

Flashback

Summer Romance

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO ALREADY, THE YEAR OF SOME GIRLS. 1978. I'M TALKING NINETEEN ...SEVENTY... EIGHT! AND '77/'79 ... FOR THE RECORD. AND WHAT A RECORD IT WAS. IT WAS A SCORCHING BLENDER: ROCK, PUNK/NEW WAVE, REGGAE, DISCO, SOUL – ALL HAVING A HEYDAY, SOME BLENDING AND ALL CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOUNDTRACK OF THOSE LONG HOT SUMMERS. THIS ERA - FOR ME - IS *THE* PINNACLE OF VERY FOND MEMORIES, *THE* YEARS OF CHART MUSIC, *THE* STONES AND, OF COURSE, SO MUCH MORE. AND YES, *ALWAYS* THE STONES. GLAD TO HAVE BEEN AN IMPRESSIONABLE FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD AT THE TIME, SIGNED – YOUR EDITOR, JAAP HOEKSMAN.

Recently, an *Evening Standard* article hailed 1977 as the greatest year in popular music, when everything seemed to take off. I agree, it may have taken off alright, but in the two years following these acts and so many more really found their ground, made their mark and marked themselves fully into the annals of musical history. These two years, for me, were a golden time of amazing talent, variety and productivity all around, be it your cup of tea or not. Still with last year's toppers such as Fleetwood Mac's "Rumours" echoing through in the charts, there's Springsteen's "Darkness On The Edge Of Town", The Band's "The Last Waltz" grand finale on LP *and* film, Michael Jackson's "Off The Wall", Meat Loaf's "Bat Out Of Hell" - even.

In '78/'79 the Stones, Dylan, Bowie, The Who, Clapton, Neil Young, Santana, Paul McCartney, Rod Stewart, Manfred Mann, Stevie Wonder, Elton John are all active and the Patron Saint of the record-buying public is looking favourably upon them, allowing them yet another lap of honour. Bands like Queen and Abba are well established names as Blondie and The Police charge the charts with their highly infectious tunes. There are glam 'n' prog rock survivors such as Roxy Music and Genesis, with Phil Collins in the main singing role as Peter Gabriel struck out on his own. Even the grand Miss Faithfull makes a reappearance with her excellent '79 album "Broken English" and the rather successful single *The Ballad Of Lucy Jordan*. Over these two years, these album and singles charts harbour a huge variety of acts living happily together and trading places in harmony: from AC/DC, Kiss, Dave Edmunds and Cheap Trick to Donna Summer, Boney M and 10CC - you name it, it's there - without a really logical explanation.

Newcomers prove highly successful, too: there's Elvis Costello, The Stranglers, Dire Straits, The Pretenders, Graham Parker, Van Halen, Ian Dury, The Clash, Talking Heads, Patti Smith, The Jam, Joe Jackson, The Boomtown Rats... the list goes on forever. Then, of course, there's the Bee Gees/Travolta film phenomenon, mainly for the kids and, oh yes, the Village People. But the real big winner of the era must be the complete breakthrough of reggae, courtesy of the wonderful Mr. Bob Marley, paving the way for other splendid acts such as Culture, Inner Circle and Third World, all triggering a global interest in this music sort, including the subsequent flurry of ska acts over the next few years. What a great way to close a decade, I'd say. And The Stones were not going to let this one slip. Even with the band's future in serious jeopardy from '77 onwards due to Keith's pending Toronto trial which could have resulted in nothing short of a life sentence, The Rolling Stones made the most of it. That's with a top single, a successful US tour and, what some might call, the last real classic album to boot.

IT'S BIG, PINK AND IT'S MICK'S

1978 was a most eventful Rolling Stones year, having started to become productive in the last part of that fruitful and promising 1977 and spilling over into the first part of that wonderful and laid-back 1979. There was *Miss You*, the worldwide top 10 single, also available in an exciting - extended - 12" 'maxi-single' format on electrifying pink (or red) vinyl. There were thrilling full-page music paper ads advertising the goods. There was the band further exploring the reggae route with the single (*You Gotta Walk and*) *Don't Look Back* and the "Bush Doctor" album on Rolling Stones Records with its famous scratch 'n' sniff cover sticker. There was the barnstorming but overall disappointing *Respectable* single, the America-only singles such as *Shattered* and its non-album B-side *Everything Is Turning To Gold*, the bizarre *Beast of Burden* single sleeve saga, the obscure-looking *and* sounding Saturday Night Live appearances, the whole of the wonderful "Some Girls" album of course (which Humphrey reviews elsewhere in this issue), its sleeve problems and subsequent amendments and its accompanying 'stripped down' American tour whilst Mick & Keith provided one of the coolest front covers for *Rolling Stone* magazine, harbouring within its pages a main spread called "Shattered".

Let's boil it down briefly for a start: *Miss You*, is one of the best placed singles in time by a band starting to become challenged yet again by time and trend and everyone was kind of taken by surprise. Pleasantly. I guess it has shown throughout The Rolling Stones' career as no-one was ever really prepared for the

highly successful return to basic blues of the 1964 *Little Red Rooster* single, certainly not for the exotic sounds of *Paint It, Black*, the rough 'n' ready termination of the flower power-era by *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, the frivolous jungle beat of *Brown Sugar* or even perhaps the too-close-to-TRex-style glam rock in the pretty belated *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll*. Singles just have to hit the spot - be it music, trend, meaning - or just out of the blue. With 1978 - the year of "Some Girls" - it was pretty spot-on: the trend, and quite a minor shock. The *Miss You* single was, simply, such a tease. The Sex Pistols had disbanded at the beginning of the year, punk had died down, had had its (brief) moment of impact, fizzled out and many angry young men 'n' women were left strutting their stuff in what was now called the 'New Wave' vicinity. On the other hand, coming out of the funk 'n' soul section, the much more simple and carefree and yet glamorous-sounding disco had been propelled to the masses after a regular feed since 1974 through dance acts like Donna Summer, and now more recently the Bee Gees with their chart-busting film-linked hype, plus an awful lot of one-hit wonders in between. And that's the area The Stones chose to move into, for the moment. Charlie still maintains *Miss You* is nothing but a simple rock song with a straight beat, but, hey, it sure sounds like disco. Thank you, Bill Wyman for that playfully pumpin' bass! And with Charlie keeping time, in the 'live' video looking like a most perfect human metronome shaking his wise, bespectacled, shaven head, yep, this is the best rhythm section in the world alright!

JUST DYIN' ... TO MEET-CHA

And then there's Mick Jagger. Camping it up, yearning for his absent lover - the one and only, as those Puerto Rican girls just won't tempt him. Keith, and the relatively new boy, Ronnie Wood are chopping away moodily at this three-bar job, trying to play the accents as subtle as can be, creating moody atmospheres where blues turn to rouge. The song sounds as if it's being tinkered with in the process. It's raw, it's moody, it's sexy, it's rock-y, and it's, well, some kind of disco, but not quite. Ultimately, it's Mick Jagger, The Rolling Stones. He sure lets us know in the video when he goes "chukkachukkachukka!", lips wide open, eyes glaring and face full-on into the camera, whereas the recorded song has a charming "chk-chk-chk, what's the matter with you, boy?" I found that really hard to explain to my Mum and Dad when we watched Top of the Pops together in those days ... Anyway, we know by now that *Miss You* is Mick's showcase and highly unthinkable to end up being left out of a gig. It has gained its seat right up there on Mount StOne-lympus, amongst classics such as *Satisfaction* and *Honky Tonk Women*.

Back then, I remember my nice but conservative old gran'pa asking me what I wanted for a birthday present whilst visiting him, so I chose the *Miss You* single. Knowing gran'pa, I tried to slip this on straight to the till. To my horror, he wanted to inspect the goods before buying. He examined the front cover with a stern look, bordering on Victorian, before asking me what was wrong with Mick, holding his head and having his eyes closed (did he have a "headache"?) before pointing out Keith and - seriously - questioning me what this guy, looking like a criminal, is doing in this band? So there you go, the Stones' bad boy image still rang through, even in those days. In the end, after a lot of persuading, I did get the single though.

Then it was the launch of the album, *Some Girls*. Previously, Dutch radio had had a special preview programme, showcasing a batch of outtakes and demos from the Paris sessions, so expectations amongst Stones lovers were very high. When the time came, I had saved enough money to go out and buy the album, which I did on the day of release. I played it over and over again, and it was beautiful. But, in retrospect I find, these songs are part of a bigger plan.

TWO TRAINS RUNNING

The "Some Girls" album, and subsequently "Emotional Rescue", had 'Mick' written all over them. Keith was around, mind, awake up to no less than a record-breaking nine consecutive nights, but Mick had his hand firmly on the helm alright. A little niggling thought even emerges: could this have been yet another great wishful Stones double album, but this time for the late '70s/early '80s like one could imagine the possibility of a "Beggars Banquet" & "Let It Bleed" alliance? After all, the '68/'69 and '78/'79 sessions showed some similarities, their moments in time for starters, 10 years apart, even though the latter period already had begun in October '77, flowing into '78 after the Christmas break. Both periods have the band riding the crest of transition in more than one way, with a new guitarist breaking in (Mick Taylor/Ron Wood) and an established one put on hold, permanently or for the time being (Brian Jones/Keith Richards). Also, with both sessions being towards the end of a decade, powerful musical trends are moving and lines are fading and the band soak up a dazzling array of influences, successful or not. Anything's tried, anything's tested, anything goes. Most of it successful, even the generally chart-absent country & western (*Dear Doctor* and *Faraway Eyes*). The '60s Olympic sessions as well as '70s Pathé Marconi are booked in a rehearsal room fashion over a long period of time, rather than a short blocked straight-to-album recording session. It even was reported that EMI would cut off the allowance for The Stones' sessions in Paris because of its far-too-expensive duration.

In both situations, the band somehow seem to treat the rehearsal/recording sessions as therapeutic; a relaxation exercise to deter the mind from (personal) troubles at each time. And, of course, the band prove to be extremely productive, recording a whole heap of song/ideas each time, probably because they *had* the time! More so in the late '70s as those recordings span from the end of '77 into the first months of '79. Mind you, just think about what might have developed if the Stones' 1967 compulsory Flower Power dalliance needn't have happened, e.g. the missing link between the "Buttons" and "Beggars"

Banquet" / "Let It Bleed" sessions.

But let's leave that tantalising thought and move on to the marvellous '77-'79 rough diamond material and - in my opinion - many missed chances based on outtake evidence such as the soulfully driven *I Need You* (forget about the 'working' lyrics: this is such an ace song!), the NY-style country flutter *Yellow Cab*, the groovy, revisited, reggae instrumental *Los Trios Guitars*, the pleading heartbreaker *Still In Love*, the hauntin' 'n' flirtin' disco of *Everlasting Is My Love* and the sound rocker *Lonely At The Top*, which Mick would adopt as his own on his first mid-'80s solo album. The final year, 1979, would even come up with Keith fully back on track as the great balladeer he is with *We Had It All* and *Let's Go Steady*. What a great loss.

LIFE'S A DRUG

Let's put it this way - with or without Keith - the band managed to reach a high: they were productive enough, inventive and up for it. But with so many musical styles happening at the same time, what to go for? At first, I suppose, the '76 lull and '77 delay, including finding a permanent guitarist since as far back as '74 and trying to cope with Keith's possible drugs conviction drained the band a bit. But Mick clearly wouldn't stand for it during such exciting musical times and, during these (personal) testing times, his immense drive and guidance helped the band survive yet once more. With Phoenix, not Lucifer, rising, urging The Rolling Stones to become, once again, main players in the global music field.

With Keith being not quite sure about his future, Mick mainly took up his working relationship with 'new boy' Ronnie Wood, which had started down at Ronnie's Richmond place The Wick back in '73/4 when they put together the song *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll*. Becoming much more proficient on the guitar and with Keith away most of the time, Mick teamed up with Woody, trying out song ideas in the most encompassing way possible: as a songwriter, ideas-man, singer, rhythm guitarist and, basically, band leader. Most songs from these sessions see Mick clearly leading the pack; the way he sings, fills in the would-be verses with coded warblings and, specifically, on a track like *Gangster's Moll*, directing the band from key to key in more a fashionable way rather than a real necessity.

JUST MY DETERMINATION ...

Those were the Inner Sanctum Sessions, but what actually filtered out into the main stream? There was the true feeling of determination that was "Exile On Main Street", plus the band had started to take more notice of their (worldwide) chart environment, which already had its reflection in the "Goat's Head Soup" and "It's Only Rock 'n' Roll" albums. Especially the latter is a complete showcase of what was going on at the time in a Stones-type jacket. From reggae and soul to Latin, glam rock and everything in between. The subsequent "Black and Blue" album, however, is a pick 'n' mix whilst finding a new guitarist and to this day I still wonder how they got such a 'New York'-sounding spin on an album recorded in boring old Holland and Germany! Then, the grand double live LP "Love You Live" was launched with great fanfare, merely being some kind of insufficient afterbirth of a pretty good world tour, only boosted by its novelty back-to-the-clubs El Mocambo side three (mind you, side four, albeit overproduced, *rocks!*). So, with Keith offside for an indefinite bit due to legal action The Stones - Mick - started to pick things up and assess the situation. Like a general in combat, Mick truly moved The Stones back into the limelight, the fashion and the charts of the world. The last real hit was Angie, six years previously.

By the end of '77 and at the beginning of '78, Mick had his eye on the two most important recent, one definitely fading, trends of the moment: punk and disco. With a focus on these, and an addition of the well-established genres soul, rock and country - all of it laced with that unique Stones style, the new album should be a success story. And so it was. "Some Girls" was a classic from day one, even though its cover had to be amended when overaged Hollywood starlets, Lucy Ball and Racquel Welch, kicked up a fuss over a bit of extra-Stones added make-up.

SOME GIRLY ACTION

Sadly for us Europeans, all the 1978 "Some Girls" action took place across the pond. Throughout the year the Stones were solely active in the US of A. I suppose Keith's Toronto proceedings and Mick and Bianca's focus on New York (apartment, Studio 54, Warhol) has something to do with this. A tour was set up and simultaneously, Mick and Keith decided to take a fresh new talent under their wing, exclusively signed to the Rolling Stones Records label. An honour that, apart from the band's own Bill Wyman only had befallen the obscure band Cracker back in '73 with no real result.

This time was different. The Glimmer Twins like ex-Bob Marley's sidekick Wailer Peter Tosh so much that they co-produce his album "Bush Doctor" and have Keith play on a couple of songs. In the UK the album comes out with a cheeky 'scratch 'n' sniff' sticker displaying the Stones' tongue logo. When scratched, a marijuana scent enters the punter's nostrils and unsurprisingly the gimmick is pilloried in the press. Result! Mick records the successful, albeit lightweight, duet single *Don't Look Back* with Peter Tosh as he's asked to open for the Stones on their new tour. Rare to this day, Mick joins Tosh on several occasions on his support slot to join in on the single's live rendition. The *Don't Look Back* duo also makes it to the Saturday Night Live! programme, where much to his chagrin, Tosh receives a full-on smacker from Jagger in his camp 'let's tease Ronnie' routine. Being Jamaican, Tosh is clearly not amused. Mick did exactly that to the Woodman (who didn't mind) on an earlier edition of the show, tongues 'n' all. This was a peculiar broadcast anyway as the Stones played songs off the "Some Girls" album 'live' but Mick's voice,

sounding like he had a severe cold (or had been to a great party!), was the gravelliest he's ever had to date. But at least he persevered, which made for most interesting listening.

STONES STRIP DOWN

The tour was a success across the States with the band filling up stadiums even without the 'bells on' approach they'd showcased in transcending form from '72 right up to '76. This was the band stripped down, without many paraphernalia, just the music - and Jagger, the showman, donning a red leather cap and a 'Destroy' T-shirt in full make-up and PVC trousers, armed with mike and guitar looking like a wasted punk godfather, Stones theatre-style. And the music was good, very good. With no synths, horn sections or back-up vocalists and lots of mistakes, it's great to hear that Stones juggernaut get a-rollin', gathering its groove and kicking complete arse by the end of the song, be it *Lies*, *When The Whip Comes Down*, *Just My Imagination*, *Beast Of Burden* or the ramshackle rough 'n' tumble of the Chuck Berry opener, *Let it Rock* - this band rocks! The set is short 'n' sweet. There's *Star Star*, still from the last tour but without the inflatable penis-puppetry, and a small selection of classics such as *Honky Tonk Women*, *Brown Sugar* and *Jumpin' Jack Flash* but no real 'home stretch' at the end of the show as we all know so well today. There are not many surprises except for a revived *Love In Vain*, Chuck Berry's *Sweet Little Sixteen* and the occasional one-off such as *Hound Dog* in Elvis' Memphis. But the band play with great gusto and Mick very much gives it his all, especially as *Miss You* really does get the "12" treatment, as it goes on forever.

The record market this time was also very much geared towards the US with the sensational soul-flirter *Beast Of Burden* being released officially as the second single, whilst the Continent had to make do with the pretty dated punk rock-inspired *Respectable*. Both song launches were completely misjudged in this extremely fickle chart climate. The US had for the time being finished with Temptations-style soul shenanigans and Europe had closed the chapter on punk rock. On both sides of the Atlantic there was no chart-busting audience for what the Stones had to offer. Even a third US single, the punky *Shattered*, boosted by the non-album disco-tinted B-side *Everything Is Turning To Gold*, failed to cause a ripple at the December end of '78. Subsequently a lot of European Stones collectors were chuffed to pick up the disc relatively cheap at their local record shops just because of that. I always thought it was a brilliant song, but the States only seemed to start dancing to it after 9/11. The *Beast Of Burden* single originally came out in a picture sleeve showing a woman with a great big lion on top of her. The Americans interpreted it as, well, you know... so the picture sleeve version got withdrawn and is now extremely rare to the tune of quite a few hundred quid. Watch out for those bootleg copies, though!

And so the main year of '78 fizzled out to an end and the stash of demos and outtakes continued to form a much lesser, more produced, yet again single album, not the following year, but as late as 1980. At the time bootleggers proved that there was enough excellent material around with the legendary "Claudine" double LP as the package reputedly sold more copies than the "Emotional Rescue" album! The Stones almost even accepted this situation as they gladly signed copies of the bootleg album and even asked fans how to get hold of one. And, indeed, when listening to the "Emotional Rescue" songs out of their official release context, nestling amongst other songs like *Think I'm Goin' Mad* and *Misty Roads*, you start to realise how much nicer and looser everything sounds. There is even a much more driven version of *Send it to Me*. Just *imagine* that "Girls"/"Rescue" double album with more outtakes thrown in ...

Back in the real world, the first single off the album, the title track *Emotional Rescue* was received with mixed reviews across the globe leaving people wondering, how much falsetto one can take. And then again, the second single, *She's So Cold*, which in my opinion is a truly great rocker (and the video to go with it was dead cool) pretty much failed to sell. In the end, I suppose both 1970 and 1980 mirrored each other being pretty nondescript chart-wise anyway. And so yet again a new era was dawning, kicking off with the promising new year/album/world tour of 1981/82, ironically spawning the brushed-up outtakes LP *Tattoo You*, which was to be nipped in the bud by the beginning of the Stones' downward spiral of '83 ("Undercover"), into the decline of '86 ("Dirty Work") until the renaissance of '89. You know the score. Rock on.