sell out stadiums around the globe. To explore what inspired them to become musicians in the first place and the events which had an impact on their musical and personal development. And to understand how the support of a long-lasting, loyal entourage of musicians, tour personnel and business advisers has helped the band not only survive creatively but also become pioneers within the music industry in terms of record deals and stadium tours.

We were looking for answers to questions that lie at the heart of the Rolling Stones. How have they continued to refresh and renew themselves to maintain a feeling of edgy dynamism despite their status as international cultural icons, admired and lauded with accolades worldwide? What is the alchemy between Mick and Keith that generates the creative tension which, like a never-ageing elastic band, propels the Stones ever forwards?

The first and most important decision was to allow the Stones the space to tell their story. We arranged a series of interviews during the *Forty Licks* tour – following the band from San Francisco and LA to Melbourne and Tokyo – to give the four principals the time between interviews to reflect, cogitate and mull. Two fellow interviewers were invited to help provide fresh lines of enquiry and new avenues to explore: Rob Bowman, a Canadian academic with an encyclopedic knowledge of blues, R&B, soul and rock, and Tim Rice, who understands as well as anyone the theatrical aspects of the rock spectacle.

Once through the door into the Stones' private on-tour worlds – each hotel suite customised for its inhabitant – they were, as expected, charming, generous, witty and funny, genuinely enjoying the memories and the stories. The whole process reaffirmed that the Rolling Stones have keen and inquisitive minds.

As will be clear to anyone who reads this book, the Rolling Stones do not bend to anyone or anything. They have a strong identity and a definite line to tread. They are

far from malleable: they will not accept anything if they feel they are being presented with a *fait accompli*. As an outsider, you can try to second-guess what the Rolling Stones will do or say, but you will usually be surprised.

Throughout the work on this book, they have always been right on the button, questioning, deliberating and then supplying a positive and ingenious solution to any query, whether about the cover design, text or photo selection. Such is the depth and purpose of their involvement in this book, an indication of the level of professionalism and commitment that they have exercised throughout their career, the very essence of their survival.

We have tried to capture as much as possible of that essence – the character, vibrancy, vitality and humour of each of the Stones' voices, the individual elements that together create the personality of the Rolling Stones: Mick's sense of showmanship, Keith's love of history, Charlie's down-to-earth strength and solidity and Ronnie's affable, optimistic humanity.

To illustrate their story, we selected over 300 photographs. There are iconic images from the great photographers who have worked with the band in the past forty years – a long and prestigious list including David Bailey, Anton Corbijn, Michael Cooper, Dezo Hoffman, Gered Mankowitz, Jim Marshall, Terry O'Neill, Norman Seeff, Pennie Smith, Mario Testino and Val Wilmer. Equally, there are photos drawn from the Stones' own family archives or taken by their immediate entourage. Each photograph is, deliberately, given air on the page to breathe, as we wanted the whole book, in both conception and design, to be clean, open and readable.

The Stones' story falls into twelve chronological chapters. At the junctions between those chapters are essays by key participants in and observers of the Stones' career over the last forty years, ranging from Atlantic Records founder Ahmet Ertegun and Giorgio Gomelsky, the creator of the Crawdaddy Club, to the band's current co-producer Don Was and Sheryl Crow, who has supported them on both the *Bridges To Babylon* and *Forty Licks* tours. Each piece gives the mirrorball another twist, shedding a different light across the history of the band.

At the back end of the book are corralled those details which will clarify and expand their story, information that provides background explanations to the Stones' narrative without holding it up in full flood: a who's who, a chronology and a discography.

Above all, this is the history of the Rolling Stones *according to* the Rolling Stones. This is not an obsessive day-by-day account of every gig, every ticket stub, every B-side. It reflects the way the Stones themselves recall what they have done and what has happened to them, fluxing and flowing through the events and the emotions that have stayed strongest in their individual and collective memory. History and memory are notoriously grey areas, but it is hard to argue with the guys who were actually there.

*The interviews for According To The Rolling Stones were conducted during the Forty Licks tour, between November 2002 and May 2003, by Philip Dodd, Rob Bowman, Tim Rice and Dora Loevenstein.*

Music is a language that doesn't  
speak in particular words,  
IT speaks in emotions,  
And if it's in the bones,  
IT'S IN THE BONES.

*Keith Richards*

# CHASING THE SIGNAL

# 1





**MICK:** I was always a singer. I always sang as a child. I was one of those kids who just *liked* to sing. Some children sing in choirs; others like to show off in front of the mirror. I was in the church choir and I also loved listening to singers on the radio – the BBC or Radio Luxembourg – or watching them on TV and in the movies. I loved all those early rock'n'roll singers. I don't know who they were; they were all just pop singers. I wasn't really that obsessed with them – I didn't care who or what they were – and I didn't make any value judgements about whether they were tacky or not. I just used to listen to them all. Eventually, though, as you do, I gravitated towards a number of singers who were really quite good, like Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry. I put together a band with some friends, and on Saturday nights I would go out and do gigs, sometimes simply with pick-up bands who were playing in some hall or other, singing Jerry Lee Lewis tunes or country music.

*Mick with guitar on an early family holiday.*

The band I had with my friends, Little Boy Blue and the Blue Boys, was more like a skiffle group. In England in the late 1950s we had all those singers like Lonnie Donegan. I used to play guitar and the group would sing skiffle, but I don't remember performing that kind of music in public very often. The two things – rock songs and skiffle – were quite different. Skiffle was more like a coffee-house version of folk music.

Among the various people we used to play with was a kid called Dick Taylor. Dick was a guitarist who lived locally to me, and much later on he played for that band called the Pretty Things. There was a time when we – Dick, Keith and myself – played in the back room at Dick's house, trying out all kinds of rock music and some kind of rhythm and blues, Chuck Berry mostly. We played everything and anything – that's how you learn.

I remember seeing Chuck Berry in the movie *Jazz On A Summer's Day*, which was a very seminal picture – a great documentary about the Newport Jazz Festival shot by the fashion photographer Bert Stern, in a very interesting style which I thought was a different way of looking at things.

I didn't get to see Muddy Waters at that point. Muddy did tour in England, but he mainly played up North, as far as I know; he certainly didn't play London very often. The first Muddy Waters album that was really popular was *Muddy Waters At Newport*, which was the first album I ever bought, but there were many other things I was listening to. The really popular blues singers in England at the time were those people who used to tour here regularly, like Big Bill Broonzy, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Leadbelly. They used to come and tour around in caravans, and whenever they toured they would also appear on television, so it was possible to see them on a regular basis. Since the UK only had a choice of two television channels, the odds were pretty good that you weren't going to miss a show if it was being broadcast. You had the TV on and there it was – you're just gonna see Big Bill Broonzy. I also had a number of friends who had their own record collections, so we used to go round to their houses and listen to them. There was one particular schoolfriend who lived close by. He was a little older than me and something of a blues purist. He liked Broonzy and Leadbelly, so I used to go over and listen to his records. It was all a bit like trainspotting.

*I had a number of friends who had their own record collections, so we used to go round to their houses and listen to them there. It was all a bit like trainspotting.*

*Mick*

You could also get hold of records directly from Chess Records in Chicago. I had come across a mailing address for them in some magazine or other. And when I had the money I would send off for records from them. They were really quite expensive for those days, because American record prices were higher than they were in England, and also to actually get them mailed out across the Atlantic cost a lot. Plus, you didn't even know if you were going to like the record when it arrived. You'd never heard it. So deciding what to order was a major decision. I knew I liked Chuck Berry, of course, and I'd order his records, because in those days they only released the singles. They would release those 7-inch extended-play records, like a sampler. You might have four tracks on one of them, and they would be a rather tantalising selection, so you'd go, "Oh well, I like that". That's how you bought them. Eventually they turned up in a cardboard package, not brilliantly wrapped. There were a couple of breakages; these weren't 78s, they were LPs, and they were pretty sturdy, but I did get one or two that were broken.

I also used to listen to a lot of jazz, the kind that Charlie likes. I had one friend who was very into jazz and he introduced me to the world of modern jazz. This was when all records were like gold dust, so you would bring your records over to one another's house and play them to each other. It was, "I'll play you my Big Bill Broonzy and my Chuck Berry and then you play me what you've got, and let's see if there's anywhere that our tastes cross over". He used to play me things like Jimmy Giuffre, who also appeared in *Jazz On A Summer's Day*, Chet Baker, who was very hip, and Gerry Mulligan on baritone. Dave Brubeck was also very popular; you'd often see him on the television in England – he was somebody a lot of people liked. And by a strange coincidence, when we walked down to the B-stage on the *Forty Licks* tour, we played a sample by Joe Morello, Dave Brubeck's drummer, of Nina Simone singing 'Let's Get Together'. All of that was my friend's taste: jazz music that was quite popular, not cool jazz. Everything had to have its own little pigeon-hole – there was cool, mainstream and traditional.

*Chuck Berry was inducted by Keith into the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame, January 1986. Keith: I lifted every lick he ever played.*

**KEITH:** When I was growing up there was a feeling in the air that things were really changing. You could put that down to the fact that World War II had effectively finished in about 1957 or '58, rather than 1945, in terms of the effect it had on the population of the UK. This is all in retrospect, of course.

In the early 1960s Harold Macmillan used to say, "You've never had it so good". I don't know about that, but certainly before that time you grew up in the middle of all

the bomb sites and the rubble left over from the War. London had enormous buildings, but then you could turn a corner and suddenly there'd be three acres of nothing – and the streets were full of horseshit because there were hardly any cars then. I really miss that about London: horseshit and coal smoke, mixed with a bit of diesel here and there. A deadly mixture – it's probably what turned me onto drugs!

I had grown up on rationing. I remember going to school and being given a medicine bottle full of orange juice once a month and the teachers would say, "That's your Vitamin C"; you didn't feel



you were missing out because that was the way things were, although there were lots of kids with rickets who hadn't got enough Vitamin C or milk. Candy was also in short supply. I was almost beyond the "I want my sweets!" stage, but when I was a kid you got one little bag of sweets a week and that was it. A lot of wheeling and dealing went down; the things people would do for a lemon drop! However, we didn't feel deprived because we didn't know any different.

The other thing about my generation was that this was the time that they stopped conscription, the draft. I had grown up expecting to be called up to do National Service. It was just part of life. At 11 years old, you took the 11-plus exam; at 16 you would do your GCE, and then at 18 you would get your hair cut and peel spuds for two years or become a fighter pilot – unless you could come up with a very bad cough, blind yourself, shoot your toe off or feign madness. But conscription came to an end in 1960, a year or so before I was 18, and at the same time there was all this new music around and even a few cars on the roads that weren't black.

The music came across the airwaves and suddenly it felt as if the world was actually changing. Things went from black and white or grey to full Technicolor: no army, there's rock'n'roll music and as long as you've got a bit of bread you can buy anything, you don't need to queue. All of these things combined created a very strong thing in England for our generation. It was a breath of fresh air and a promise of real possibilities, instead of the prospect of simply following in our fathers' footsteps, which was pretty gloomy.

I was fortunate that I came from quite a musical family and that my mother brought me up on the best that the BBC had to offer. I thought everybody played the piano or sang because that's what my family did. The first time I got applause was singing 'Bewitched, Bothered And Bewildered' at the age of four at Christmas. I grew up listening to Sarah Vaughan, Billy Eckstine, Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. The flipside of that was that they also broadcast the British pop scene, where what you would be hearing was Billy Cotton shouting "Wakey, wa-aa-key!" and lyrics like "How much is that doggie in the window?" or "You're a pink toothbrush, I'm a blue toothbrush". I can still reel off the 1950s Top Tens, but it was intensely boring. So that's why Chuck Berry and Elvis were, to us, so startlingly different. The music got called rock'n'roll because it had gone white; otherwise it was rhythm and blues.

I have no doubt that I first heard Chuck Berry, Elvis and Little Richard on my transistor radio courtesy of Radio Luxembourg or the BBC. That's certainly where I first heard 'Heartbreak Hotel', 'Good Golly, Miss Molly' and 'Tutti Frutti'. And Chuck: I didn't know if he was black, white or indifferent at the time, especially with his material, which is such a beautiful mixture of hybrid stuff. You want the best rock and roll band in the world? Chuck Berry's band – Johnnie Johnson, Ebby Hardy and Willie Dixon. The first record I bought, or nicked, was 'Good Golly Miss Molly', but I didn't have anything to play it on. Radio Luxembourg was really the only station playing those songs. You could hear some of them on the BBC, but only if they were big hits and had been released in England so that they were given "needle time", as the BBC used to call it.

To get any kind of signal at all for Luxembourg you had to go all around your bedroom with your tranny. I'm sure I was supposed to be asleep, so I was trying to do this underneath the sheets. The station would keep going off into ads for watches or the Irish sweepstakes, but every now and again you would get something special. So I always had to search for the signal; it kept moving around the room with every damn song or else it would disappear in the middle of 'Heartbreak Hotel' – that's what they meant by "heartbreak". You'd keep chasing the signal and then it would come good just at the end