



ALBUMS:

- A. England's Newest Hitmakers, '64
- B. 12 X 5, '64
- C. The Rolling Stones, Now!, '65
- D. Out of our Heads, '65
- E. December's Children, '65
- F. Aftermath, '66
- G. Got Live If You Want It!, '66
- H. Between The Buttons, '67
- I. Flowers, '67
- J. Their Satanic Majesties Request, '67
- K. Beggars Banquet, '68
- L. Let It Bleed, '69
- M. Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out, '70
- N. Sticky Fingers, '71
- O. Exile On Main St., '72
- P. Goats Head Soup, '73
- Q. It's Only Rock 'N' Roll, '74
- R. Metamorphosis, '75
- S. Black and Blue, '76
- T. Love You Live, '77
- U. Some Girls, '78
- V. Emotional Rescue, '80
- W. Tattoo You, '81
- X. Still Life, '82
- Y. Undercover, '83

Graphic by Shawn Bird

Stones roll out 20 years of albums

In May, 1964, The Rolling Stones' first U.S. LP, **England's Newest Hit Makers** — **The Rolling Stones**, was released. Twenty years and 24 albums later — excluding seven domestic greatest hit compilations — The Stones continue to crank out new records at about one a year.

The following is a retrospective of The Stones album history. *The Emerald* takes a look at its ups and downs.

The Stones' first five albums chronicle the slow progression of the band from blues and R&B toward rock'n'roll and include many of the early hits. The songs fluctuate in quality, but Mick Jagger's voice improves with each album, as does his and Keith Richards' songwriting.

Big Hits (High Tide and Green Grass), particularly the British import version (with three additional songs), captures the best of the early albums, providing an attractive alternative to their unevenness.

Aftermath is the first Stones' disc (excluding **Big Hits**) that functions as a fully realized and enjoyable whole. For the first time, all of the cuts are by Jagger and Richards, and the writing has matured. The tracks cover a wide variety of relevant topics including death ("Flight 505"); misogyny ("Stupid Girl"); brutality ("Under My Thumb"); depression ("Paint It, Black"); defiance ("Doncha Bother Me"); rejection ("It's Not Easy"); and, naturally, love ("Lady Jane").

Got Live if you Want It! and all of their live releases are sloppy excuses for albums that fail to advance their

music at all.

Between the Buttons is probably the band's least recognized record. Lush and apocalyptic, it transcends the frontiers established by **Aftermath** in a haze of suggestion and giggling hysteria. The players seem, at times, to be satyrs dancing in a pagan ritual, delivering frenzied bursts of musical virtuosity as they play for their very souls.

High points are "Connection," "Cool, Calm, and Collected," "Miss Amanda Jones" and "Something Happened To Me Yesterday," a naive account of a young man's first acid trip told in both the first and the third person.

Flowers is a collection of post-**Big Hits** singles (most of which appear on **Aftermath** or **Between The Buttons**) and previously unreleased material.

Their Satanic Majesties Request is undoubtedly The Rolling Stones' most underrated and ridiculed album. It's generally dismissed as a feeble attempt to imitate the success of The Beatles' **Sgt. Pepper**, and while there is a direct influence, it stands on its own as a highly innovative work. It represents a radical departure from their previous music, and it sets the stage for their best work, which is to come over the next five years.

Beggars Banquet has the group returning to bare bones rock'n'roll and creating their finest album. The LP opens with "Sympathy For The Devil," a compelling, brilliant anthem, featuring one of rock's great original drumbeats as its backbone. The song builds in intensity as it recounts various

dark moments in history as witnessed by "a man of wealth and taste," and ends with his exposure and the message that "you're to blame."

The rest of the record is gently devastating with understated ballads and searing, if subdued, sexual blues. Each song touches something that lies at the core of human existence and renders it in well crafted and achingly beautiful terms.

Let It Bleed is a continuation of, and elaboration on, the themes and genres of **Beggars Banquet**. There is country, country rock, concept rock, hard, sex rock, a soft sex ballad, slice-your-guts rock ("Midnight Rambler" — featuring Mick Jagger's best harmonica work), fun rock, and message oriented ballad-rock. Despite the wide variety of styles, the album flows well and the songs are of a very high caliber.

Sticky Fingers is a patchier LP than its predecessor. Keith Richards is going through his first serious bout with heroin addiction (and enjoying it, I might add), but he still manages to lay down intriguing riffs and write good songs. Mick Taylor (Brian Jones' replacement) provides some dazzling lead guitar runs on "Brown Sugar" and "Can't You Hear Me Knocking," but the disc's best number is the exquisite, shimmering "Moonlight Mile."

Exile On Main St. glorifies the decadence of the Stones' lives in a collection of "rock-noir" tracks shrouded in paranoia. Richards is still strung out, yet the album is their greatest post-sixties achievement due to the

coherence and the strength of its songs.

Goats Head Soup and **It's Only Rock'n'Roll** are the other two underrated Rolling Stones albums. Although not as good as **Exile**, they have some surprisingly well executed cuts, such as "Can You Hear The Music" and "Star Star" on the former, and "Luxury" and "Fingerprint File" on the latter.

Metamorphosis is a lame pastiche of '60s demos and outtakes released, over the objections of Jagger and Richards, to fulfill a contractual obligation.

Black And Blue signals the beginning of Ron Wood's tenure with the band (replacing Mick Taylor) and the end of The Rolling Stones as real innovators in rock music. Their work since then has been consistently slick and decent, but lacking in creative merit.

Some Girls looks like it might be a move in the right direction, but **Emotional Rescue** is a directionless mess. The group's aesthetic nadir is reached in the title cut, a disco abomination featuring Mick Jagger doing his Leo Sayer impression.

Tattoo You and **Undercover** signify a return to the straightforward (translate "uninspired") rock'n'roll that seems to be their forte this decade.

Perhaps their next album should be commemorative of this 20 year anniversary. They could even go back and use the title of their first album, with a slight alteration, but somehow I don't think they'd go for it. **England's Oldest Hitmakers — The Rolling Stones.**

Kevin Frank

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