

PART I

**Albums, Songs, Players, and the Core
Repertory of the Rolling Stones**

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Excerpt

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1 The Rolling Stones: Albums and Singles, 1963–1974

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The Rolling Stones are one of the most critically and commercially successful acts in rock music history. The band first rose to prominence during the mid-1960s in the UK, and in the USA as part of what Americans call the “British Invasion” – an explosion of British pop ignited by the UK success of the Beatles in 1963 and their storming of the American shores and charts in early 1964 (see Figure 1.1). The Beatles and the Stones were part of a fab new cohort of mop-topped combos that also included the Animals, the Dave Clark Five, Gerry and the Pacemakers, the Yardbirds, the Zombies, the Kinks, the Who, the Hollies, Herman’s Hermits, and even Freddie and the Dreamers. However much comparisons between the Beatles and the Stones may irritate the faithful of both groups, the similarities and differences can nevertheless be useful. Place of origin matters: The Beatles were not the first pop act from Liverpool to hit it big in London, but they were perhaps the first not to hide their northern roots. Although Brian Jones was from Cheltenham (Gloucestershire), the Stones as a band were, by contrast, from London. Songwriting factors in: John Lennon and Paul McCartney were writing together even before the Beatles were a band, while Mick Jagger and Keith Richards did not start writing until after the Stones had already begun their careers together. Commercial success is also worth noting: The first Beatles No. 1 hit single in the UK was “Please Please Me,” released in March 1963; the first Stones UK No. 1 was “It’s All Over Now,” released in August 1964. “I Want to Hold Your Hand” topped the American charts in late January and February 1964; the Stones’ “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” hit the top of the US charts in the summer of 1965. The most important distinction between the two bands – and the one that probably tells us the most about the stylistic distance between them – has to do with early influences. The Beatles were very much a “song band,” focused mostly on pop songs and their vocal delivery. And while Jagger and Richards were fans of the 1950s rock and roll of Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly, they were also students (along with Brian Jones) of American blues. As a result, the Stones’ music is often more “rootsy,” at times placing more emphasis on expression than on polish.

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Figure 1.1 The Rolling Stones in Paris, 1964 (Charlie Watts is absent from the photo). Courtesy HIP/Art Resource, NY.

This chapter provides a broad survey of the Stones' music over their first dozen years, beginning with the band's earliest recordings in 1963 and extending to *It's Only Rock 'n Roll* of 1974.¹ Its purpose is to provide a historical context for several of the chapters that follow and to sketch an outline of the band's releases and stylistic development over this period. As we shall see, the Stones emerged out of a small London blues scene to explore many styles over these twelve years. The period from 1963 through the end of 1967 – from “Come On” to *Their Satanic Majesties Request* – finds the Stones becoming increasingly ambitious musically, relying more and more on their own songwriting while following, and at times fueling, a practice among rock bands during the mid-1960s that emphasized innovation and experimentation. If *Their Satanic Majesties Request* represents the culmination of these early years of stylistic development, *Beggars Banquet* of 1968 marks the beginning of what would become the band's most productive years, as the Stones balance the musical ambition and accomplishment of their previous music with a return to blues, country, and rhythm and blues influences, producing a series of albums and singles

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that have come to define – for fans and critics alike – the classic Stones sound. The first dozen years of the band’s history can thus be divided into two arcs of stylistic development: the period from 1963 to 1967, which is driven by increasing musical and artistic ambition; and the period from 1968 to 1974, which is characterized by striking a distinctive balance between musical ambition and stylistic tradition.²

Students of the Blues and Early Singles, 1962–63

What would become some of the most internationally celebrated music in rock history, performed in stadiums and arenas around the world, started from a desire to recreate American blues in a few small London clubs in the early 1960s. The Beatles spent their early years performing in Liverpool and Hamburg, often playing long hours and performing sets filled with their versions of American hits.³ The Stones, by contrast, developed their musical skills in the London blues revival scene of the early 1960s, far from the center of UK pop and mostly off the commercial radar. Since the mid-1940s, there had been a significant British interest in markedly American styles such as jazz, folk, and blues. By the late 1950s, the “trad” jazz scene had developed in the UK, led by performers such as Acker Bilk, Kenny Ball, and Chris Barber – the “three Bs.”⁴ Grounded more in Dixieland jazz than in the American bebop of the time, these British musicians were often dedicated students of American recordings. In the second half of the 1950s, a skiffle craze hit the UK, led by guitarist/vocalist Lonnie Donegan, whose “Rock Island Line” added a big beat to an American folk classic and became a hit not only in the UK but also in the USA. Like many other British musicians interested in American music, Donegan developed into an expert on American folk, reportedly scouring every possible source for information and recordings, including the library in the American Embassy in London.⁵ British enthusiasm for the blues on the London scene was led by guitarist Alexis Korner and harmonica player Cyril Davies.⁶ Their band, Blues Incorporated, began playing Sunday nights at the Ealing Club in March 1962 and in May took over Thursdays at the Marquee Club.⁷ Both Korner and Davies were at least ten years older than most of the young musicians they would influence, including not only Jagger, Richards, Jones, and Watts, but also Jack Bruce, Eric Clapton, Ginger Baker, Paul Jones, Eric Burdon, John Mayall, and Jimmy Page.⁸ The musical approach of Blues Incorporated is accurately represented on the band’s *R & B at the Marquee* album, recorded in June 1962 and released in November.⁹ This recording features a mix of originals with versions of blues classics based on recordings by Muddy Waters, Howlin’

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Wolf, and Lead Belly. Blues Incorporated plays faithfully in the late 1950s American electric blues style without being slavish imitators, turning in a series of convincing performances that might easily be mistaken for authentic Chicago blues tracks.¹⁰

The Rolling Stones began, at least as far as Brian Jones was concerned, as a band very much in the mold of Blues Incorporated.¹¹ The band's first gig was at the Marquee, filling in for Blues Incorporated on the bill also featuring a band quickly formed by singer Long John Baldry.¹² Bassist Bill Wyman joined the Stones in December 1962, with Charlie Watts (who had played drums with Blues Incorporated but quit to return to school) joining in January 1963. In February the Stones began their residency at the Crawdaddy Club, initially managed by Giorgio Gomelsky. In April, just two months into those gigs, a young Andrew Loog Oldham heard the band for the first time at the Crawdaddy, and by May he and senior partner Eric Easton had signed the Stones to both a management deal and a recording contract with Decca.¹³ The Rolling Stones' first single, a version of Chuck Berry's "Come On" (Chess Records, 1961) was released in the UK in June 1963 – less than a year after the band had played their first gig at the Marquee. That debut single, which rose only as high as No. 38 in the UK, featured a version of Willie Dixon's "I Want to Be Loved" on the B side – a song that had been recorded by Muddy Waters (Chess, 1955). The two sides of this first single clearly announce who the Stones will be over the next few years: a band pursuing pop appeal while also retaining a strong blues sensibility.

The path to the Stones' second single perhaps reveals more about their aspirations for commercial success than about their blues roots. In July 1963, the band recorded Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller's "Poison Ivy" (originally released by the Coasters on Atlantic Records in 1959), which was to be issued as the follow-up to "Come On" in August.¹⁴ But Oldham felt the track was not strong enough; he withdrew plans for its release and drafted Lennon and McCartney to write "I Wanna Be Your Man" for the Stones. Released in November 1963, this second single rose to a promising No. 12 in the UK, establishing the Stones as rising stars on the British pop scene. The Beatles also released a version of this song on *With the Beatles*, with Ringo singing lead. The contrast between the blues-driven, rootsy intensity of the Stones version and the commercial polish of the Beatles track provides a succinct measure of the stylistic distance between these two groups. The record also provides, on its B side "Stoned," an early instance of the band recording its own original material. This mostly instrumental track is based loosely on "Green Onions," a 1962 hit for Booker T. and the MGs. The Stones, however, credit songwriting to Nanker Phelge – a pen name given to songs "written" by all of the band

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members.¹⁵ Subsequent early Stones releases would include additional Nanker Phelge songs, which were often based on specific tracks written by others.

Singles and Albums, 1964–65

In January 1964 the Rolling Stones had their first success on the top of the charts: The EP *The Rolling Stones* (containing four tracks, including the previously withdrawn “Poison Ivy”) topped the UK charts. This was followed by the British release in February of “Not Fade Away,” a Buddy Holly/Norman Petty song from 1957. The B side was “Little by Little,” another Nanker Phelge song, this time based on Jimmy Reed’s “Shame, Shame, Shame” (Vee-Jay Records, 1963). This third single went to No. 3 in the UK, and when released in the USA in March with “I Wanna Be Your Man” as the B side, rose to No. 48 – the Stones’ first chart appearance in the States.¹⁶ Aside from the songs attributed to Nanker Phelge – which, as already noted, were not particularly original – the first three singles and first EP featured no songs written by Jagger and Richards. Table 1.1 lists the Rolling Stones’ singles from 1963 to 1965. Note that it is with the fourth single (not counting the aborted release of “Poison Ivy”) that a Jagger/Richards song, “Good Times, Bad Times,” is included, though as a B side. “Tell Me” marks the first Jagger/Richards song to appear as the

Table 1.1 *Rolling Stones singles, 1963–65*

“Come On” (Chuck Berry) b/w “I Want to Be Loved” (Muddy Waters), June 1963, uk21, UK only
“Poison Ivy” (Coasters) b/w “Fortune Teller” (Benny Spellman), withdrawn
“I Wanna Be Your Man” (Lennon/McCartney) b/w “Stoned” (Booker T. and the MGs/Nanker Phelge), November 1963, uk12, US release did not chart
“Not Fade Away” (Buddy Holly) b/w “Little by Little” (Jimmy Reed/Nanker Phelge), February 1964, uk3; US release b/w “I Wanna Be Your Man,” March 1964, us48
“It’s All Over Now” (Valentinos) b/w “Good Times, Bad Times” (Jagger/Richards), June (uk1), August (us26) 1964
“Tell Me” (Jagger/Richards) b/w “I Just Want To Make Love To You” (Muddy Waters), June 1964, us24, US only
“Time Is on My Side” (Irma Thomas) b/w “Congratulations” (Jagger/Richards), September 1964, us6, US only
“Little Red Rooster” (Howlin’ Wolf) b/w “Off the Hook” (Willie Dixon/Nanker Phelge), November 1964, uk1, UK only
“Heart of Stone” b/w “What a Shame” (both Jagger/Richards), December 1964, us19, US only
“The Last Time” b/w “Play with Fire” (both Jagger/Richards), February (uk1), March (us9) 1965
“(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” (Jagger/Richards), b/w “The Under Assistant West Coast Promotion Man” (Nanker Phelge); UK release b/w “The Spider and the Fly” (Jagger/Richards), May (us1), August (uk1) 1965
“Get Off Of My Cloud” b/w “I’m Free,” September 1965, us1; UK release b/w “The Singer, Not The Song” (all Jagger/Richards), October 1965, uk1
“As Tears Go By” b/w “Gotta Get Away” (both Jagger/Richards), December 1965, us6, US only

Note: Chart numbers refer to A side of each single release (first-listed song). Names in parentheses indicate original artist recording that song, except in the case of “Jagger/Richards,” which indicate the songwriters. Parentheses marked “Nanker Phelge” also include the original recording artist who provided a model for that song.

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A side of a single, though it was released in this way only in the USA. After this, with only one exception, the remainder of the singles listed in Table 1.1 feature at least one, and sometimes two, songs written by Jagger and Richards. Note also that in the fall of 1964 the band released “Time Is on My Side” in the USA (going to No. 6), but released “Little Red Rooster” in the UK. “Rooster” had been released by Howlin’ Wolf on Chess in 1961, and the release of this slow blues number as a pop single was a risky move – though it paid off with a No. 1 hit. It seems likely that with the clear pop emphasis of the previous singles, the band was eager to reestablish its blues-revival bona fides with “Rooster,” especially at home in the UK.¹⁷ Table 1.1 provides a good picture of how, over the period 1963–65, the Stones moved from versions of songs previously recorded by others to Jagger/Richards originals.

The absence of Jagger/Richards songs in the first batch of singles, as well as on the first EP, might suggest that Jagger and Richards were either not writing much or were unwilling to release what they may have been writing.¹⁸ As can be seen in Table 1.2, however, Jagger and Richards were indeed writing during this period, though these songs were released by other artists, two as early as January 1964. Among these songs, the most interesting is Marianne Faithfull’s recording of “As Tears Go By,” which (as seen in Table 1.1) the Stones released in their own version in late 1965. The use of chamber strings in the Stones version seems to be influenced by the Beatles’ “Yesterday,” but the philosophical quality of the song’s lyrics actually predates McCartney’s “Yesterday” lyrics by a year. Still, the character of these Jagger/Richards songs recorded by others suggests that the Stones believed that material to be too pop-oriented for the band. And the timing of those first songs, released in early 1964, suggests that the October 1963 meeting with Lennon and McCartney that produced

Table 1.2 *Early Jagger/Richards songs*

“That Girl Belongs to Yesterday,” Gene Pitney, January 1964 (uk7, us49)
“Will You Be My Lover Tonight,” George Bean, January 1964
“Each and Every Day,” Bobby Jameson, February 1964 (B side)
“Shang a Doo Lang,” Adrienne Posta, March 1964
“Tell Me,” the Rolling Stones, June 1964 (us24) (April 1964 LP)
“Good Times, Bad Times,” the Rolling Stones, June 1964 (B side, “It’s All Over Now”)
“As Tears Go By,” Marianne Faithfull, June 1964 (uk9, us22) (later released in Stones version)
“So Much in Love,” the Mighty Avengers, August 1964
“Congratulations,” the Rolling Stones, September 1964 (B side, “Time Is on My Side”)
“Grown Up Wrong,” the Rolling Stones, September 1964 (not a single, album track, 12 × 5)
“Blue Turns to Grey,” the Mighty Avengers, February 1965 (later released in Stones version)

Note: Indented singles are Rolling Stones releases.

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Table 1.3 *Rolling Stones album projects, 1964–68*

<i>The Rolling Stones</i> (April 1964, uk1)/ <i>England's Newest Hit Makers – The Rolling Stones</i> (June 1964, us11), prod. by A. Oldham [10v 2np 1jr] <i>12 × 5</i> (November 1964, us3), prod. by A. Oldham [7v 2np 3jr] <i>Rolling Stones 2</i> (January 1965, uk1)/ <i>Now!</i> (February 1965, us5), prod. by A. Oldham [13v 4jr] <i>Out of Our Heads</i> (July 1965, us1; September 1965, uk2), prod. by A. Oldham [8v 10jr]
<i>Aftermath</i> (April 1966, uk1; June 1966, us2), prod. by A. Oldham [0v 15jr] <i>Between the Buttons</i> (January 1967, uk3; February 1967, us2), prod. by A. Oldham [0v 14jr]* <i>Their Satanic Majesties Request</i> (December 1967, us2, uk3), prod. by the Rolling Stones [0v 9jr + 1Wyman] <i>Beggars Banquet</i> (December 1968, uk5, us3), prod. by J. Miller [1v 9jr]

Note: UK release date is listed first, with US release listed second.

v = version of a song previously recorded by another artist.

np = song attributed to Nanker Phelge.

jr = song written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards.

* According to Bill Wyman, the first album to be conceived as an album and not simply as a collection of singles.

“I Wanna Be Your Man” helped prod Jagger and Richards into writing their own music.¹⁹

As Table 1.1 suggests, the differences in UK and US releases can make the chronological organization of the Stones’ singles difficult – or at least complicated. The problem is even more pronounced when it comes to the Stones’ albums, at least up to *Their Satanic Majesties Request* of December 1967. Albums with the same name, for instance, will contain a different collection of songs, while albums (or EPs) that appeared on one side of the Atlantic were never released on the other. Table 1.3 lists eight “album projects,” with each album project representing the combination of all songs that appeared on the US or UK versions of a given album. For example, the début LPs in the USA and UK together include thirteen tracks; eleven appear on both albums, while one appears on the US version only (“Not Fade Away”) and another appears on the UK version only (“Mona (I Need You Baby)”). The combination of the UK and US versions of *Out of Our Heads* totals eighteen tracks, with six held in common and six appearing only on one or the other. This approach to organizing the Stones’ releases has the advantage of grouping together tracks that were recorded at about the same time, allowing the development of the band’s style to be tracked from one album project to the next.²⁰ There are some songs along the way that get left out using this general organizational scheme, but these are few. There are also albums such as *December’s Children* (December 1965, USA only), *Big Hits (High Tides and Green Grass)* (March 1966, USA; November 1966, UK), and *Flowers* (June 1967, USA only) that are left out of this listing; such albums are primarily compilations that introduce only a few new tracks, with these new

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recordings placed side by side with ones recorded much earlier and thus blurring the band's stylistic development.²¹

In addition to identifying the eight Stones album projects from 1964 to 1968, Table 1.3 provides the number of songs written by Nanker Phelge and Jagger/Richards on each of these. Note that the first four album projects are dominated by Stones versions of music written by others.²² The first album project contains ten versions, two Nanker Phelge tracks (based, as noted above, on the music of others but not versions, strictly speaking), and one Jagger/Richards song. While the number of Jagger/Richards songs increases with each subsequent album project, the fourth, *Out of Our Heads*, still contains eight versions of songs previously recorded by others. A dramatic and important change occurs with the fifth album project, *Aftermath*, which contains Jagger/Richards songs exclusively – a feature continued in the sixth album project, *Between the Buttons*. *Their Satanic Majesties Request* includes one song by Bill Wyman but is otherwise all Jagger and Richards. *Beggars Banquet* settles into what will become the model for the Stones – one version among otherwise exclusively Jagger/Richards material. Viewed against the rest of the Stones recordings through the years, the first four albums stand out for their dependence on the music of others.

Table 1.4 lists the original artists who previously recorded the songs appearing on the first four album projects. These album versions provide us with a general sense of the music the Stones seem to have enjoyed most during these years and the names listed are almost entirely those of American rhythm and blues artists.²³ Two of the hit singles from 1965 (see Table 1.1), while credited to Jagger and Richards, also reinforce this strong American R&B influence. “The Last Time” is heavily indebted to the Staple Singers’ 1954 single “This May Be the Last Time,” while “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction” draws on Martha and the Vandellas’

Table 1.4 *Versions on the first four album projects (original artists)*

<i>The Rolling Stones/England's Newest Hit Makers – The Rolling Stones</i> (April/June 1964) [10v 2np 1jr] Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, Bo Diddley, Slim Harpo, Marvin Gaye, Solomon Burke, Rufus Thomas
12 × 5 (November 1964) [7v 2np 3jr] Chuck Berry, Little Walter, Irma Thomas, the Drifters, Solomon Burke, Dale Hawkins
<i>Rolling Stones 2/Now!</i> (January/February 1965) [13v 4jr] Solomon Burke, Alvin Robinson, Chuck Berry, Otis Redding, Bo Diddley, Howlin’ Wolf, Irma Thomas, Barbara Lynn Ozen*, the Drifters, Muddy Waters
<i>Out of Our Heads</i> (September/July 1965) [8v 10jr] Don Covay, Marvin Gaye, Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, Solomon Burke, Larry Williams, Chuck Berry, Barbara Lynn Ozen*

* The Stones’ version of Barbara Lynn Ozen’s “Oh Baby (We Got a Good Thing Going)” appeared on *Now!* in the USA and on *Out of Our Heads* in the UK.