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But Will It Really Be 'The Last Time'?

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Author: [larryjaffee](http://www.rocksbackpagesblogs.com/author/larryjaffee)
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04 Nov 2012



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Charlie Is My Darling, deluxe package

By Larry Jaffee

So what exactly did Mick Jagger mean when he first sang in 1965 "What a drag it is getting old" in "Mother's Little Helper." More like Grand Dad's Walker.

But how many of the geriatric set pushing 70 can still do what they do? With four sold-out shows in Newark and London, they're rumored to be planning a world tour next year, dubbed "GRRRR! 50 and Counting"? You've got to hand it to the Rolling Stones, even if their motivation these days more likely is money for their families than creating great music.

Let's face it, the Stones have mostly sucked as a recording act since *Exile On Main Street*. Okay, *Some Girls* and even *Tattoo You* had moments of greatness, but they paled in comparison to the glory years of 1968-1972 when they used to be introduced on stage as "The World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band," and they truly were.

As a performing act, since the '72 tour nothing in the new set material had ever been "must listening" compared to say "Gimme Shelter" or "Midnight Rambler." The new songs played live were retreads of riffs they've played countless times before, and not to mention they were nicked from Chuck Berry.

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JEFFREY

I thought they hit the nadir in 1989 with the *'Steel Wheels'* tour and album, but 2005's *A Bigger Bang* showed how low low can be.

But as long as there are babyboomers with disposable income, there will be always Stones product to purchase and \$1,000 concert tickets, boxed sets, coffee-table books, DVDs, etc.

Apparently, there's plenty in the archives to mine, such as the newly released *Charlie Is My Darling* documentary \$72 boxed set (ABKCO) chronicling the Stones' 1965 tour of Ireland. It's truly a time capsule, capturing their youthfulness and creativity urging to burst out, a band nearly at its prime. (The documentary alone is available a la carte on DVD/Blu-ray or digital download; the deluxe set also includes two soundtrack CDs, commemorative book, replica poster, film still.)

Barely out of their 20s, you see how the band was every bit important as the rival Beatles. *Charlie* is their answer to *A Hard Day's Night*. However, legal disputes prevented its release until now, and Allen Klein's daughter Robin has done a masterful job in producing a keepsake for those who care about this stuff.

Directed by Peter Whitehead, the documentary provides thoughtful interviews with Jagger and Brian Jones about fame, the youth movement, and entertainment. Jagger says what they do is "ephemeral," while Jones honestly responds that he cannot contemplate a Rolling Stones future with any degree of certainty. Maybe he was foreshadowing his death-wish.

There's an amazing scene of the band playing "It's Alright" on stage, and a riot ensues, as the unruly mob literally mauls the band members. Another revelatory moment is Mick singing and Keith on an acoustic guitar working out "Sitting On a Fence" in a hotel room. These London blokes knew, back then at least, how to craft a tune.

You see at the airport a disgusted Keith getting ticked at a teenage girl trying to snatch a piece of his hair from behind, and instead of giving her a shove just walks off briskly. Perhaps he was fully conscious of the camera watching his every move.

Having recovered and restored in recent years similar Stones curios as *The Rock 'N' Roll Circus* and *Get Yer Ya Yas Out* in deluxe packages, ABKCO, I've got a question: What's next? *Cocksucker Blues*?

•••

Perhaps not coincidentally, there's other Stones-related product to piggyback the current media attention on the band. *The Rolling Stones Under Review 1975-1983: The Ronnie Wood Years Part 1* on DVD, out Nov. 20 courtesy of MVD, an in-depth documentary covering the career and music of the Rolling Stones between 1975 and 1983, rounds up various pundits, including RBP chief Barney Hoskyns.

Key to the story is how Wood gave the band new lease on life, and Richards' drug problems allowed Jagger to take the reins business-wise and creatively. There's a consensus that the band missed Mick Taylor's musicianship.

Album by album, they dissect the band's output. There are moments of insight that would only appeal to an aficionado, such as how *Goat's Head Soup* (1973) was recorded in Jamaica, but did not reflect the Glimmer Twins' love for reggae, which would emerge on later tracks like *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll's* "Luxury" and *Black and Blue's* "Cherry Oh Baby."

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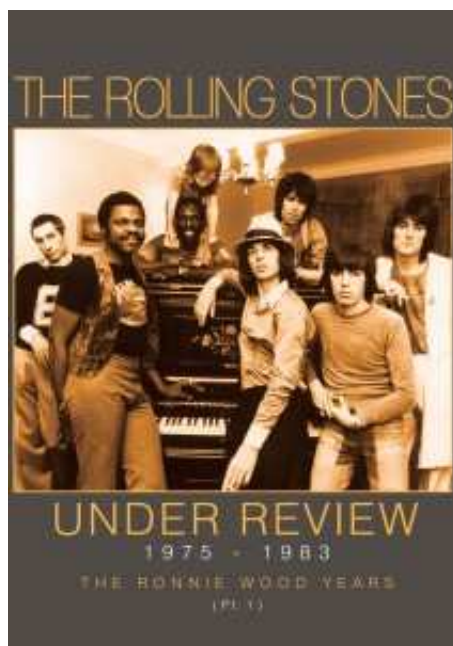
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The critics seem especially kind to *Black and Blue*, which, to my ears, only had two redeeming tracks, "Memory Motel" and "Melody," the latter which was helped especially by Billy Preston's influence and soulfulness. The album's lack of cohesiveness may be explained by the band auditioning Taylor's replacement during the recording. Among those who auditioned included Wood, Wayne Perkins, Harvey Mandel, Steve Marriott and Peter Frampton, but only Wood, Perkins and Mandel made the final cut of resulting tracks.

I remember having a conversation with a record-store owner as the album's "Fool to Cry" came on the radio at the time of its 1976 release, and me opining that Queen was a much-better band at the moment. There are some seldom-seen videos, such as "Undercover of the Night," most of which no doubt are on YouTube.

The harmonica player Sugar Blue offers some firsthand insight to the making of "Miss You" and how the Stones operated in the studio.



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Finally, Philip Norman's biography *Mick Jagger* (Ecco) appears to be almost an answer to *Life*, Richards's strangely lucent 2010 autobiography that spurred the countless classic rock memoirs that have been since published (e.g., Steven Tyler, Rod Stewart, Pete Townshend, et. al). Norman's weighty analysis at 622 pages shows his exhaustive research, as he had done with the Beatles. Just starting to dive into it, so stay tuned for a "holiday gift guide" review from me in the coming month.

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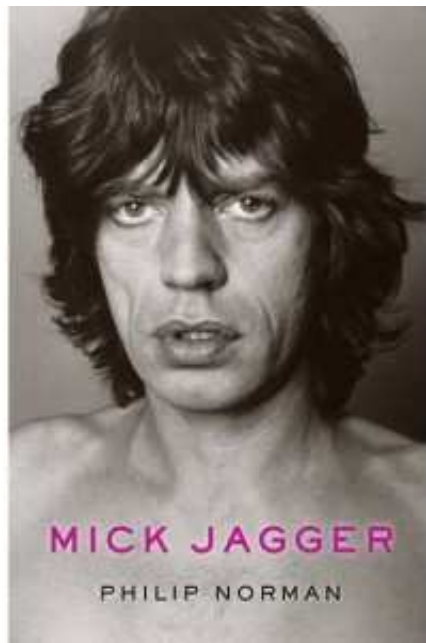
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Check out my earlier RBP musings about the Stones at:
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Elen Sander says:

Larry,

Maybe the last time, I don't know.

Ellen

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