

## Preface

The long and durable musical career of the Rolling Stones continues to span almost the entire history of rock and roll. Making their recording debut in 1963 with their single “Come On,” a Chuck Berry cover, the Stones were catalysts in the important British blues revival of the early 1960s, and along with the Beatles, Animals, Who, Kinks, and Yardbirds spearheaded the British pop music invasion of the 1960s. Appearing first on widely watched nationally televised variety shows, followed by regular tours, the group has now played more than 2,100 shows, reaching some 45 million fans.<sup>1</sup> For over 50 years, and with a body of music amounting to over 400 songs, they have sustained an impact that has been musically influential, culturally powerful, and economically crucial to the development of virtually all aspects of the massive rock music industry. Adapting to and in many cases anticipating new (or retro) trends in popular music during their long career – rock, folk, psychedelic, funk, punk, reggae, disco, and others – the Stones nevertheless remained true to the fundamental stylistic roots and sound of rock and roll: R&B, country, and most of all, the blues, to which their indebtedness is reverential. Their amalgamation of these styles into an individual, highly distinctive, roots- and riff-based sound, along with their trademark subversive attitude (no less influential than their music), skillfully mediated the commercial and poetic boundaries of popular music. As a result, the Stones are both a barometer of rock aesthetics and a guide to its culture over the last half-century.

Given their long career and vast musical production, the group has received prolonged attention through some excellent journalism, detailed reference works chronicling their tours, recordings, and gear, studies of specific albums, biographies, and key autobiographies by Bill Wyman, Keith Richards, Ron Wood, Marianne Faithfull, and Andrew Loog Oldham, all of this supplemented by extensive concert footage, interviews, film documentaries, and a – literally – weighty amount of large-format, glossy, but occasionally valuable books in the “coffee table” genre. The sum total of this body of work is massive, often guideless, of variable quality, and unfortunately fragmented among many fields, industries, and specialists. *The Cambridge Companion to the Rolling Stones* was conceived to “desilo” the field and shine a light on the various communities of knowledge about the Rolling Stones. It brings musicologists, ethnomusicologists, players, Stones scholars, film scholars, and filmmakers into a single volume intended to stimulate fresh thinking about the group as they vault well over

the mid-century of their career. It further broadens the approach to their music by considering new issues about sound, culture, media representation, the influence of world music, fan communities, group personnel, and the importance of their revival, post-1989. In addition, threaded throughout these essays are album- and song-oriented discussions of the landmark recordings of the group and their influences.

The present collection is cast in three parts. In Part I, “Albums, Songs, Players, and the Core Repertory of the Rolling Stones,” John Covach traces the rapid evolution of the Stones through their recordings up to 1974, with particular emphasis on their early stylistic development and singles. Bill Janovitz looks at the relationship between the original composition of the band and the critical changes that take place musically through successive personnel changes and the eventual enlargement of the band’s sound in the 1970s. In a further study, Covach revises the notion that the Stones’ 1967 album *Their Satanic Majesties Request* is the end of the group’s “Psychedelic” phase and shows instead traits of Psychedelia continuing in and influencing *Beggars Banquet*. Victor Coelho accepts the notion of the four albums from *Beggars* to *Exile* as the “core repertory” but places the texts and musical styles of these releases within the larger poetic and political dimension of exile, one that allows many vernacular, rural, and gospel styles to enter their sphere as another vocabulary. Paul Harris’ essay follows the group from their “exilic” period to their unsure position in the mid- to late-seventies, in which a new urban sound is cultivated under the influences of punk, post-punk, and club culture.

Part II, “Sound, Roots, and Brian Jones,” begins with Ralph Maier, who, drawing on gear, recording, and studio equipment, contributes an important study of the Stones’ *sound*, an often neglected but critical topic whether discussing recorded or live performance. The deep influence of country – and of country records, players, and techniques – on the Stones is analyzed by Daniel Beller McKenna in his essay that draws on case studies of five songs and their roots backgrounds. Finally, ethnomusicologist Brita Heimark takes a fresh approach to the influence of Brian Jones, perhaps the most mythologized and misunderstood member of the Rolling Stones, using Deleuze’s theory of *assemblage* to explain his unusually wide influences and culturally diverse musical interests.

Finally, Part III, “Stones on Film, Revival, and Fans,” begins with film scholar Michael Baker’s study of the Stones as represented on film within the context of the “rockumentary” genre, from Whitehead to Scorsese. Coelho’s essay on “Second Life” examines how the Stones at the end of the 1980s, corroded internally, marginalized by rap, and seemingly left with only their past history, triumphantly revived themselves, and in the process curated a lasting history of the band – on their own terms. Modern

culture is full of “shrines” to the Rolling Stones – websites, fanzines, and a flourishing market for relics (bootlegs, outtakes, videos, and the like), which cry out for attention within the study of identity formation and the rituals of audiences. Filmmaker Philippe Puicouyoul’s “fan memoir” that closes the volume gives us a close view of the global Stones fan community, and is a fitting conclusion underlining the main element common to those of us who listen to, play, study, and write about the Stones: we are all, in the end, fans.

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## Note

- 1 Cited in the official program booklet for the Rolling Stones traveling exhibit, *Exhibitionism: The Rolling Stones* (n.p. [2016]).