

2Stoned

Andrew Loog Oldham

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How about these for starters? The only reason *Goin' Home* is as long as it is because the band didn't know how to finish the song, and Keith refused to give the signal to Charlie. Sonny Bono (of Sonny and Cher) is one of the co-writers of *She Said Yeah*, using the name S. Christy, Christy being the name of his first daughter. *Satisfaction* was the first song ever to refer to women's periods ("I'm on a losing streak"). Keith and Andrew Oldham wrote *I'd Much Rather be with the Boys* while walking along a Melbourne beach (don't get the wrong idea...then again with Andrew Oldham, you can never be 100 per cent sure). The guitar noise at the beginning of *Have You Seen Your Mother....* is actually Mick, Keith and Andrew Oldham doubling up on the Keith guitar figure by pinching their noses and making the sound through their mouths.

You will find these nuggets of information and millions more besides in the second part of Oldham's biography. Here, at ***Shattered*** we can't recommend *2Stoned* too highly: it is riveting, heartbreaking and breathless stuff, written in Oldham's extraordinary style with which we Stones fans will be only too familiar. It is not always easy-going and those for whom English is a second language may be flummoxed by some of the word play.

The book, broadly speaking, covers the first golden period of the Stones, from 1964 to the drug bust of 1967, and that astonishing run of singles where Mick and Keith, ably supported by the band (with the exception, more often than not, of Brian) delivered classic upon classic single and album. The industry and creativity of that period, where the Stones worked seemingly every minute of every day leaves one absolutely gobsmacked in awe. No wonder the old boys take it comparatively easy these days; man, they packed more in those two to three years than most people do in two lifetimes. And the quality never dropped for a second. Mick may tend to be dismissive of the Stones' 'pop' period, but reading *2Stoned* made me yearn for those times again.

Andrew Oldham clearly had a central role in the Stones' rise to fame. We all know about his capacity for promotion and marketing, but what comes through very strongly is his love of, and incredible knowledge about, the same music that the Stones also loved. It is often said that he knew nothing about production and engineering - and he would admit as much - but he sure as hell knew if something sounded right and if it would hit the mark. The first stab at *Satisfaction*, recorded at Chess Studios, was a clunker, so Oldham immediately put the band on the plane to Los Angeles, so they could re-record it at RCA in Hollywood. He knew that would work, and sure enough it did.

Not everything went to plan. Oldham, also a great aficionado of films, kept pushing the Stones into films - with zero success. "The rebel image that had worked for them in rock worked against them in film," he writes. At one point, if you can believe it, it was mooted that the Stones would feature in a film version of *A Clockwork Orange*.

The book, just as *Stoned* (the first part of his autobiography), is not just Oldham writing. There are quotes from others, extracts from other books and interjections all woven into the narrative, often to give someone else's point or to fill in a gap in his memory, where brain cells have been obliterated by over-indulgence in the heavy stuff. But it is Oldham's writing that is most arresting and interesting. Here is another example: "Excellence, a field in which the Stones were replacing dreams with reality, is not an act, but a habit. My boys were becoming hit-cutting men."

The anecdotes and insights leap off every page. There are revelations aplenty. Oldham relates how Allen Klein told him that the Stones were offered the master recordings of the Decca/London recordings, but turned down the offer on the advice of their accountants. If true, that is absolute dynamite, given the acrimony and bitterness that has arisen from that one fact. Or the story of how

Andrew Oldham's driver, Eddie, knew someone who would act the part of famous, too-busy people and take their driving tests for them. So now we know: Keith never passed his driving test on his own! And, funny, too, as in this instance where the group arrive in Hong Kong and a group of ageing, hideous and toothless groupies is paraded before them, definitely not to their taste. Oldham takes up the story:

"The next batch paraded were marginally younger and prettier, full-bodied and full-toothed. They were followed by a final parade of teens and early twenties. We decided that somebody had to do the honours - we were, after all, in the land where nobody should have to lose face. We drew straws; somehow, Bill Wyman won and saved the day."

It all had to end. Oldham's personal demons, in the form of insecurity and manic depression, could only be kept at bay by time and drugs for so long. Andrew Oldham always sensed that he was sailing not so much close to the wind as tiptoeing on a trapeze off which he could fall at any moment.

It was a high-risk strategy, to get the Stones noticed. For every brilliant piece of PR (yes, he lied to the media, it was Mick out in front pissing against the garage wall, when in reality it was Bill), he knew he could come unstuck at any moment. As you might expect, it was Mick who held the sword over Oldham's head. On one occasion, Oldham lines up an interview with an ageing, venerable film director who proceeded to mock and belittle both of them. "Never put me through that again, Andrew," said Mick. "Never".

When the band reached the top, Oldham's mission had been achieved, and he brought in Allen Klein to handle the money and get him off the hook with a terrible deal that had been struck behind his back by Eric Easton, Oldham's first co-manager. Then came the gruesome *Satanics* sessions and, so the story goes, of the band playing so appallingly that Andrew finally took the hint and went his own way.

Regrets, he has had a few. He regarded his parting from the Stones as a failed marriage. The drugs consumed all but finished him off, albeit over 30 years. The final kick in the groin was when Keith said that Jimmy Miller was the first producer the Stones had ever had, completely ignoring Oldham's major input to their records.

2Stoned puts Oldham's side of the story. You will laugh, you will sigh, you will yearn for your days of youth, recalling the thrill every time a new Stones' single was unleashed on the world, and you will be thankful, once again, that there once was a band called The Rolling Stones.

Review by Humphrey Keenlyside