

**STONED - ANDREW LOOG OLDHAM**  
**Secker & Warburg**  
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At long last - the Svengali's story, the manager's memoirs -and manual, the soundtrack to The Rolling Stones' sixties! Study the impressive index of names and places and look at the last page, number 352, - it's still only 1964! Andrew's done well with this first instalment of his three-piece autobio. Impressive it is and you'll love it!

For me, this is Stones history at its finest (if I get rid of the old 'stickler' attitude). Everyone's come to town to tell the tales of days long gone. London town - in one of the most memorable eras of its time (well for us anyway!). The book perfectly captures the scene. It reads like a film script and pictures those sunny Soho afternoons, bustling basement nights and early days of capital R'n'B. However, you have to get used to the fact that the facts in Stoned can have many faces. Andrew would say this, someone else straight after will say that, even though other sources will prove both of them wrong! So as for the actual authenticity of the information offered by Stoned, it's very much as Andrew starts off on page 1, chapter one, line one: "There are three sides to every story: yours, mine and the truth". But what the hey, it is such a great read!

At the beginning we learn about little Andy's formative years. His dad, Andrew Loog, was of Texan/Dutch origin and serving in the US air force during WWII. 'Over here', he made it with London nurse Celia Oldham but he didn't make it as far as the war went. As Andrew jnr. put it: "(he) was shot down over the Channel. I shot out on 29 January 1944". Andrew was born without a father and out of wedlock, hence the fact that mum gave him his surname and dad put in the middle bit.

Nevertheless Andrew Loog Oldham was born. Soon we learn that little Andy is a fast mover, mainly fuelled by his fixations on mobsters 'n' dames movies, crooners and everything that glitters. Little Andy loves showbiz, and what's more, he needs to know how it works!

"Andrew Loog Oldham -The Early Days" are very much helped by his mother's wealthy man-on-the-side. Celia's connection places young Andrew in "happening" London areas and assorted showbiz locations. Now combine that with Andrew's passion for the limelight, his intimate experiences with both sexes, his wide-boy type entrepreneurial streak and ... Cliff Richard! (oh yes! - if it wasn't James Phelge with his love for Perry Como...) Andrew's perfect vision for the perfect Rock 'n' Roll stage act was based on the visual qualities brought on by films like "Expresso Bongo" rather than the fat sweaty face of Bill Haley, gawd bless 'im. So from teenage heart-throb Johnny Ray for screams to moody-mugs Jet Harris for rebel image and The Everly Brothers for their musical purity it was no wonder Andrew was hit for six when he saw all his fantasies packed into one at the Crawdaddy one sweaty Sunday night.

The raw sexual power, dangerously androgynous, with its exciting new soundtrack - and the spotlight on ... Michael Philip Jagger! Andrew was in love the minute he exchanged glances with the singer in a back alley before the show had even started! Previously - and occasionally later - Andrew's attitude had been that it didn't matter if you couldn't play, as long as you looked

good! Now with The Stones Andrew received his true wake-up call, since the closest he'd ever been to R'n'B was Elvis.

Even though the description of his first moment with The Rollin' Stones in Richmond suffers slightly from 'hindsight syndrome' (including some convenient poetic inserts like Brian Jones having "a face that already looked as though it had a few unpaid bills with life"), the overall style sets the tone of the pictures Andrew's words are about to paint. Aided by other key players, musicians and businessmen alike, the colourful Sixties come to life through Andrew's technicolour-tinted glasses. Because that was very much the way this remarkable man lived his life. Andrew lived a dream, floating in a newspaper-thin vessel which only through his incredible determination and front could survive the rough seas of Soho, including its multitude of sharks.

He was the ultimate hustler, not necessarily a promoter in the music sense. Andrew would be quite happy to leave the band on their own on the road as soon as they were past Kilburn. Andrew preferred to hold the fort in London Town, the limelight. Instead of backing the boys in some Midland barn, he would rather capitalise on the "good-bye London" sell-out gig in Hammersmith the night before. He'd prefer to play the London scene which included the written and broadcast media. In other words, the world!

It's a shame, though, that manic depression set in almost immediately ...

Andrew's drive, his get-up-and-go-and-get attitude, often "where angels fear to tread" - and a healthy dose of bullshit intimidation - portrays him a lovable rogue. This - and his flair, impeccable dress sense, flamboyance and cool - surely made him the perfect manager for that hard-working, but highly innovative band on the road, The Rolling Stones. With Andrew on board, quite frankly, they were already one step ahead of The Beatles!

Stoned as a first instalment of the Lives and Times of Andrew Loog Oldham is well worth the wait. As far as I can make out the man is there, bearing his soul - or is quite happy for others to do it for him. On the research side, you learn just that bit more about the other players in mini-bio style, and the way the music biz worked in those days, coming briefly off the Stones' trail and filling in the background. It's the big picture that we have here, of The Stones' Sixties London, and - believe me - Andrew Loog Oldham was part of a very big picture! Theirs, his and ... the truth.