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The Stones, Batdorf and Stanley-style

By Michael Miller | [Laguna Beach Coastline Pilot](#)



John Batdorf and James Lee Stanley will perform "All Woods and Stones" on the radio in Laguna Beach this weekend. (April 4, 2013)

John Batdorf and James Lee Stanley will appear on the radio Saturday in Laguna Beach to play mellow, harmony-drenched folk tunes — the kind you listen to on a lazy afternoon with a sweater, a cup of mocha and a cat napping at the foot of the couch.

Among the possible repertoire: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," "19th Nervous Breakdown," "Get Off of My Cloud" and other quaint standards like that.

In 2005, Batdorf and Stanley released "All Wood and Stones," a collection of Rolling Stones songs performed in tight-harmony style. (The "Wood" in the title refers to an acoustic guitar, not to Stones guitarist Ron Wood.) This year, the duo will be back with "All Wood and Stones II," in which 10 more Jagger-Richards compositions get the treatment.

The intent of the project, Batdorf said, is to honor two underappreciated songwriters in a highly appreciated band.

"They're really not presented as singer-songwriter guys," he said. "But the craft between Keith and Mick, when they were competing with the Beatles for pop stuff — those are just fantastic songs."

The duo will perform songs from both "All Wood and Stones" discs from 9 to 10 a.m. Saturday on KX 93.5's "The Friendship Show." Co-host Scott Hays, who has known Batdorf since the 1970s and once worked with him on a charity project for the homeless, said most of the show will be dedicated to the Stones material, with Batdorf and Stanley each performing brief solo sets.

The website for the "All Wood and Stones" project asks on its home page, "Can you imagine what the Rolling Stones songs would have sounded like if Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were California boys with acoustic guitars?" That's only partly a fantasy; while the Stones' chief songwriters may have grown up an ocean away from Jackson Browne, they've often balanced their harder rock with radio-friendly pop.

Considering their original versions, songs like "Wild Horses," "Ruby Tuesday" and "As Tears Go By" hardly sound jarring in coffeehouse style. Some of the more uptempo numbers, though, demanded a heavier sound even without electric riffs; Batdorf and Stanley, who used minimal percussion on the first album, went ahead and enlisted drums this time.

Still, some of the old chestnuts may not be recognizable unless a listener pays attention to the words. "Get Off of My Cloud," on the new disc, turns from a bitter rocker into an almost cheery singalong, with Batdorf and Stanley's harmonies surging on the chorus. Likewise, on "Sympathy for the Devil," Batdorf comes off as the sweetest-voiced Satan in memory.

"We didn't want to be a cover band," Stanley said. "We didn't want to do a song the way the Stones did it."

So far, the "All Wood and Stones" project has garnered mixed notices. USA Today critic Edna Gundersen gave the first CD a boost when she praised it in a column about new tribute discs. The artists, she wrote, had "turned the rock grooves inside out" and found "radically new interpretations of songs long tattooed in boomer DNA."

By contrast, Allmusic.com critic Stewart Mason called the concept "suffused with earnestness and baby-boomer nostalgia" and reminiscent of a Christopher Guest musical mockumentary in the style of "A Mighty Wind." Reviews notwithstanding, though, Batdorf and Stanley have found popular support for their endeavor. They've played "All Wood and Stones" material on tour every year since the first album's release.

Both men are music-industry veterans. Stanley has recorded since the 1970s and, according to his website, was once called "probably the last great undiscovered singer-songwriter in America" by author Tom Robbins, while Batdorf belonged to the 1970s duo Batdorf and Rodney, did session work for years and recently sang backup for Adele during her "Skyfall" performance at the Oscars.

So did they ever get close to their current tribute subjects? Batdorf said he did, kind of.

"The closest I ever got to the Stones was when Batdorf and Rodney signed our deal at the Beverly Hills Hotel in 1970," he said. "That was around the time the Stones were making their deal with Atlantic [Records] for 'Sticky Fingers.' They were signing in one room and we were signing in the other room. That was the closest I got."

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