

## EXILE ON MAIN STREET: A SEASON IN HELL WITH THE ROLLING STONES

By Robert Greenfield

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If you love Exile on Main Street, still regarded by many as the band's finest 68 minutes, then I urge a great deal of caution before you read this book. For it will puncture comprehensively the mystique, the aura and the magic that shines through in the music. Of course, if you have a hard head and love the detail and the depths of degeneration that certain of the key players extend to, then you will probably enjoy this.

We all know about the drugs, the machinations, the affairs, the arguments, the betrayals and everything but the kitchen sink that characterise the Stones' story. Obviously it has a fascination, but, clearly in this case, it has been played up to such an excessive degree to sell as many copies of the book as possible. No wonder the band had nothing to do with it.

Robert Greenfield did a fantastic job interviewing Keith during that long hot summer of 1971, which interview turned up in Rolling Stone, and was one of the best rock interviews ever done. And a Journey Through America with the Rolling Stones was readable and absorbing. But this is a book too far, in my humble opinion.

There are redeeming features: Andy Johns, the engineer, is full of insights, as well as being very funny, about the trials and tribulations of recording and mixing the album. The story about Keith waking him at 4.00 in the morning, just as he had gone to bed, to come back and record another guitar part for Rocks Off, is a classic. And it is always revealing to discover just how the Stones always manage to steal triumph from the jaws of disaster. As Jim Dickinson, who worked with the band during the 1969 Muscle Shoals sessions, put it: "Chaos, chaos, chaos, chaos...magic!"

But if you are looking for the best Exile book, stick with John Perry's book - which you probably have anyway! - *HK*