



# Rolling Stones: Goodbye to all that

**D**OING MUSIC JOURNALISM offers a number of minor but attractive perquisites, primarily the opportunity to hear a good deal of free music. Show producers, band managers, record promoters—they all try to curry favor with journalists and are generous with backstage passes and direct access to the performers, especially when they have a weak or inexperienced group to build up. But all these courtesies and petty larcenies suddenly disappear when you're dealing with the Rolling Stones. Then you get down in the pit along with everybody else and take your chances. I

didn't manage to get to the bloodbath at Altamont a few years ago. Their appearances in San Francisco this June were my first opportunity to see the Stones in person, as a matter of fact. And I realized that by the exigencies of their profession (and mine) it was very likely my last.

As early as February I contacted the San Francisco outlet of Atlantic Records, the distributors of the Stones' own label, concerning their forthcoming tour. Atlantic's promotion man, Ralph Witsel, was friendly but non-committal about access to the Stones—or even tickets to their performances.

In April the tour schedule was announced by Gibson & Stromberg, a public relations firm operating out of Los Angeles. I contacted them; they were encouraging but indefinite. The San Francisco shows were to be promoted by Bill Graham; I contacted his office and spoke with someone who was sympathetic but not positive. There would be four performances: a matinee and an evening show each day on June 6 and 8. Five thousand tickets would be issued for each show, 4500 to go on sale through the computer-controlled Ticketron System or May 15, the remainder held back by

by Dick Lupoff

Photograph by Michael Zagari

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Graham for members of San Francisco bands and other illuminati.

I would have liked to see the Stones at several points in their career—their earliest days together with Alexis Koerner, the first tour that they shared with Bo Diddley, Little Richard and the Everly Brothers. Their first American and European tours, their Pacific tour in '65. And certainly their 1969 tour and the Altamont disaster.

Still, 1972 was a good time to see them; they stood alone at the pinnacle. For years there had been the unavoidable comparison with the Beatles. But that was over now. Long ago they had made all the money they could spend, they had achieved total public acceptance to the point of adulation. The only reason to continue was to play the game, to compete with the Beatles for the sheer excitement of competing.

The Beatles departed; the Stones won the game by default. They were beyond challenge the greatest rock and roll band in the world. This year's tour of the United States and Canada, their first since 1969, was thus like the victorious race car driver who makes an extra circuit of the track after the race carrying the checkered flag: an extra chance to see and be seen in triumph. It also gave the tour something of a nostalgic, even a melancholy note.

**I** SPOKE WITH MANY FANS BEFORE, during and after the Stones' visit, and a remarkable portion of them made comments to the effect that they wanted to see the Stones as a kind of farewell meeting, a farewell not necessarily to the Stones (although it is widely rumored that this is their last tour) but to the era of which they are possibly a living fossil.

It wasn't exactly the rock and roll era; there was rock and roll back in the 1950s and remarkably similar stuff called rhythm and blues or race music into the '40s or earlier. And there will be rock and roll for a long time to come, much of it good lively fun and some of it serious art.

But this era, this period that seemed to start with the Beatles and the Stones and that seems to be ending if not ended, this era is somehow special.

It lasted nearly a decade, a long time in the volatile world of pop culture, and has been associated with a

widespread questioning of official values and impulses leading seriously to a commitment to change, a bitter disillusionment, and a tentative engagement once again. The teenagers of 1963 are now close to thirty, the rock stars who stimulated and motivated them are the same age or older, and the unrestful youngsters of today listen to different music and musicians—who will have their day too.

The fans didn't come out to say farewell to the Rolling Stones, they came out to say farewell to their past, to the excitement and ferment of an epoch. Thus the performance became a sort of maturation ritual, even though for the most part the celebrants may have participated in it without being conscious of its resonance.

**N** EITHER ATLANTIC, NOR GRAHAM, nor Gibson & Stromberg had made a firm commitment to me by Friday, May 12. So on Sunday the 14th I scouted nearby Ticketron outlets—there would be fifty-odd in service when Stones tickets went on sale the following Monday—and selected a Montgomery Ward store in Oakland as likely to be less swamped with customers than most others. A press pass might yet arrive, but I didn't want to chance missing the show.

At seven the next morning I joined a sparse gathering of early arrivals. A few devoted had arrived the night before with their sleeping bags. At nine-thirty the store opened its doors and there was a rush to form a line at the Ticketron outlet, a window located in one corner of the second floor where an office wall and an internal partition joined.

At ten o'clock the Ticketron terminals in all the outlets went on-line to the central computer in Los Angeles. At one minute after ten the terminals stopped working. What had happened was something that anyone familiar with the design of time-shared computer systems like Ticketron should have anticipated, but that no one apparently did.

At ten o'clock, May 15, 1972, every terminal in the system came on-line with a demand for tickets. In effect, the terminals were standing in line waiting for tickets, the computer tak-

ing care of one after another until it came to the end of the line, then going back to the beginning to start over. Twenty seconds per transaction sounds good, but with over fifty terminals standing in the line, it meant a delay of twelve to fifteen minutes at each terminal between any two transactions.

As a result, hundreds of people stood in line for periods up to eight hours, even discounting time put in before the terminals went on-line at ten o'clock. Some 18,000 tickets were sold, with a limit of four per customer, and thousands of would-be customers went home with nothing to show for their wasted day except sore joints and sweat-soaked clothing.

A rough camaraderie developed during the day based on a common desire to get those tickets and a common sense of us-versus-them, *them* being the Ticketron system. Some stores used numbering systems for their waiting customers, but at Ward's where I waited there was no such thing. By mid-afternoon the line of customers, which had started several hundred long and one or two wide, had converted itself into a wedge. The customer actually at the ticket window was the apex. Behind him stood others three abreast; behind them, five or six, and so on to a maximum width of fifteen men and women, all of them straining forward in hopes of reaching the window before the tickets were exhausted. The heat and the sheer pressure of human bodies were unbelievable, growing progressively worse as one approached the window. Once a customer did receive tickets it was necessary to fight backwards through that mass of bodies all pressing forward.

I was lucky. I got my four tickets at about 3:15 in the afternoon. They were all for the first matinee, but there was no choosing, you took what you could get and were grateful to get any tickets at all. Once I'd got them I faced the hardest part of the day's struggle—getting back through the crowd. Anyone who yielded an inch jeopardized his chances of ever getting to the window, so no one gave an inch. When at last I burst through the last rank and into the comparative open air of Ward's fireplace implements department, I found myself brought

up short within two steps. My shirt was pulled halfway off and the buckle of my belt had got caught somewhere back in the entrails of the mob. Struggling like a hooked tarpon, I took the belt in both hands, and began hauling in. Unbelievably, I reeled a large leather purse out of the human sea. I passed it back into the crowd, restored my clothing and went home.

THREE WEEKS WERE LEFT until the Stones arrived. Immediately, a barter market sprang up with people swapping tickets for one show for some to others of the four scheduled appearances. Simultaneously, a bull market for scalpers developed with buyers and sellers briskly contacting each other chiefly through bulletin board notices posted in record shops and elsewhere. The list price was \$5—Winterland is all unreserved—plus a 50¢ Ticketron service charge; scalping began at \$15 and went higher. I know of a set of four tickets that changed hands for \$120.

There was also counterfeiting. The Stones' shows were on Tuesday and Thursday, the 6th and 8th of June. On the previous Sunday night, KSAN, the leading underground FM station in San Francisco, scheduled a four-hour Stones Special. Tom Donahue, a long-time powerhouse in the San Francisco rock and roll and underground media scene, was MC. "We were going to have a big on-the-air ticket swap," he announced, "but we've received word from Bill Graham's office that there are phony tickets in circulation. We can't afford to get involved with that scene." So the special went on without on-the-air swapping.

It was like a thieves' market: frantic negotiations, bulletin board notices, suspicion over counterfeits. Are these tickets the right width? Is the print fuzzy? If you hold them under a black light does the word Stones glow in yellow? It was a mess. Everyone was out for a piece of the action. I spoke with one scalper who had no qualms about what he was doing. "Look," he told me, "these tickets say five bucks but you can't buy them for that. Ticketron took them all and with their so-called fifty cent service charge they made \$9000 in one day. And they did absolutely nothing but buy the tickets and sell them again.

I'm doing the same thing, and I'm not going to make anything like \$9000."

There was also a small scale commercial civil war going on behind the scenes. In this country, the Stones appear on two different record labels. Starting with their first album in 1964 and through *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out* they were on London. In 1971 they set up Rolling Stones Records, distributed by Atlantic, and released *Sticky Fingers*. London retaliated last December with *Hot Rocks*, a double Stones album drawn from old material, including several tracks off *Sticky Fingers* that were cut before the Stones left them and to which London still held rights. This May the Stones released a new album, *Exile on Main Street*, also a double, on their own label again.

To publicize their tour and their own label the Stones released a poster of a jetliner with the Stones' insignia blazoned on its tail. (It's a stylized picture of Mick Jagger's mouth, tongue sticking far out.) London Records released a poster of its own, showing the Stones, a map of their tour, and the covers of nine Stones albums on the London label. John Barbis, London's San Francisco promotion man, says, "Listen, we've got to sell those albums."

It was confused, but still an embarrassment of riches. Bill Graham's organization put out a poster of its own, a pair of tumbling dice to match the single off *Exile*. At Winterland you could buy Rolling Stones badges, pins, pendants—all in the mouth-and-tongue motif.

THE SHOW OPENED WITH AN OLD film, a 1964 rock and roll show featuring such period luminaries as Jan and Dean ("Little Old Lady from Pasadena"), Leslie Gore ("It's My Party"), James Brown, the Supremes, and the Stones themselves. During the film the audience held their places rather amiably. The Stones were preceded by Stevie Wonder and a big band. The people sitting on the open floor all stood. There was some jockeying for position near to the stage. Wonder did a good set, well received by an audience there only to see the Stones but willing to be entertained while they waited. Robert Shields, a local mime, held forth while

the stage crew changed equipment.

Then Graham introduced the Stones and the scene on the floor turned ugly. In the next hour I learned what the territorial imperative is, what aggression is, how competition can build in a slightly submerged form until one false word or deed can produce violence. As it did at Altamont. It did not at Winterland, but it seemed to me a near thing.

With the appearance of the Stones the near audience began to use every possible tactic to reach the edge of the stage. Jagger pranced around and sang, seven men played, and there was a kind of limited war in front of the stage. The basic tactic was to find the contact point between two people in front of you. Somehow drive a wedge between them. For a man this could be done with a hand between the shoulders, for a woman it was more often a shoulder between the biceps. Or either could use a hip or knee.

Get any portion of your anatomy between the people, then alternately press forward and sideways, driving them out of the way, propelling yourself forward. People shoved, clawed, fought their way for ten or twenty rows to reach the front. There was no quarter given. Somewhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of the aggressors were women.

As in the ticket line, the crush of bodies during the performance generated huge amounts of heat and pressure. I saw one woman near me collapse; she didn't fall because she was caught upright by the press of people around her. She recovered and at the end of the show left with everyone else! The second night I sat high in a balcony.

The Stones themselves were a superb show. Their music is thoroughly familiar; performed live it is far more compelling than it is recorded. Jagger himself is the chief center of attention, cavorting around the stage in a white outfit or a black tank top with a portrait of Marilyn Monroe on his chest. His moves are largely copped from James Brown—using a film of Brown to open the show is either an act of overwhelming honesty in acknowledging one's sources or an act of complete disdain for all sensitivities. Take your pick.

(Continued on Page 61)



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# Nixon's Vietnam Strategy: How It Was Launched with the Aid of Brezhnev and Mao And How the Vietnamese Intend to Defeat it

LATE THIS MAY, while President Nixon was giving away Cadillacs and signing treaties in the Kremlin, a letter soliciting funds for his campaign chest was sent to a select list of Republican supporters. The contents of the letter cast an illuminating light both on the strategy of the coming elections and its intimate links to the shifting vectors of the world power struggle.

"Dear Fellow American," it began, "We need your help to make the re-election of President Nixon a reality." We believe that the President should be re-elected, it went on, "*first*, because by travelling around the globe and meeting with all major leaders, he is setting us on the path to world peace"; *second*, because by appointing strict constructionists to the Supreme Court, "he is bringing law and order back to America," and *third*, because he is "slowing inflation" and has "helped to return America to a sound fiscal economy." (The bread and butter issue, usually in the number one spot in election campaigns, is no doubt relegated to such a low priority be-

cause, with a \$90 billion deficit to explain, and large-scale unemployment to minimize, it is so weak.)

If the Nixon campaign strategy, as outlined in this letter, pays off, conservatism at home and abroad will be confirmed in November, as a workable solution to the conflicts and general disequilibrium which troubled the Empire in the Democratic '60s.

Such a prospect would have seemed wildly implausible just a short time ago. At this juncture, however, it is not only plausible, but all that remains to make it probable is a ceasefire agreement with the Vietnamese, sometime before the November election. One can confidently assume that such an agreement is the next objective of the Nixon-Kissinger strategy, the calculated climax of the diplomatic offensive which first came into the public eye with Kissinger's appearance in Peking just one year ago. Even a ceasefire agreement would virtually clinch Nixon's chances of re-election, and it is unlikely that, having gone to such lengths to create a winning hand, he will fail to play any card that

would take in all the chips.

One can further assume that if Nixon gets a settlement, as the result of the diplomatic maneuvers of the last year, it will be a settlement that he wants, and not the settlement for which the Vietnamese have paid so heavy a price in human suffering and human life. For if Nixon were willing to settle for a face-saving exit from Vietnam, he could have done so three years ago when he first took office. In fact, 1969 would have been the best year to get a favorable (but meaningful) withdrawal agreement, because as a new president he was in a stronger bargaining position to negotiate such a solution. But Nixon did not want that kind of withdrawal, i.e., one that would "ratify" an NLF victory, and therefore he bent his policy towards another course.

While withdrawing American troops under the deceptive rubric of "Vietnamization," he escalated the air war in the South, invaded Cambodia and Laos, and resumed the bombing of the North; since then he has mined North Vietnam's harbors and in general

by David Horowitz