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## Rock 'n' Roll Stew: The Rolling Stones and Blues Music through the Looking Glass of American Culture in the 1960's

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Rock 'n' Roll Stew:  
The Rolling Stones and Blues Music Through  
The Looking Glass of American Culture in the 1960s

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the American Studies Program

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by

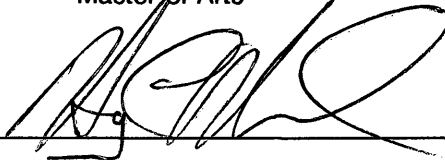
Henry Woodward

1992

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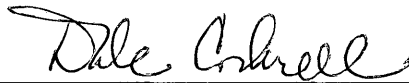
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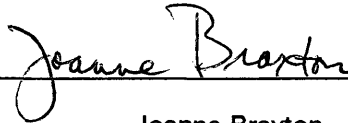
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Henry Woodward

Approved, 1992

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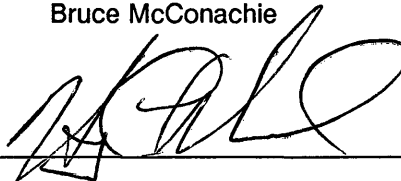
Dale Cockrell

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Joanne Braxton

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Bruce McConachie

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### Audio Examples

- A. "Rollin' and Tumblin'" - Muddy Waters - :42  
syncopation, polyrhythms (guitar and drums) blue notes, AAB line structure
- B. "Jumpin' Judy" - Library of Congress Field Recording - :50  
recording of prison work group demonstrates natural syncopation
- C. "Little Red Rooster" - Howlin' Wolf - 2:00  
cut 1: oral tradition of blues as Howlin' Wolf teaches Eric Clapton "Little Red Rooster" - chord changes on recording for The London Howlin' Wolf Sessions, also blue notes (slide guitar)  
cut 2: first verse of original Chess recording of "Little Red Rooster", blue notes, syncopation, circumlocution in sexual theme of text
- D. "Bring It On Home" - Sonny Boy Williamson - :43  
syncopated rhythm, call-response/comment between vocal and harmonica
- E. "Good Morning Little Schoolgirl" - Muddy Waters - :35
- F. "Back Door Man" - Howlin' Wolf - 1:10  
circumlocution and strong sexual posturing in text and vocal delivery
- G. "How Blue Can You Get" - B.B. King - 1:02  
live recording, performer/audience interaction
- H. "Mannish Boy" - Muddy Waters - 1:41  
larger-than-life stage persona, strong sexual posturing, audience response (simulated/added for studio recording), strong syncopated rhythm
- I. "Me and The Devil Blues" - Robert Johnson - 1:10  
Johnson dramatizing relationship between bluesmen and the idea of evil through himself and Satan
- J. "Death Don't Have No Mercy" - Reverend Gary Davis - :40  
direct, fatalistic attitude, anthropomorphism of death
- K. "Little Red Rooster" - The Rolling Stones - 1:06  
compare to Howlin' Wolf original, guitar/harmonica call and response, electric slide guitar, 4/4 shuffle, Jagger's quiet, powerful delivery
- L. "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" - The Rolling Stones - 1:18  
sound mix: acoustic guitar, drum beat, electric guitar, vocal, overall cathartic sound compared to text
- M. "Under My Thumb" - The Rolling Stones - 1:15  
strong sexual posturing in text and delivery, upbeat, danceable rhythm
- N. "Street Fighting Man" - The Rolling Stones - 1:10  
violent, chaotic noise created through instruments and vocal sound
- O. "No Expectations" - The Rolling Stones - 1:30

acoustic guitar/slide guitar interplay, quiet vocal and plaintive lyric

- P. "Sympathy For The Devil" - The Rolling Stones - 2:00  
Cut 1: percussion, polyrhythms, piano and vocal creating sound/mood for beginning of song  
Cut 2: violence in the electric noise of guitar solo
- Q. "Gimme Shelter" - The Rolling Stones - 2:00  
Cut 1: female chorus, slow, steady beat, and strained-sounding vocal creating sound/mood for beginning of song  
Cut 2: vocal solo
- R. "Love in Vain" - The Rolling Stones - :55  
quiet acoustic version of Robert Johnson blues
- S. "Live With Me" - The Rolling Stones - 1:10  
saxophone solo complementing driving rhythm, raunchy sound and text of song
- T. "Midnight Rambler" - The Rolling Stones - 2:45  
development of song from quiet guitar/harmonica call and response to driving, violent climax
- U. "You Can't Always Get What You Want" - The Rolling Stones - 2:44  
cut 1: choir, acoustic guitar, vocal creating sound/mood of song beginning then dropping into main rhythm of song  
cut 2: chorus and instruments climax into final rhythmic line that fades out

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the music of The Rolling Stones and its roots in and relationship with American music and culture from the years 1963 to 1970. It analyzes how this popular group was at once reflective of and a shaper of its times. Towards this end the thesis explores the band's roots in the tradition of American blues music, focusing on the subversive elements of blues and its opposition to mainstream American culture. Then a connection is made from the blues to the subversive music of The Rolling Stones, the social power and influence of rock music, and the transformations that took place in American culture in the 1960s. Chapter one introduces several theories concerning the relationship between music and society. Chapter two analyzes the structures and meanings, both musical and social, of blues music. It also compares American popular music and blues and closes by looking at the beginnings of The Rolling Stones in England. Chapter three is a close analysis of Rolling Stones songs, three from 1965 and the rest from 1968 and 1969. It considers how they connect with blues music and with the cultural changes of their time. Chapter four analyzes the relationship between The Rolling Stones, their audience, and American society through the band's infamous concert at Altamont, California on December 6, 1969. The concert serves as a symbol for the end of The Rolling Stones' and all of rock music's period of dominance as a subversive social force. The epilogue suggests that The Rolling Stones after 1969 are a model for the movement of rock music away from subversion and confrontation and into the mainstream of society. It also points to the transformation of blues music from a purer, subcultural status into the many forms of music and culture that came under the pluralistic label of rock 'n' roll.

## INTRODUCTION: NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

The research for this thesis was designed to help answer questions on the connections between the blues, The Rolling Stones, and American culture in the 1960s. The first source was the music itself; albums and tapes of blues and Rolling Stones music. Two films, Gimme Shelter and The Rolling Stones 25X5, were used. The Rolling Stones 25X5 had rare film and television footage that filled in details on band history and public image. Gimme Shelter was the primary document used for examining the 1969 tour and Altamont concert in Chapter IV. Books used were from five categories: The Rolling Stones, the blues, music and society, music and social change in the 1960s, and anthologies of rock criticism and musician interviews.

The book that began this thesis was Greil Marcus' Mystery Train: Images Of America In Rock 'n' Roll Music. By analyzing the music and careers of performers, he attempted to locate clues to American cultural expression and change through rock music. Marcus identified the diverse musics and traditions that were mixed into rock's cultural stew. He also fits rock into the field of American literature, using literary passages and images to locate rock's roots and place in the continuum of uniquely American cultural expressions. Marcus's writing style served as a model for this thesis. Specifically, I wanted to emulate his balance of text, image, and the actual sound or noise of songs to explain their message and impact. Marcus was also able to balance and identify rock's qualities as an immediate, visceral, and anti-intellectual experience while still carrying as much of a message and cultural impact as other "serious" art forms. His ability to write about rock in a readable, entertaining, and serious style inspired me to pursue my own ideas on the connections between the blues, The Rolling Stones, and American culture.

Most of the books written on The Rolling Stones were not useful for my research. Though some gave an adequate history of the band, most read like hype-ridden fan magazines. There were three notable exceptions: David Dalton's anthology of articles, press clippings, and photos The Rolling Stones: The First Twenty Years, Robert Christgau's article in The Rolling Stones Illustrated



History Of Rock 'n' Roll, and Stanley Booth's The True Adventures Of The Rolling Stones. What Booth and Christgau were able to do was to cut through myths and hype to understand where the music of The Rolling Stones came from and how and what it communicated to its audience. They also stressed the importance of sound ahead of text and image in their analysis of individual songs.

The most useful books on music and society were Jacques Attali's Noise: The Political Economy Of Music and Richard Middleton's Pop Music And The Blues: A Study Of The Relationship And Its Significance. Attali's theory on noise, the historical dialectic of change in music codes in relation to social and economic codes, provides a framework for discussing the cultural impact of the music in this thesis. Middleton's book was the only detailed study of the connections between blues and rock. He analyzed the rhythmic, harmonic, and textual components of the music and made his ideas on the relationship clear and well-supported. Most of the books on the blues provided solid histories and contexts. But Amiri Imamu Baraka's Blues People: Negro Music In White America stood out for its discussion of blues as a separate and subversive language and cultural focal point for African Americans.

The majority of books on rock and social change fell into the trap of focusing primarily on text and media image in their analysis of the cultural and political impact of rock groups. One book that didn't was Charles Hamm's Yesterdays: Popular Song In America. Hamm's analysis stressed the balance between sound and text in the creation and reception of a song. He also explains popular music's unique dynamic of performer and audience as seller and buyer of a product. This was a key to understanding the differences between blues that was performed within the folk music tradition and the blues of The Rolling Stones that was created and consumed within popular music structures.

A major research problem was audience response. Beyond record sales, chart positions, and concert attendance there were no methods of gauging how those who listened to and purchased the music felt about it. Quotes such as "The Stones are a way of life" and "They speak for us" are useful in some ways but difficult to fit into an analysis. Interviews with band members

proved inadequate; there were few revelations about how songs were constructed or why certain lyrics were written. Critical comments were gathered from anthologies, which saved the effort of sifting through the hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles. Sometimes these comments were helpful in articulating the impact or character of certain songs or of the band while others focused too much on text or media image.

Finally, there was the music itself, gathered from my own collection of Rolling Stones and blues records and tapes. The main struggle of this paper lay in trying to write about sounds: what I heard in a song, what an audience heard, and what the musicians heard. For this, I had to assume the roles of fan, critic, and historian and search for a balance between them in expressing my analysis. The more I wrote the more I realized that words could only partially describe the character and impact of music. This is why Dale Cockrell and I agreed that a tape to augment my analysis would be essential. As the tape should prove, the sound of blues and Rolling Stones songs gave immediate illumination and proof as to the individual nature of each and the connections between them.

## CHAPTER I. THEORIES ON MUSIC AND SOCIETY

In Noise: The Political Economy of Music, Jacques Attali defines music as both a reflection of a society and a theoretical tool for examining that society.

Music, the organization of noise, ... reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and bands that make up society. An instrument of understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge. <sup>1</sup>

His theory is based on the social determination of what constitutes "noise." A piece of music is evaluated as conformist or revolutionary by its relationship to the norm. For Attali, music that subverts the norm is said to have noise. The music is "noisy" when it is heard by the establishment not as music, which would be sounds conforming to the norm. Performers, by manipulating noise, can make statements about established social codes. The two-way communication between the music and the audience contains social content.

Attali locates the political significance of music in its dual functions as a reflection of social climate and as an economic mediator between a government and its citizens. He traces the relationship of music and government through European history but focuses on music and the modern industrial state. The state uses its economic power to create and distribute music as a form of mass communication. Ideas, opinions, and social codes are determined by the central organization and control of noise. Attali extends this idea to the idea of harmony. A society's concept of musical harmony, the organization of its noise, reflects its concept of how to organize its people. <sup>2</sup> The state also uses music in performance as a social spectacle, a channeling of violence and dis-harmony that is sold to the public as entertainment. <sup>3</sup> Attali asserts that the state seeks to quell social unrest by staging violence and representing order to its people through music.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Attali, Noise: The Political Economy of Music (Minneapolis, 1985) 5.

<sup>2</sup> Attali, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Attali, 24.

Within a society, there is a progression of change that a musical analysis reveals: the introduction of codes, their transmission and reception, and their absorption into the economy. Music is prophetic. Changes in noise codes precede changes in social and economic codes because music explores these codes faster.<sup>4</sup> What Attali attempts to do is explain history in terms of dialectics of sound.

Attali's theory fails to account for twentieth century popular music. His examination moves between two fixed poles: popular music, music that is mass-produced for the purpose of making money, and folk music, people's music produced outside the economic structures. In Attali's view, popular music doesn't break out of its status as a tool for the capitalist state and folk music doesn't leave its position outside the economic and social mainstream. Attali's noise theory will be applied to the relationship between The Rolling Stones and American culture in the 1960s.

Most theories on modern popular music center on the premise that this music is controlled to serve the economic and political interests of the businesses that create and distribute it. Such an early influential treatment was offered by Theodor W. Adorno. Adorno placed popular music within the capitalist state as a product that is mass-produced for public consumption. For his examples of popular music, he used popular songs from his native Germany and Tin Pan Alley songs from America. Adorno theorized that music mediated between the state and its citizens. The corporate apparatus created music that affirmed government hegemony, packaged it as a commodity, then mass produced it.<sup>5</sup> Popular music stripped the audience of power by making them passive receptors of its sounds. Richard Middleton, in Studying Popular Music, quotes Adorno and comments,

"The composition listens for the listener...[both] are kneaded by the same mode of production...[creating] a pre-established harmony...between production and consumption...the people clamor for what they are going to get anyhow." The music at one and the same time offers escape from the banalities of social life and is continuous with them; its twin functions

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<sup>4</sup> Attali, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Middleton, Studying Popular Music (Buckingham, 1990) 57.

are thus distraction (music as narcotic) and affirmation: "Accepting what there is...identifying...with the inescapable product." <sup>6</sup>

Listeners are given the illusion of choice while in fact they are being fed the same musical experience that has the same net social effect.

Adorno looked to music produced outside the corporate structure for a solution to the repetition and affirmation of values in popular music. For him, it was the avant-garde that could produce autonomous music that challenged the social norms. But, like Attali, he saw no middle ground between popular and avant-garde. Adorno, writing in the 1930s, did not address rock music, which came to synthesize American blues, country, jazz, folk, and popular musical and could not be dismissed so easily.

Simon Frith analyzes rock music as a product of cultural synthesis and as a dialogue with American capitalist society. Capitalism is the structure against which rock music rebels and to which it is always tied. Rock's noise in its beginnings in the 1950s was a youth rebellion against the social and economic values held by parents. Yet rock did not reject capitalism. It took into its mythology the ideal of the independent loner making it in America through music. Frith links this working-class ideal with a theory of leisure and the experience of self. The industrial world had become so mechanized and dehumanized that only in the sphere of leisure activity could individuals be creative. The leisure activity of buying, and listening to music took on greater social power when it became an experience of identity and expression for its fans. Frith ties this notion back to blues culture. The work status of black Americans reflected the alienation and powerlessness that many workers felt as part of the modern industrial state. <sup>7</sup> This alienation and search for self and community is one of the aspects of blues culture that survived its transliteration into rock music. And it was in leisure time, time outside the workplace, that Frith believes black Americans and then the wider audience for rock music explored their identity and personal power.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Middleton, Studying Popular Music (Buckingham, 1990) 57.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Frith, Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, And The Politics Of Rock 'n Roll (New York, 1980) 264.

Frith's theory raises two important points. Rock music has a complex and paradoxical relationship with American culture. At times rock is revolutionary, noise to the mainstream. Other times its economic and social ties to the mainstream silenced that noise. Secondly, rock music's synthesis of American musical traditions made it cross-class and cross-cultural music. Yet this also could be misleading. Rock's status as a commodity controlled by mainstream interests would keep it from being as much of a people's music as was sometimes claimed.

Another of the guiding ideas of this paper is the transformation of blues culture by rock music and its subsequent expression as Rolling Stones music. There was a change from the oral, folk music tradition of blues to the literate, mass-consumption machinery of popular music. This transformation took elements of blues music out of the culture where they were created and to which they spoke and into the culture they had always opposed. When it was the exclusive property of African Americans, blues music had subcultural status, always existing in relation to the music and culture of the dominant, white society. The blues' subversive nature was always directed against that mainstream culture. Rock music's subversiveness came from a different cultural position. The rebellion of rock, from its first period in the late 1950s and second in the 1960s, came from young people and freethinkers within the mainstream against parents and the established power structure. Through this mixing of traditions came a new form of American culture.

CHAPTER II. THE STRUCTURES AND MEANINGS OF BLUES AND POP/THE BEGINNINGS OF  
THE ROLLING STONES

Blues music's rhythms give a good example of its oppositional quality. Blues songs feature syncopation, the accenting of beats or pulses typically unaccented in metric music. African music had long cultivated polyrhythms, with layers of rhythms that complemented and played off each other like a musical conversation. A dominant meter, around which most Western music is centered, was never the intention. This metrical patterns in blues was both an active preservation of African rhythms and song structure and a conscious undermining of the rhythms of most Western music. [Listen to audio EXAMPLE A for syncopation, polyrhythms, and the overall structure and sound of a blues song.] Different approaches to rhythm reflect the natures of the different cultures. The polyrhythms of African music suggest the timing of the "natural" world and the human body. Western rhythms are more like artificial, regularized time units necessary to an industrial society, like a mechanized machine.<sup>1</sup> African rhythms reflect a culture not regulated by clock time and one that used music to get out of time, as in the attainment of ecstatic states of consciousness during religious rituals. Richard Middleton described the origin of syncopated rhythms as the literal act of percussion: the first pulse being the action of a body to raise a hand to strike and the second louder pulse being the sound created when the hands hit the instrument, be it drum, guitar, or piano.<sup>2</sup> An example of this would be the syncopated work songs associated with chain gangs or railroad workers. The rhythms of the songs sung by the workers reflected the natural syncopation of their work: the action of lifting a hammer up and a second louder sound of the hammer hitting a railroad spike. [illustrated in audio EXAMPLE B.]

Middleton's examination of the natural African and industrial Western ideas of time in music can be extended to include musical forms. The simple 12-bar structure of blues was a formula, much like meter, that could be improvised upon to give each performance an individual character.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Middleton, Pop Music and the Blues: A Study of the Relationship and Its Significance (Oxford, 1972) 43.

<sup>2</sup> Middleton, 42.

In opposition is Western music, which is generally notated and expected to be performed in a certain way with little or no deviation. Attali's theory on harmony and structure is useful here. He sees a highly organized society imposing restrictions on (tonal) freedom through a strict organization of the structure and performance style of its music.<sup>3</sup> What blues music did was create within the musical (social) structures space for an individual voice and in doing so diverged from the dominant forms.

Blue notes are another example of blues musicians retaining a sense of their African roots while at the same time standing in opposition to and undermining the dominant structures of Western music and American society. Blue notes, from the perspective of Western music, are notes that are bent, flattened, or otherwise manipulated by the performer so as to sound "off." The notes, whether played or sung, sound wrong, grate against the system, and therefore gave a sense of "otherness" and uniqueness to the sound of the blues. [Listen for blue notes and the non-notated, oral tradition of blues in Howlin' Wolf's "Little Red Rooster," EXAMPLE C.] These notes implicitly placed emphasis on the individual interpretation of a common form as opposed to the Western notion of performance being a flawless re-creation of that form. The blues musician could have a musical conversation with himself, with the blue notes from his guitar or harmonica responding to or commenting on the lyrics he sang, [illustrated in audio EXAMPLE D.] The blue notes became part of the language of the blues, a set of alternate codes, phrases, and gestures that were known to performers and audiences and part of a separate, and in a sense secret, culture for black Americans.

Blue notes are a form of circumlocution. Whether in forming lyrics or in playing notes, circumlocution is the method of talking or playing around an idea or a note instead of specifically stating it. This was a tradition that survived from African culture. What it meant in America for black people was a way of expressing what Richard Middleton called the "double-bind" of black life, of

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<sup>3</sup> Attali, 83.



trying to overcome being a secondary people and win a fight that could not be won.<sup>4</sup> The contradictions and dualities of blues music all speak to this problem, to the limits of life in a white world. Irony and double meaning are also a way of subverting the dominant culture, criticizing it without the "other" knowing what you say. Textual circumlocution also left an out for the singer, by never directly stating literal meaning the singer never be pinned down to specific intentions. Circumlocution was also a way to include the audience in the performance, of leaving room for interpretation of the meaning of lyrics by those receiving them. Again this stood in opposition to the music and culture of white America where sound and social signals were strictly organized and followed.

The content of blues lyrics set them apart from the standard forms of Western song and carried much of the music's appeal and meaning. Personal and communal experience are the central topics of blues lyrics. Blues singer Henry Townsend recalled,

Although they call it the blues today, the original name given to this king of music was "reals." Just as gospel music is songs about people in biblical times, the blues is songs about black folks today - and these songs are dedicated to the truth. I'm telling stories that were told to me or events that happened to me - just like all blues singers.<sup>5</sup>

The emphasis on truth in blues lyrics also included an acceptance of certain realities of life, of contradictions and dualities. Blues lyrics are unromantic in their emphasis on uncovering pain and of embracing conflicting emotions and realities. One of these realities was loneliness. The blues are foremost the music of the individual, of exploring one's self and one's relation to others and the world. The realities of life for the black men who composed the first blues lyrics were homelessness, unemployment, loneliness, and hunger. Big Bill Broonzy sang,

I worked on a levee camp and a chain gang too, A black man is a boy to a white, don't care what he can do.

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<sup>4</sup> Middleton, 27.

<sup>5</sup> William Barlow, Looking Up At Down: The Emergence of Blues Culture (Philadelphia, 1989) 326.

I wonder when will I be called a man, Or do I have to wait until I get ninety-three?<sup>6</sup>

The experience of loneliness and the necessity for self-sufficiency had no roots in the communal history of African life or in the enforced dependence and communal life of slavery. The plaintive nature of blues lyrics reflect a search for answers from within and without to questions of life and identity. The individual searches in blues music communicated a communal search for identity and a meaningful life that was shared and understood by all. Amiri Imamu Baraka wrote,

The materials of blues were not available to the white American, even though strange circumstances might prompt him to look for them. It was as if these materials were secret and obscure, and blues a kind of ethno-historic rite as basic as blood.<sup>7</sup>

Baraka addressed this aspect of blues music as being the exclusive property of black people in America and part of their shared history.

Against the themes of loneliness and hardship was set the search for good times and satisfaction in blues music. This was expressed in blues lyrics and in the experience of blues in performance. Bluesmen accepted the harshness of life but looked to the simple pleasures of drink, dance, and sex to transcend the tough times. The discussion of pleasure and especially sex in blues songs stood in opposition to 19th and early 20th century white popular song. Mainstream America listened to songs where romantic love was the goal of honorable men and chaste women with the end result being the bliss of marriage. Blues songs are open in their acceptance of lust and in their unromantic view of love. The bluesman used sex, especially his own prowess, as a part of an image that he created in his lyrics and his performance style. The music of blues was sexual in its very sound. The polyrhythms and syncopation simulated the rhythms of sex. The structure

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<sup>6</sup> Barlow, 302.

<sup>7</sup> Amiri Imamu Baraka, Blues People: Negro Music In White Americ (New York, William Morrow and Company, 1963) 148.

of blues songs and the repetitions of lines built up sexual tension within the music.<sup>8</sup> [Listen to EXAMPLES E and F for the sexual braggadocio of two blues songs, sung to syncopated, suggestive blues beat.]

Performing blues resolved some of the blues singer's pain and loneliness that he expressed in his songs. The singer and the audience shared in a catharsis gained from celebrating the struggle to find good times and a good life amid their pain and troubles.

The simple style of the songs and the emphasis on personal interpretation meant that blues songs changed with each performance, responding to the audience. Blues songs in performance frequently featured the call and response style of African music and American gospel music, with the crowd responding to questions and statements by the bluesman. [EXAMPLE G.]

Blues singers were keen observers of human nature, able to detach themselves from society to comment upon it. Jacques Attali identifies performers as those who play the role of the scapegoat. The performer is afforded certain freedoms in appearance and lifestyle while being denied social status and power. A performer has social power only within the limits of the performance ritual. Yet within that space, the audience, representing the larger society, also has the power to determine whether the performer directs the ritual in the manner of a priest or becomes the ritual's offering as the scapegoat. When the society has no more use for the entertainment function of a performer it can turn against and dispose of that person.<sup>9</sup> Blues singers were shunned by the religious community and tolerated within certain limits by the rest of their society. They had a reputation for dishonesty, theft, laziness, and promiscuity. There was a contradiction between the stage persona of a larger-than-life character and the reality of the performer having a marginal position in the everyday world. [Listen to EXAMPLE H and how Muddy

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<sup>8</sup> David Evans, Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity In the Folk Blues (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1982) 20.

<sup>9</sup> Attali, 118-119.

Waters creates his stage persona through his words and his singing style in "Mannish Boy."] The life of the blues singer swung between the power extremes of speaking for a community and being rejected by it.

Another aspect of the oppositional nature of blues music was its relationship with the church. Christianity had a strong influence in the black community and had been one of the more vital aspects shared between white Americans and African slaves. Blues music was the secular alternative to gospel music. It rejected God, salvation, and the moral and social codes of the Christian church. Instead, the central deity of the blues was Satan. Identification with the devil brought freedom. It dealt with pleasure in the here and now. Rejection of God and the church was a way of asserting independence from white America, who had fostered Christianity in the black community with its hope of salvation and a better life after death partly as a means of social pacification and control. Yet the blues recognized the penalties for living the "evil" life in the loneliness and danger that were part of the outlaw blues singer's life. The best of blues singers were said to have been in league with Satan, gaining their playing and singing skills from him for the price of their souls. [Listen to EXAMPLE I, Robert Johnson's "Me and The Devil Blues," as he laments the power Satan has over him and resigns himself to his evil life.]

Blues singers existed alongside preachers as complementary opposites, using similar ecstatic skills and techniques to communicate with their audience. Blues singers offered the alternative to the atonement and guilt of the Sunday morning sermon. They offered Saturday night all the time, yet implied that this freedom had its cost. As Greil Marcus notes, bluesmen inherited and carried on the American religious tradition of hellfire and damnation by living what their church counterparts only preached about.

...the blues singers, in a twisted way, were the real Puritans. These men, who had to renounce the blues to be sanctified, who often sneered at the preachers in their songs, were the ones who really believed in the devil; they feared the devil most because they knew him best. They understood,

far better than the preachers, why sex was man's original sin, and they sang about little else.<sup>10</sup>

[Listen to EXAMPLE J for Reverend Gary Davis, a bluesman turned preacher, and his powerful, sermon-like delivery of his song, "Death Don't Have No Mercy."] What the blues offered was pleasure and pain on individual terms, without the morality and limits of the church and society. The loneliness that went with the freedom was another of the contradictions and dualities that accompanied this music and lifestyle. Blues singers walking with the devil acted out the group fantasy but paid the price for a life outside the safety of the group.

Blues music takes a fatalistic and noncommittal attitude when facing the future. The people who first created the blues did not see how their lives would improve. Poor, uneducated, and above all black, blues singers did not hold out much hope that white America's "dream" would ever come their way. Blues lyrics accepted their lot in life yet encouraged the struggle. As Michael Bane noted, this attitude is at the heart of most folk music.

People's music says ... [no], we cannot change the world. The best we can hope for is to survive; and if we are lucky we can change ourselves. That's the blues.<sup>11</sup>

Blues was people's music, a shared language between those who played it and those who listened and danced to it. As the music of African Americans it held dual qualities of being truthfully fatalistic about its people's future and containing no overt political messages, while being oppositional to and subversive of white music and culture through its sound, its expression, and its methods of performance.

Blues music never became popular music. In twentieth century America, "popular" meant mainstream and mainstream meant white and middle-class. Charles Hamm defined popular song as music composed to be popularized through secular performance, then reproduced and marketed

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<sup>10</sup> Greil Marcus, Mystery Train: Images of America In Rock 'n' Roll Music (New York, 1975) 22.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Bane, White Boy Singin' The Blues: The Black Roots of White Rock (Middlesex, 1982) 76.

to be consumed by a wide audience.<sup>12</sup> The popular song form that blues and later rock music rebelled against the most was the Tin Pan Alley songwriting style that dominated popular music from the turn of the century to the advent of rock and roll in the mid 1950s. Hamm identified the trademark style of these songs.

Virtually all Tin Pan Alley songs are in verse-chorus form. For the first several decades of the new era, songs normally had three or more verses, which lay out a brief drama; the chorus follows each verse with a commentary on the emotional situation developing in the verses. The verse is usually twice as long as the chorus, but the chorus has the more memorable music, the "tune" which the songwriter hopes will appeal to his listeners and stick in their minds.<sup>13</sup>

Hamm chronicles the eventual standardization of the song form and its movement toward stating a single theme or emotional state and structuring the song to make that point as clear and memorable as possible. Songs were kept simple and short in order to fit into the limited length of a phonograph record, which along with sheet music were the ways by which a song made money for its writer and publishing company.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to the emphasis given both individual interpretation of a standard form and circumlocution in blues music, Tin Pan Alley songs were written and performed to state a single point clearly and simply.

State your theme in the first eight bars - which should include the title. Then amplify in your next eight bars. Then build further in your next eight bars. Then come in strong with punch line and title again. These are the fundamental rules, as a study of standards will disclose.<sup>15</sup>

Tin Pan Alley differed from blues music in text. The songs were known for their sentimentality, their romanticism, and their general inoffensiveness to the sensibilities of their audience.

When writing popular songs always bear in mind that it is to the masses, the untrained musical public, that you must look for support and popularity.

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Hamm, Yesterdays: Popular Song In America (New York, London, 1979) xvii.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Hamm, Music In The New World (London, New York 1983) 355.

<sup>14</sup> Hamm, Music In The New World, 356.

<sup>15</sup> Henry Kane, as quoted in Hamm, Music In The New World, 359.

Therefore, do not offer them anything which in subject matter or melody does not appeal to their ears. To do so is just so much time thrown away.<sup>16</sup>

In Contrast to blues, Tin Pan Alley sought to preserve fantasies and to confirm musical and social norms. Most popular were songs that maintained the ideals of romantic, monogamous, non-sexual love. This is illustrated in Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's "All The Things You Are."

You are the breathless hush of evening  
That trembles on the brink of a lovely song.  
You are the angel glow that lights a star,  
The dearest things I know are what you are.  
Some day my happy arms will hold you,  
and some day I'll know that moment divine,  
When all the things you are, are mine.<sup>17</sup>

While Tin Pan Alley songs defined popular music in America in their time, it is important to note that they did not speak for everyone.

It seems fair to generalize that Tin Pan Alley songs were for white, urban, literate, middle-and upper-class Americans. They remained practically unknown to large segments of American society, including most blacks (excepting musicians and a handful of urban blacks aspiring to a life-style approaching that of whites), and millions of poor, white, rural Americans of English, Irish, and Scottish stock clustered in the South and scattered across the lower Midwest.<sup>18</sup>

With hardly any noise, Tin Pan Alley revealed its hegemonic roots. The poor Americans who listened to blues and country music could not afford to indulge in the fantasy and sentimentality that characterized middle-class white music.

One searches almost in vain for songs touching in any way on the great social and political issues of those years - the continuing desperate plight of the black American in white America; the struggle of working-class citizens to combat by unionization and strikes their exploitation by management; ... And Tin Pan Alley's pose was quite a deliberate one, tied directly to the most powerful elements of the New York musical stage and the Hollywood sound film, which held that these media were best used to

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<sup>16</sup> Charles K. Harris, as quoted in Hamm, Yesterdays, 284.

<sup>17</sup> Hamm, Yesterdays, 359.

<sup>18</sup> Hamm, Yesterdays, 379.

entertain people, to take their minds away from personal and national problems - not to remind them of such things.<sup>19</sup>

Popular music was uniformly without noise until Tin Pan Alley's dominance was challenged by rock music.

When rock burst into American culture it confronted the mainstream with some of the subversive sounds and attitudes of blues music. The blues experience of a sense of community gained through the expression of individual loneliness and pain found its expression among young people who listened to rock music. Rock's sound and message was linked to the growing power of the mass media and spread quickly through American culture. The mass media created new markets that popular music businesses mined for profits. Radio and television allowed unprecedented numbers of people to share the experience of listening to music. Television also gave a visual image to a performer, which changed the marketing of a song or performer to an image-based style. As in movies, television gave an illusion of intimacy between a performer and audience that increased both the popularity of music stars and the intensity of their fan's devotion. The social noise created by rock music's early performers, for example Elvis Presley, was spread out to a greater audience through its connections to the apparatus of the music industry. By the early 1960s, this connection to the industry, coupled with rock music's economic success, allowed it to be absorbed into the mainstream, its noise muffled. Rock became the most lucrative market in the popular music business. As rock became more popular, its forms became more standardized and its contents more sanitized for mass production and consumption. Rock's social noise had been swallowed by its own industry. Performers and the "teen idols" of this period such as Paul Anka and Fabian, whose music was marketed as rock, resembled the ideals and sound of Tin Pan Alley more than they did Elvis Presley or Chuck Berry.

Rock music's second revolution began with the emergence of The Beatles. The popularity of The Beatles set the conditions for what Greil Marcus called a "pop explosion," which, he wrote

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<sup>19</sup> Hamm, Yesterdays, 377.



...can provide the enthusiasm, the optimism, and the group identity that makes mass political participation possible: a pop explosion is more than a change in style even if less than a revolution, though it can look like either one—depending on who is looking, and when. (not that "changing the world" in the political sense of the term is never a "goal" of a pop explosion, if such an event can be said to have a goal beyond good times; still, a pop explosion changes the world by affecting the moment, which means the world retains the capacity to change back momentarily.)<sup>20</sup>

The Beatles and the pop explosion around them allowed groups like The Rolling Stones to begin and flourish. The Beatles also provided the base line, or norm, to which The Rolling Stones would always measure themselves against.

More than any popular music group of their time, The Rolling Stones mediated between blues culture and the corporate world. Their career in the 1960s evolved from being students and imitators of American blues music to being synthesizers of blues and popular music to their icon status, as leaders of a social revolution against the mainstream that had roots in black American blues culture. A key to this was their ability to maintain the avant-garde and subversive nature of their music as they created and performed it within popular music's corporate structure. In Attali's language, The Rolling Stones' music was noise because of its ability to reflect the subversive concerns and tastes of its wide audience while at the same time challenging and advancing them.

The key to the popularity of The Rolling Stones was their communication through their music and public image of the power and subversive nature of both black American blues music and white middle-class bohemianism. It is crucial to note that the creative core of the band did not fit the image of the working-class rock hero like Elvis Presley. Brian Jones, Mick Jagger, and Keith Richards all had roots in the English middle-class. Only bassist Bill Wyman and drummer Charlie Watts came from what could be called working-class families. The band's status as white and English gave them an emotional and intellectual distance from the black American music they copied. Yet, this distance also allowed them to separate blues music from the racial tensions and cultural apartheid of American society, with the result that they listened to and enjoyed blues music

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<sup>20</sup> Greil Marcus, "The Beatles," The Rolling Stone Illustrated History Of Rock 'n' Roll, ed., Jim Miller 181-182.

when few in mainstream America could or wanted to do so. This cultural distance gave their recordings of blues songs a freshness to white audiences, many of whom were hearing the songs for the first time.

Blues music and the culture of the American black man held a romantic attraction for The Rolling Stones just as their version of it would be attractive to their audience. This attraction for modern industrial whites has been labeled "romantic primitivism" and is important in explaining their attraction to blues culture.<sup>21</sup> The rhythmic earthiness and freedom that exist in blues music combine with a projection by whites of a natural, visceral, and "primitive" existence that stands in opposition to all the rules and tenets of "civilized" white society. Richard Middleton stated,

This should not surprise us. Romantic primitivism is imbedded in the development of capitalism itself: ideologically, in capitalism's need for an Other, to refresh its "spirit" in non-productive time, to energize and justify its own contrasting drive to "civilization", and at the same time to prove its liberalism.<sup>22</sup>

What distinguished The Rolling Stones from being mere romantics or poor imitators was their ability to realize and celebrate the essential truths and outlook of blues music as well as their own emotional and cultural distance from them.

All of them, Jagger included, were attracted to the gruff, eloquent directness of so much black music; relatively speaking, they became natural, expressive, sexy, and so forth by playing it. What set them apart was Jagger's instinctive understanding that this achievement was relative - that there was a Heisenberg paradox built into the way he appreciated the virtues of this music - and his genius at expressing that as well. The aggressiveness and sexuality of the form were his, but the sincerity was beyond him - partly because he was white and English, and especially because he was Mick Jagger.<sup>23</sup>

This conscious exploration of the differences between black and white music gave a special tension and depth to The Rolling Stones' music.

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion of the romantic primitive and other aspects of rock music's appeal, see Robert Pattison, The Triumph Of Vulgarly: Rock Music In The Mirror Of Romanticism (New York, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Middleton, Studying Popular Music, 168-169.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Christgau, "The Rolling Stones," The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n Roll, ed., Jim Miller, (New York, 1976) 193.

The Rolling Stones' sound and lyrical style were based on the rock music of Chuck Berry and the urban blues, or rhythm and blues, of Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Elmore James. The band developed by mimicking the sound of these musicians, even taking their name from Muddy Waters' song, "Rollin' Stone." They began to be noticed when their performances outside of London's few blues clubs attracted a following of younger people. Their loud, fast versions of what was called American R&B were getting the same frenzied crowd responses that had been part of blues music from its start. Dance clubs became packed full of dancing teenagers and were the scene of occasional riots, the same response from that had marked the original impact of rock music in America.<sup>24</sup>

The Rolling Stones always stood in the shadow of The Beatles. Their devotion to the hard-edged sound and posturing of blues as opposed to The Beatles' embrace of lighter, more pop-oriented music guaranteed that they would never be as popular with the mainstream. So in the tradition of blues culture, The Rolling Stones and their R&B were recognized and marketed as the opposite of The Beatles and their pop rock. This was a combination of their true orientation and of image manipulation by their manager, Andrew Loog Oldham. The workings of the English pop industry depended heavily on appearance and image, so Oldham used this to the band's advantage. As opposed to The Beatles, who initially were clean-cut, dressed alike, and were genial with the public, the Stones had long, unkempt hair, dressed as they pleased, and were sullen and sarcastic when dealing with the press. Oldham would write their press releases, stating,

They don't wash too much, and they aren't too keen on clothes. They don't play nice-mannered music, but raw and masculine. People keep asking me if they're morons.<sup>25</sup>

All of this worked to perfection and followed what was becoming the law of youth culture: offend the parents and the establishment and you've got the kids.

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<sup>24</sup> Detailed account of early Rolling Stones concerts and press reactions are chronicled in Bill Wyman's Stone Alone: The Story of a Rock n' Roll Band (New York, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Loog Oldham in Bill Wyman, with Ray Coleman, Stone Alone: The Story of a Rock n' Roll Band (New York, 1990) 196.

The Rolling Stones' first album was released in 1963. Their version of Muddy Waters' "I Just Want To Make Love To You" is representative of their style of blues playing. On lyric value alone, the song broke all conventions of popular music. While The Beatles were singing "Love Me Do," the Stones told their girl "I don't want you to be true, I just want to make love to you." The original version of the song was a slow, threatening blues featuring the deep, solid voice of Muddy Waters lingering over each verse. The Stones' version is faster and louder, sounding like the band is rushing through the tune and the love-making expressed in the words. The sound is dominated by a fast guitar rhythm and drums that crash over the beat. Mick Jagger's vocals are harsh and loud, stressing the "I" in "I don't want you..." of the verses and straining to be heard over the noise of the band, which then halts as he slowly pronounces the refrain of "I just want to make love to you", sounding like he is revelling in the idea of being able to say it on a record and get away with it.

Through 1964 most of the Stones' recordings continued to be in the style of American rhythm and blues. Their performances continued to draw larger and more frenzied crowds and built on their reputation as a subversive, even dangerous band. An example of one of their best covers of a blues song was their faithful version of the Chicago blues standard "The Little Red Rooster." [EXAMPLE K] The song is based on a light 4/4 shuffle by the drums, a repeated riff on guitar with bottleneck slide guitar accents, and another guitar commenting after each vocal line. There is a call-and-response interplay between Brian Jones' slide guitar and Mick Jagger's harmonica between verses. Jagger does not over-sing the lyrics here, reciting of "I am the little red rooster, too lazy to crow today, keep everything in the barnyard upset in every way." The song contains all the elements of the blues tradition and was even recorded in Chicago's Chess Studios, home to the most influential blues performers. "The Little Red Rooster" became a number one single in England, proof of the popularity of the band's blues sound and image.

### CHAPTER III. MUSICAL ANALYSIS: ROLLING STONES MUSIC 1965-1969

"Satisfaction" was the breakthrough single for The Rolling Stones, reaching the number one spot on pop charts in England and America in the summer of 1965. The song was a synthesis of all the influences and contradictions that formed the band and steered their career from then on: blues sound and structure with popular music technology and sensibilities, joyful and cathartic music with dark and rebellious lyrics, individual alienation with a sense of a rock music community, media image with reality, and the social and political power of rock with the limits of consumer music and hegemonic realities.

"Satisfaction"'s foundation is a blues riff that is simple, catchy, and repeated throughout. The song begins with the riff, an announcement that plays once and is followed by bass and drums that set a driving tempo. The drum accents change the slower 4/4 blues shuffle into one of insistence by use of what Richard Middleton calls a "backbeat transformation."<sup>1</sup> The syncopated, soft/hard/soft/hard, backbeat of a 12-bar blues that the riff recalls is changed to a hard/soft/hard/soft double-time, taking a familiar pace and manipulating it. This emphasizes the "different" sound of the song and its faster pace. "Satisfaction" also transforms the conflict/resolution AAB form of 12-bar blues. The new style, anchored by the guitar riff and drums, pounds away at what would be the A line, "I can't get no satisfaction," repeats it, then when the resolution of the B line is expected, the third line, "Well I try, and I try, and I try," continues to build tension. The resolution comes with the fourth line, Mick Jagger's shout of "I can't get no!". Yet while the fourth line releases the tension built in the first three, the lyric "I can't get no" does not resolve the textual conflict. Here is the heart of the contradiction of the song: the placement of rebellious lyrics that go unresolved against irresistible, danceable music that gives satisfaction through its sound. [EXAMPLE L, the opening verse of "Satisfaction," illustrates the interplay of instruments, vocal, and lyrics that create the noise of the song.]

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Middleton, Studying Popular Music 213.

"Satisfaction"'s unique sound mix is an example of The Rolling Stones' use of elements of popular music. They used modern studio technology as another instrument, a way of manipulating the sound of the song for a desired effect. The basic track is an acoustic guitar and drums playing the melody and beat over which electric guitar, bass, and vocals are dubbed. According to Keith Richards, the song started out as "folk"-style song, to be performed in the manner of the protest songs that Bob Dylan had made popular.<sup>2</sup> The acoustic guitar track remained, but the entire sense of the song changes with the addition of the drum beat, electric guitar track, and the vocals. The guitar riff was recorded through a Gibson fuzz box, which cuts out the treble and gives the loud, thick, big sound to the riff. The vocals are not so much sung as they are shouted and they are placed in the mix right with the other instruments, giving the effect that Mick Jagger is straining to be heard above the noise of the band. This voice and instrument effect became permanently associated with the "Rolling Stones sound." As noise, it represented the attitude of the band and its fans, that of the individual voice fighting to be heard above industrial, societal noise. The sound mix enhances the textual meaning, the adolescent shout that demands attention and satisfaction.

The lyrics to "Satisfaction" recall the band's blues roots in its structure and delivery. Circumlocution was the model for delivering the vocals, burying them in the sound mix to the effect that they are almost indecipherable except for "I can't get no satisfaction." Jagger revealed his conscious re-creation of this style in an interview.

MJ-"I don't think lyrics are that important. I remember when I was very young, this is very serious, I read an article by Fats Domino which has really influenced me. He said, 'You should never sing the lyrics out very clearly.'

RS-"You can really hear, 'I got my thrill on Blueberry Hill.'"

MJ-"Exactly, but that's the only thing you can hear just like you hear 'I can't get no satisfaction.'"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Keith Richards in David Dalton, The Rolling Stones: The First Twenty Years (New York, 1981) 53.

<sup>3</sup> Mick Jagger in Peter Herbst, ed. and The Editors of Rolling Stone, The Rolling Stone Interviews: Talking With The Legends Of Rock & Roll 1967-1980 (New York, 1981) 47.

Jagger's lyrics do not tell a story in the style of Tin Pan Alley pop, but paint a series of short scenes that are stronger as a whole than as individual parts. They are a catalogue of youthful frustrations and hassles: "When I'm drivin' in my car and the man comes on the radio he's tellin' me more and more about some useless information supposed to fire my imagination. When I'm watchin' my TV and a man comes on and tells me how white my shirts can be. But, he can't be a man 'cause he doesn't smoke the same cigarettes as me. When I'm ridin' round the world, and I'm doin' this and I'm singin' that; and I'm tryin' to make some girl, who tells me, baby, better come back maybe next week. 'Cause you see I'm on a losing streak." The "I can't get no!" at the end of each verse is the shout of protest of social and sexual frustration and of independence from the limits of the adult world. While Jagger's words do not make explicit what information he thinks is useless, what kind of cigarettes he smokes, or why he cannot make the girl, the sound of his voice and the sound of the music do make it clear that making noise about it makes him feel better. It was the communication of this sound, the joy of making noise in the face of frustration, that simultaneously linked the song with the blues tradition and provoked such a strong response from popular music listeners. Robert Christgau commented on the song's reception by its audience and how, in the blues tradition, its listeners helped determine its meaning.

It was the perfect Stones paradox - the lyrics denied what the music delivered, with the vocal sitting on the fence - and it dominated the summer of 1965, securing a pop audience half of which was content to shout "I can't get no" while the other half decided that the third verse was about a girl who wouldn't put out during her period.<sup>4</sup>

"Satisfaction" elevated The Rolling Stones into a new level of popularity, especially in America, where they were not as well known as in England. What popularity communicated to the band was that the music and image they had created resonated with a mass audience, one that seemed eager for more. As Todd Gitlin reflected,

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<sup>4</sup> Christgau, 194.

...the Stones discovered to their own satisfaction just how vast was the market for badness.<sup>5</sup>

The band became increasingly identified as a voice of alienation. Their music at once identified frustrations and celebrated them in the cathartic experience of making noise about them. Their music also began to be regarded as more than entertainment. When The Rolling Stones first came to California in 1965, they were presented with the following document, identified as "Radical Welcome to The Rolling Stones, presented upon the occasion of Their First Visit to the West Coast."

Greetings and welcome Rolling Stones, our comrades in the desperate battle against the maniacs who hold power. The revolutionary youth of the world hears your music and is inspired to even more deadly acts. We fight in guerilla bands against the invading imperialists in Asia and South America, we riot at rock 'n' roll concern everywhere. We burned and pillaged in Los Angeles and the cops know our snipers will return... We will play your music in rock 'n' roll marching bands as we tear down the jails and free the prisoners, as we tear down the State schools and free the students, as we tear down the military bases and arm the poor...<sup>6</sup>

The Stones were articulating the frustrations of an increasingly radical and politically active segment of society that was taking much of its identity and sense of community from rock music.

Mick Jagger became the focus of much of the attention paid to The Rolling Stones. More accurately, it was the blues culture persona that Mick Jagger was developing that attracted the attention. This persona was revealed in both his songwriting and in his performance style. Jagger's intuition directed him to mold the poses he had learned from the blues to fit his times. He developed a voice that projected both the sexual braggadocio and observer/reporter qualities of the bluesman. The observer persona, as he constructed it, was at once petulant, mature, ironic, sexist, cloyingly romantic, but above all honest. Songs about women, a favorite subject of the blues, were his most notorious. Jagger's version was the put-down song and his favorite targets were upper-class, pretentious, and uptight girls. "Stupid Girl," from 1966, exemplifies this type, recalling the honesty of the blues and violating the gentle romanticism of popular song, "I'm not

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<sup>5</sup> Todd Gitlin, The Sixties: Years Of Hope, Days Of Rage (Toronto, 1987) 199.

<sup>6</sup> David Pichaske, A Generation In Motion: Popular Music And Culture In The Sixties (New York, 1979) xx.



talkin' about the way she combs her hair; look at the stupid girl. The way she powders her nose, her vanity shows and it shows. She's the worst thing in the world, well, look at that stupid girl." "Under My Thumb" expanded the put-down, it added meanness and revenge to the blues posture. "Under my thumb, the squirming dog who's just had her day. Under my thumb, a girl who has just changed her ways. It's down to me, the way she does just what she's told down to me. The change has come, she's under my thumb." "Under My Thumb" illustrates the contradictions of Rolling Stones music: the catchy riff and drum beat create a joyous, danceable tune that denies the harshness of the lyrics. [EXAMPLE M] Yet, as Todd Gitlin's comment illustrated, the badness and meanness of Rolling Stones lyrics were part of their appeal. The society girls put down in Rolling Stones songs were still attracted to the band's power and rebel image. Jagger's contemptuous tone reports on the world of the rock performer, a realization that like the bluesman he can be as mean as he wants and still find women at his door after the show.

Mick Jagger's performance style recalled the blues culture tradition of highly personal and expressive singing. Commanding the stage in front of the band, he was at once a whirling dervish, crooner, cheerleader, and raw bluesman. Jagger had taken parts of the styles of blues and soul singers like Howlin' Wolf, Jackie Wilson, Little Richard, and especially the dance steps of James Brown and synthesized them into his own stage persona. Jagger sang to the audience, interacted with the other musicians in the band, and danced to the music in a world of his own. He became both part of the music as a strong stage presence and a part of the audience as a dancer, a mediator between the crowd and the music. And just as the music of The Rolling Stones seemed so fresh to their white audience, Jagger's frenetic performance style was the most original and outrageous act in mainstream music since Elvis Presley. Jagger's posing and overt sexuality enhanced the hard, driving music of the band and added to the subversive image of The Rolling Stones.

Two events from 1967 contributed to the dramatic changes in The Rolling Stones' music and career in 1968: a series of drug-related arrests of band members and the relative failure of the

album Their Satanic Majesties Request. The band's defiance of authority and rebel posturing caught up with them. That year the arrests, most of which were drug-related and revealed in courts to be police set-ups, divided and occupied the band. This hindered them creatively and also left them legally unable to perform in or leave England. The frustration of the British establishment at the influence of The Rolling Stones and other rock groups seemed to be the motivation behind the legal harassment. This recalls Jacques Attali's theory of the scapegoat; someone had to pay for the unrest caused by this social noise. And in England, The Rolling Stones were the scapegoats, emphasizing their social position as the opposites of The Beatles. The Beatles were regarded as cultural ambassadors and national treasures and as such were afforded freedoms in their lifestyles, like drug use, that other artists did not receive. The British media played Rolling Stones arrests and trials for maximum drama. The band's legal problems only increased their image as outlaw heroes. The Rolling Stones' arrests also signalled the symbolic end for "Swinging London;" a period of bohemian art and lifestyle experimentation, innocence and freedom, the English equivalent of psychedelic San Francisco, that was presided over by rock groups like The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. The album created in the midst of this confusion was Their Satanic Majesties Request, a psychedelic answer record to The Beatles' masterwork Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. It featured a style that was the fashion in rock music at the time: exotic instruments, long, formless instrumental passages, experimental sounds and textures, and "psychedelic" lyrics. The experimentation sounded nothing like Rolling Stones music and carried little of its characteristic power. And it especially suffered in the inevitable comparison with The Beatles' album. The influence of the band's drug use was not so much evident in the text of the album as it was in the uncharacteristic lack of focus and tension in the music. This was a reflection both of the band's problems outside of making music and their experimentation with a style that did not work for them. The media seized on the idea of the album as a failure, the first time that term had been applied to the band.

Rebounding from these setbacks, The Rolling Stones sought refuge in the roots of their music. The sound that would characterize their next album, Beggar's Banquet, was heralded by the release of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" as a single. It was a return to the blues and to the power of noise, to a sound that was tighter, louder, and more mature-sounding than anything they had recorded before. It had all the components that had given the band its strength: repeated guitar riff at the center, syncopated 4/4 on the drums, shouted vocal straining to be heard in the mix, and an overall wash of noise and rhythm. There seemed to be a more "Stones-like" approach in a confused lyric like "I was born in a cross-fire hurricane and I howled at my ma in the pourin' rain," than the "meaningful" words from a song like Their Satanic Majesties Request's "Sing This Together," "Why don't we sing this song all together, open our heads, let the pictures come. And if we close all our eyes together, then we can see where we all come from." There may not be literal meaning in "But it's all right now, in fact it's a gas. Well it's all right. I'm Jumpin' Jack Flash, it's a gas, gas, gas," but the sound and noise communicated a joyous, cathartic power and made "Jumpin' Jack Flash" a number one single in both Britain and America.

"Street Fighting Man" from Beggar's Banquet, was the first Rolling Stones song that addressed politics directly, and coming as it did in 1968 it became controversial soon after its release. Like "Satisfaction," it is a typical Rolling Stones song in its celebration of contradictions within its own text and between the text and music. Mick Jagger assumes the role of reporter, singing in the first line, "Everywhere I hear the sound of marching, charging feet, boy. 'Cause summer's here and the time is right for fighting in the street, boy." Jagger builds on this theme in the second verse, "Hey, dig the time is right for palace revolution. 'Cause where I live, the game to play is Compromise Solution." Yet the refrain is the key to the song, a prime example of Jagger distancing himself from his incendiary words, "But now what can a poor boy do except to sing for a Rock 'n Roll Band 'cause in sleepy London Town there's just no place for Street Fighting Man!" Jagger plays with ironic comment in the refrain. "What can a poor boy do?" is his shrug of the shoulders, a contradiction of the violence in the song's music and most of its text. Jagger also

comments on his Englishness and on English politics, how "sleepy London Town" and the English class structure will never fuel the fires of any revolution. Yet, this type of commentary is lost in the noise of the song. [In audio EXAMPLE N, the third verse and chorus of "Street Fighting Man," listen for the strong, violent sound of the music and how it dominates any sense of irony or disengagement that the lyrics might communicate.]

While the text pulls back from violence, the music feeds it. The song is built around a staccato acoustic guitar riff that begins and is followed by the dull, loud thud of the drum kit. This part had been recorded on a simple tape recorder with a child's toy drum kit. The rawness of the basic track is augmented by layers of electric guitar, bass, and a pounding piano that create the familiar wall of sound. The vocals are slurred and shouted, buried in the sound mix. "Street Fighting Man" is the rawest and noisiest song on Beggar's Banquet and musically carries a message of revolt. The song also illustrates a contradiction between the band and its audience that will be explored further: while the Rolling Stones may not have been interested in politics, many in their audience were and looked to rock music for answers and guidance.

"Violence. The Rolling Stones are violence," wrote Jon Landau in a review of Beggar's Banquet. "Their music penetrates the raw nerve endings of their listeners and finds its way into the groove marked 'release of frustration.' Their violence has always been a surrogate for the larger violence their audience is so obviously capable of. On Beggar's Banquet the Stones try to come to terms with violence more explicitly than before and in so doing are forced to come to take up the subject of politics. The result is the most significant and meaningful statement we can expect concerning the two themes - violence and politics - that will probably dominate the rock of 1969."<sup>7</sup>

Despite any efforts by the band to the contrary, they were associated with the message of their music by fans and critics and began to be held accountable for the social effect of their noise.

Most of the songs on Beggar's Banquet mine deep blues roots to complement the band's hard rock sound. Apart from "Street Fighting Man," "Sympathy For The Devil," and "Stray Cat Blues," the album's sound is simple, quiet, country blues that sounds like it was made by a different

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<sup>7</sup> Jon Landau, quoted in Dalton, 122.

band than the one that recorded 1967's Aftermath and Their Satanic Majesties Request. The foundation for this sound is the acoustic guitar playing of Keith Richards, who now assumed most of music writing and guitar playing duties because Brian Jones was no longer healthy enough to work full-time in the studio. Yet Jones, who from the start was the most knowledgeable about blues music, contributed powerful and unique slide guitar work on songs like "Jig Saw Puzzle" and "No Expectations." Where he had once been a perfect emulator of the Elmore James and Muddy Waters style of blues playing, Jones' sound on Beggar's Banquet was his own. The slow, watery-sounding slide guitar on "No Expectations" perfectly complements the quiet, plaintive lyric of lost love and dreams, "Take me to the station and put me on the train. I've got no expectations to pass through here again. Once I was a rich man, and now I am so poor. But never in my sweet, short life have I felt like this before." [Listen for the overall sound of "No Expectations" in audio EXAMPLE O.] The band also included a cover song, but where they had once done R&B and soul they went back to country blues and selected Reverend Robert Wilkins' cautionary bible song "Prodigal Son." The sound is true to the country blues form, featuring a simple acoustic guitar riff that starts and is then joined by the drums with a quick, muffled pounding that drives it along. Jagger's voice is rough and has a distinct nasal twang, a sound that he repeats on songs like "Dear Doctor" and "Factory Girl," which musically recall the American South. Jagger also returned to playing harmonica on most songs, adding to the simple, roots-oriented sound.

"Sympathy For The Devil" opened up the first side of Beggar's Banquet. Its sound does not recall American blues roots as much as it recalls Africa itself. The song begins with a drum-beat, a double-time 4/4 on high-hat answered by a pulse from the bass drum. After that rhythm is established, it is joined by congas, then at once maracas and two vocal screams. As Jagger's voice grunts and breathes and the four rhythmic motifs interweave, all listener expectations have been denied and a new noise created. The three chord progression that accompanies the vocal is played by a piano, no guitars have entered the soundscape. [EXAMPLE P1 illustrates how the song is constructed from the opening through the first refrain.] And the voice is out front, easily heard, but

the words are unbelievable. This announces that the text will be a crucial part of the song, another change from the usual Rolling Stones sound. "Please allow me to introduce myself. I'm a man of wealth and taste." In this phrase Jagger has turned the blues around. The devil, eventually revealed as the subject of the song, was a familiar figure in the blues. Yet instead of talking about the devil or his fear of the devil within himself, here Jagger assumes the voice of Satan. Additionally, Satan is neither an overbearing, evil presence or the shadowy figure teaching Robert Johnson at the crossroads. He is announced as a man of wealth and taste, respectable. This is a modern devil, a behind-the-scenes manager and manipulator. This Satan, "...rode a tank, held a general's rank when the Blitzkrieg raged and the bodies stank" and "..was around when Jesus Christ had his moment of doubt and pain. Made damn sure that Pilate washed his hands and sealed his fate." Jagger chose his images deliberately to unsettle the sensibilities of his listeners: Jesus Christ, Hitler, the Kennedys. Like his Lucifer, he is detached and observant. His view is of the universality of evil, one that lurks if not in the hearts of all people then at least around the corner close by. His vision of Lucifer as a respectable manager is much more frightening to a modern audience than any horned and tailed cartoon demon could ever be. This manipulation of evil in people is the "nature of my game" that Lucifer says is "puzzling you."

What makes all these literary and esoteric references work is the sound that accompanies them. Like no other Rolling Stones song before, it creates the noise of chaos: many rhythms pounding away, Western chords and piano sounds mixed with Latin and African percussion and tempo, and the vocal that starts out in front but is increasingly threatened by being swallowed up by the noise around it. There is no resolution to the music that accompanies the list of Lucifer's deeds. Each line spills into the next, with the sound mix becoming increasingly complex and loud. There is gospel-style call and response, a mad chorus of "woo-woos," commenting on the vocal. The first electric noise is heard when the guitar solo breaks the verse patterns, only to add more chaotic noise. The sound is clear and sharp, simple notes played in the single-string blues style that are held or bent for effect. What comes across is violence, the staccato way the notes are attacked

and the electric noise cutting through the natural, polyrhythmic sounds of the percussion. [Listen for this in EXAMPLE P2.]

"Sympathy For The Devil" was an exposé of violence, both historical and contemporary. Jagger wrote in the ambiguous style of the blues tradition, the pairing of opposites: Satan/God, good/evil, sacred/profane, pleasure/pain. "Just as every cop is a criminal and all the sinners saints, as heads is tails just call me Lucifer" reveals a blues feeling coupled with an intellectual distance. What Jagger added to the blues tradition, revealing and celebrating contradictions and dualities in the simple realities of life, were the truths and frustrations his own intellect revealed to him: good and evil as two sides of one coin, the relative uselessness of political commitment, his literate aspirations for a non-literate medium, being white and singing black music, and the distance between himself as a popular performer and his audience. Robert Christgau wrote about The Rolling Stones and the distance they created by mediating between elements of blues culture and the popular culture of their own times,

Jagger is obsessed with distance. He forces the Stones' music to gaze across (and down) the generation gap and the money gap and the feeling gap and the meaning gap. But then, powered by the other Stones - all of them, like most of the Stones' fans, somewhat more simple-minded than Jagger - the music leaps, so that as a totality it challenges the frustrating, ubiquitous, perhaps metaphysical margin between reach and grasp that presents itself so sharply to human beings with the leisure to think about it. This dual commitment to irony and ecstasy makes the Stones exemplary modernists. But it is their realism, bordering at its most suspect on cynicism, that makes all that energy interesting, and ensures that their following will never be as huge as that of the high-spirited Beatles. After all, not everybody wants to be reminded that it is salutary to think and have fun at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

This exploring of contradictions was always a source of confusion and friction between The Rolling Stones and literal-minded fans and critics whose expectation for simple solutions and clear explanations they denied.

The Rolling Stones began 1969 by releasing Let It Bleed and preparing to tour America for the first time since 1966. "Gimme Shelter" opened the first side, and if fans or critics were looking

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<sup>8</sup> Christgau, 193.

for a message of hope or a call to arms, they were disappointed. The song starts lethargically, a slow electric guitar riff joined by percussion and a distant, eerie-sounding chorus. Immediately an audience expectation is denied, for it is a chorus of female voices, yet unheard on a Rolling Stones recording. As their "woooos" surround the slow riff, the bass joins and the song settles slowly into a familiar groove as the drums come in on a loud 4/4 beat. Only after this does the vocal come in, Jagger's voice sounding distant and choked, like someone fighting through a drugged haze not as much to be heard as to breathe "if I don't get some shelter, yeah, I'm gonna fade away." The chorus joins in, "War, children, it's just a shot away, it's just a shot away." [Listen to EXAMPLE Q1 for how the mood of the song is created in the opening lines.] The lyrics are inaudible, a jumble of noise, but the sense comes through, "yeah a fire is sweepin' down the streets today." The rhythm is slow, not the driving sound of "Street Fighting Man." The vocal is not a defiant shout but a choked plea to "gimme shelter." In this way the song could be an answer to the controversy and confusion over the message of "Street Fighting Man." Here the message is clear, that in 1969 the best way to deal with the changes and coming storm might be to back away from conflict and get some shelter. The female sound introduced by the chorus is further complemented by a staggering vocal solo by Merry Clayton, singing, "pain and murder, it's just a shout away," literally shrieking the last "murder!" Unknown voices are off mike, howling their approval for the solo, a touch of informality that gives a sense of intimacy to the song, a group effort to record a song about group struggle. [Go to EXAMPLE Q2 to hear the vocal solo and refrain.] Following this is Jagger pleading that "love, sisters, it's just a kiss away." The chorus and female voices give a gospel flavor to the song, and while having a female sound was not the end to strong sexual posturing by the band, it worked in "Gimme Shelter." Rolling Stones lyrics had always been written around and concerned with an "I," reflecting the individuality of the blues tradition. Yet, in "Gimme Shelter," there is a "we" that is implied through words like "sisters" and "children" and the addition of the female voices. There is an uncharacteristic vulnerability in the combination of lyrics asking for help and sharing the song's



noise with female voices. It is a recognition of mortality, a sign of wisdom and maturity long a part of blues culture.

The wall of noise created in "Gimme Shelter" fades into the quiet guitar opening of Robert Johnson's "Love In Vain." Again, the band was reaching further into the blues for material, this time going for the sound of one of the legendary voices of the Mississippi Delta. [Listen to EXAMPLE R for the quiet, restrained opening to the song.] The song is played quietly, lingering over Johnson's moody lyrics, "When the train left the station it had two lights on behind. Well, the blue light was my baby and the red light was my mind. All my love's in vain." In contrast, "Live With Me" is an up tempo rocker with a nasty sound and outrageous lyrics, proof that a listener could never expect the band to stay in one mood for very long. "Live With Me" showcases some of the band's experiments with new sounds, this time with a horn section and a guest appearance on piano by Leon Russell giving a true Chicago rhythm and blues sound. "Live With Me" has a tongue-in-cheek tone to its lyrics, another change for the band. It explores a rebel grown old and decadent in his wealthy years, an example of Mick Jagger being able to laugh a little at himself, "I got nasty habits. I take tea at three. Yes, and the meat I eat for dinner must be hung up for a week. My best friend, he shoots water rats and feeds them to his geese. Don't you think there's a place for you in between the sheets?" The decadent voice of the song lives in a mansion where "there's a score of hair-brained children there a-locked in the nursery" and "the cook, she is a whore. Yeah, the butler has a place for her behind the pantry door" with all the verses ending with the refrain of "C'mon now honey, don't you want to live with me?" Against the wild, joyous music of the song, the refrain sounds like a taunt, an invitation to join the party if you dare. The rhythm is loud and driving and a loud, honking saxophone solo injects some dirty noise and comments on the outrageous lyrics. [Go to EXAMPLE S to hear this solo.] Again, Let It Bleed shifts mood on the next song with the title track, which after a quiet acoustic guitar introduction settles into a slow, steady rhythm while Jagger sings, "Well, we all need someone we can lean on. And if you want it, well you can lean on me." This invitation to intimacy with the band is extended in the next versus, stating that "We all need

someone we can feed on," then to "dream on," "cream on," and "bleed on," with the understanding that "you can bleed on me." Yet, as fans knew there had to be a catch somewhere, sincerity not being the hallmark of Jagger's lyrics, and in the last chorus he shouts, "take my arms, take my legs, aw babe but don't ya take my head" as the music fades out.

Contradiction and swings from one extreme to the other are at the heart of Let It Bleed and even the cover art reflects this. A year before, the release of Beggar's Banquet had been held up for three months when the Rolling Stones' label, Decca, rejected the album's cover: a toilet with graffiti on the walls featuring song titles, credits, and political and inside jokes. The cover accepted was plain white, an R.S.V.P. card for the beggar's banquet. Let It Bleed's cover art had a less direct but more acceptable approach to its message. The front cover shows a collage of sorts: a neat, well-groomed pop band (looking a lot like The Beatles) on top of a cake consisting of frosting, a tire, a pizza, a clock, a film canister, at the bottom of which is a Rolling Stones record complete with their faces that is being played by an old gramophone needle. On the back it has all fallen apart: the musicians have plunged into a chasm created when a piece of the pie was removed, the tire is patched, the needle is broken, the film is shredded. Two inner sleeve messages read "Hard Knox and Dirty Sox", and "Play This Record Loud." The message in the music reflects the cover in that behind facades of order, whether in The Rolling Stones or elsewhere, lurk chaos and that war is just a shot away and you can't always get what you want.

Side two of Let It Bleed opens with "Midnight Rambler," the most notorious song on the album, where Jagger extends the role-playing twist on the blues that he explored in "Sympathy For The Devil" by taking it to a greater extreme, making references and acts explicit where they had been hinted at before. Simply, it is a seven minute journey alongside a robber and rapist. The music starts as a steady shuffle: electric guitar riff, drums, and bass handling the rhythm with a loud, muffled harmonics commenting on each vocal line. The song is experimental in form: abrupt shifts in tempo, stops and starts that break up any sense of rhythmic unity or tonal resolution, doing to the ear what the unbelievable text is doing to the brain. "Did you hear about the midnight

rambler, the one you've never seen before?" asks the opening line. With each verse about the rambler, the tempo quickens and drives forward, building a tension that begs for release or resolution. The guitar and harmonica call back and forth to each other over the quickening pace, which then stops abruptly, leaving the two instruments to play on a quiet, night-like soundscape. Jagger drawls out, "Well you heard about the Boston ..." as the implied "strangler" is lost in a crash of harmonica and drum. He goes on, breathing erratically, "I'm gonna hit and run and rape her in anger, the knife-sharpened, tippy-toed ..." into another stabbing of sound from harmonica and drum. Each instrument then slowly re-enters the music and builds to another climax. This is followed by a return to the original riff and beat, Jagger shouting louder and louder "did you hear about the midnight gambler and did you see me make my midnight call" until it all ends abruptly with a final vocal thrust of "I'll stick my knife right down your throat babe and it hurts." [Listen to EXAMPLE T for how this mood is created in the final section of the song.] "Midnight Rambler" was an experiment in violence. Like "Sympathy For The Devil" it explored how evil and violence could be rendered through music and revealed The Rolling Stones' blues culture attitude of laying the subject bare with no judgements on it and no solutions for it.

The album ends with "You Can't Always Get What You Want." If critics and fans were looking for a grand statement by the band on the state of things, on the sixties or on the myth of the sixties, this was as close as they would get. The Rolling Stones looked at their times through the lens of blues culture, with honesty but without sentiment or faith. The power, like in the blues, lay in the tenacious search for the good times, the celebration of the struggle: "You can't always get what you want, but if you try some time you might find you get what you need." The text is a series of sketches, a collection of losers and dropouts and social wreckage, "And I went down to the demonstration to get my fair share of abuse," "I saw her today at the reception. In her glass was a bleeding man. She was practiced at the art of deception. Well, I could tell by her blood-stained hands." The strength lay in the music itself, tying together all the experimentation on the album. The song begins with a full choir singing the first verse and refrain. As revolutionary noise, there

could not be much more that could rattle the sense of an audience than to have the prim and proper sounds of an a cappella choir on a Rolling Stones record. There is irony in the sound of the choir, a sign of the official culture, singing the dark, faithless words "you can't always get what you want." Out of the sound comes a quietly strummed guitar that is answered by a plaintive, sad-sounding French horn. Jagger's voice begins softly and with each verse more instruments are added: maracas, drum kit, bass, piano, chorus, and more guitars as the noise reaches the familiar chaotic wall of sounds. [EXAMPLE U1 illustrates how these sounds are constructed in the first section of the song.] After the last vocal the chorus is repeated by Jagger's shouts while the choir keeps raising up, the instruments play louder and louder, until it climaxes and drops into a final groove that sounds like a giant party celebrating the irony of the dark lyrics and the joyous noise, [illustrated in EXAMPLE U2.] If this was a coda, it had the attraction of a New Orleans funeral parade: going toward a strange destination, playing noise that seems contradictory to the occasion, but with an energy that made any one who heard it not want to be left behind.

CHAPTER IV. THE LIMITS OF POWER: THE ROLLING STONES AT  
ALTAMONT 6 DECEMBER 1969

The Rolling Stones, during their fat years, constantly gave and reinforced the impression that they were going through the same life experiences as me and coming to the same conclusions - and at the same time that they were precisely me they were also infinitely-more-than me, all-wise, all-experiencing, all-encompassing. <sup>1</sup>

The Rolling Stones came to the United States in 1969 after a three-year absence for a concert tour touted as not only a musical, but a cultural event. The swirl of myth and legend that fans and media had constructed around the band gave their tour the feeling of a triumphant return and a gathering of the faithful for a religious leader. One reviewer wrote,

Their attraction for audiences so far transcends "mere" entertainment that it is tempting to suggest that they are not entertainers at all. Their importance is symbolic. They don't exist on a literal level. <sup>2</sup>

The finale of The Rolling Stones' tour in 1969 was to be their free concert at the Altamont Speedway in Livermore, California. Billed as a continuation of the Woodstock music festival, it turned into its opposite, with hatred and violence in the place of peace and love. Altamont became a symbol for many things: the end of the sixties, the naiveté of the "Woodstock Generation," and the irresponsibility and cynicism of The Rolling Stones, on whom most of the blame for the concert centered. Much more than that, though, it was about the Stones' relationship with their audience and with blues and popular culture. The concert exposed the conflicts in this relationship: the darkness and violence associated with blues music against popular ideals of love and non-violence; the fatalistic, covert politics of blues against the optimistic, overt politics of the counterculture; and the myths and realities in the dialogue between The Rolling Stones and their audience. Altamont also stimulated rock music writers and critics, who were responsible for the articulation of much of the politics and identity of the rock community, to re-evaluate the social power and place of rock music and the counterculture that aligned itself with it.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Lydon, quoted in Dalton, 122.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Williams, quoted in Dalton, 126.

Perhaps Altamont gave performers and audiences alike what they wanted. Jacques Attali maintains that at its most basic level, noise is violence, an interruption of a transmission that simulates murder. Following that, music is a channelization of noise, what he defines as a simulation of ritual sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> The ritual of music, he states,

...symbolically signifies the channeling of violence and the imaginary, the ritualization of a murder substituted for the general violence.<sup>4</sup>

The concert experience, then, would be the most real of the simulations, the gathering of a crowd to witness the performance of the violent music, substituting the actions of the musicians, like gladiators, for their own suppressed violence. "People come to Stones concerts to work it out,"<sup>5</sup> wrote Robert Greenfield. Two factors added to the feelings that audiences wanted to "work out" at Rolling Stones concerts in 1969: the band's dark, dangerous, rebel image and the violent divisions and clashes in American society at the time. Attali also fits the concert experience into his scapegoat theory. The concert is the re-creation of ritual sacrifice with the performer acting as the symbolic offering. Altamont will be analyzed as a failed ritual, where the expectations for the concert experience were violated. The controlled violence and ritual murder of performance were replaced by actual murder and chaos.

Rock concerts are events of tremendous power and take on even more significance when they are regarded by their audiences as quasi-religious meetings, a gathering of people with shared values and beliefs for a ritual performed by their idols. Robert G. Pielke uses Rudolph Otto's The Idea Of The Holy as a means of understanding rock concert audiences and the idea of the performance as a re-creation of religious ritual. He describes Otto's six components of the religious experience: 1) feelings of insignificance called "creature consciousness," feelings of 2) awe or 3) dread, 4) feelings of being overpowered, 5) the experience of energy or urgency, and 6) the wholly

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<sup>3</sup> Attali, 27.

<sup>4</sup> Attali, 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Greenfield, in Peter Herbst, ed. and The Editors of Rolling Stone, 170.

other, the entrance of non-worldly energy through the performance ritual that produces rapture in the audience.<sup>6</sup> Pielke connects these religious ideas with rock concerts through the transformational effect the music had on its listeners. Rock music had retained the transformational qualities of blues music, which in its power contained both ecstasy and violence, good and evil.

It was apparent that audiences were looking for something in addition to entertainment at a Rolling Stones concert. In 1969 audiences believed that rock groups articulated their concerns not only as individuals but as a group. Politics had been brought into the arena of popular music along with the idea that there was a rock community that had definite characteristics and social and political goals. In 1967 the underground newspaper, the San Francisco Oracle, had printed a credo for rock music that articulated its self-perception as art, as a voice of a community, and as a revolutionary cultural force.<sup>7</sup> As John Street reflected,

By 1968 white youth came to recognize what black people had long known, that it took more than well-meant words and nice thoughts to change the world. Rock musicians started to be taken seriously as "artists," as social commentators, and as representatives of youth opinion. Music came to be thought of as both a vehicle for social change and the embodiment of a self-contained world.<sup>8</sup>

In 1969 The Rolling Stones' image as cultural outlaws and heroes was at a peak. The challenge to adult authority that had been part of their music and image was now a part of American life for young people, especially those in the counterculture. The people who were paying money to see The Rolling Stones in 1969 wanted a message along with the music, a confirmation of their identity or a signpost for their future. Michael Lydon wrote,

I spoke to many fans before, during, and after the Stones' visit, and a remarkable number of them made comments to the effect that they wanted to see the Stones as a kind of farewell meeting, a farewell not necessarily

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<sup>6</sup> Robert G. Pielke, You Say You Want A Revolution: Rock Music In American Culture (Chicago, 1986)

<sup>7</sup> Hamm, Yesterdays, 453-454.

<sup>8</sup> John Street, Rebel Rock: The Politics Of Popular Music (Oxford, New York, 1986) 171.

to the Stones (although it was widely rumored that this is their last tour) but to the end of an era of which they are possibly a living fossil.<sup>9</sup>

Bands and audiences each had their own set of expectations for the concert ritual. The performer played the dual role of the scapegoat and as a point of consciousness, the leader of the ritual. The audience expected a certain experience, some of the feelings of which were described earlier by the paragraph on Otto's The Idea Of The Holy. In addition, there was an expected "official" presence at the concert ritual. This was the security or police. Part of the ritual was the game between security and the audience, an "us versus them" clash where the audience tested certain limits like getting in free, smoking and drinking, or storming the stage. This game contained two contradictory impressions of the security force by the crowd: the police as the bad guys whose authority was to be tested and the police as caretakers whose presence would keep the concert energy and violence within certain bounds that would keep the crowd from hurting themselves.

The Woodstock concert set new expectations for rock concerts that Altamont was expected to fulfill. This was the ideal of the self-policing ritual, where the counterculture could organize and run its concerts without any official presence. The success of Woodstock as a ritual gave rock audiences and performers the new expectation that they could gather and hold their ritual, get the experience they sought, and keep the boundaries of safety and control without any mainstream presence. These expectations are important to understanding Altamont and how it failed as a ritual.

The free concert at Altamont had been announced during the band's sold-out tour and billed as a "thank-you." Once the idea fell into the hands of businessmen and promoters the problems started. The concert was originally planned to take place in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, the site of many free concerts and the famous "Be-In" of the summer of 1967. But legal and financial problems forced the show to be moved to the Sears Point Raceway, where again it was rejected. It was only a day before the concert, having been announced as an on-again/off-again affair by the media, that the site, a privately-owned raceway near Livermore, California was approved. The crew

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Lydon in Dalton, 125.



had little time to move the sound equipment and try to improve on the inadequate parking and sanitation facilities. An estimated 300,000 fans from all over the country drove and walked through a massive traffic jam to attend "Woodstock West" on December 6th, 1969. The most notable facility change was the hiring of the notorious Hell's Angels motorcycle gang as a security force, on the recommendation of San Francisco promoter Rock Scully. The Angels seemed to be the perfect physical complement to the revolutionary noise of The Rolling Stones. They were outsiders, tough and independent. Their name even recalled the dark attraction of blues music, which identified Satan as the embodiment of the dangerous power in music and as the patron for those who lived outside society. At Altamont, the Hell's Angels acted their part, embodying the dark side of blues culture. The gang instituted their own form of security, taking over the stage area. Using their fists and pool cues the gang moved the crowd at will, making special effort to protect their prized motorcycles, which they had parked right at the front of the stage. Violent outbursts, interrupting the music, became common. Marty Balin of The Jefferson Airplane was knocked out by a Hell's Angel when he left the stage to break up a scuffle. A sense of fear and violence permeated the atmosphere. Proliferation of drugs and the crowded conditions added their part. When The Rolling Stones finally arrived on the scene, Mick Jagger was promptly punched in the face by a fan as he departed from the band's helicopter.

The Rolling Stones took the stage late at night, after long delays. Scuffles between the Hell's Angels and the crowd continued in front of the stage. Finally, in the middle of "Sympathy For The Devil," the band stopped playing altogether. Mick Jagger exhorted the Hell's Angels and the crowd to calm down but it became clear that he was as powerless as the rest to stop anything. Then, during "Under My Thumb," the crowd parted in front of the stage as a man named Meredith Hunter, while being thrown around by the Hell's Angels, pulled out a gun and waved it around. He was immediately surrounded by the gang and stabbed and beaten repeatedly. The music stopped as a doctor was called and the crowd screamed. Meredith Hunter was carried away on a stretcher

and was pronounced dead on the helicopter ride to the hospital. The Rolling Stones finished the concert and left the site immediately.

All of these events were recorded on film by Albert and David Mayles, documentary filmmakers who were following the band on the tour. Their film, Gimme Shelter, stands as the primary source for the history of the concert, giving viewers a front row seat to the chaos and crystallizing Altamont's image to the public. Gimme Shelter was originally conceived to be a cinema verité-style documentary of The Rolling Stones' American tour. It ended up being mostly about Altamont and the events leading up to it. The film especially focused on how the concert tour exposed the relationships between the band and its audience and between the band and the business end of popular music. As a document about Altamont it can be compared to the film about Altamont's opposite, Woodstock. The blues/popular opposition can be applied here: Woodstock represents the popular, the love and peace and optimism, especially in the myths it inspired; Altamont is the blues, darkness and violence and pessimism, and the realities it uncovered.

Gimme Shelter was filmed at each Rolling Stones concert, but shows them all blending into one image, a large arena filled with a mass of fans. The band's repertoire reflected the full range of their style: old favorites like "Under My Thumb" and "Satisfaction," new work like "Sympathy For The Devil," "Street Fighting Man," and "Live With Me," even interruptions of the amplified madness for the acoustic country blues of "Love In Vain" and "Prodigal Son." As the film follows the band from concerts to Holiday Inns to press conferences and a recording session in Alabama it reveals the extraordinary number of people who surround the five band members at all times: girlfriends, reporters, business managers, promoters, bodyguards and other hangers-on. From frenzied crowds to businessmen to groupies these are the people who want to get a piece of The Rolling Stones; a piece of the experience or the energy or the power, not to mention the money. The band's reward for their success is a group of frowning men trying desperately to act hip making sure The Stones never need to see the money they've earned or do anything as mundane as pay for their own meals. This is a far cry from the simple interplay between performer and audience that

characterizes blues culture. The Altamont concert is foreshadowed throughout the first part of the film by clips of announcements and press conferences where the show was on again and off again. Even more telling are the scenes with various business managers negotiating, pleading, and fighting with promoters and owners, all of whom want their cut from the band's "free" concert. The predatory nature of the rock business in relation to The Rolling Stones is a feeling that carries over into the views of the crowd at the concerts, all are looking to fill a hunger through the band and its music.

As Altamont came to be regarded as the opposite of Woodstock, Gimme Shelter presents reverse images of the Woodstock film. It documents the failure of Altamont to live up to the new expectations and guidelines of the concert ritual that the Woodstock concert created. The camera shows the long hours of waiting for the music to start, for something to happen, and the tension that builds during that time. The negative feelings and violence at Altamont went beyond the actions of the Hell's Angels and included many in the general crowd. The film expresses the other side of drug use, people tripping badly on acid. In the Woodstock film, individuals are shown moving happily in their own worlds, stoned and oblivious yet protected and encouraged by the crowd. At Altamont there are many scenes of the hopelessly stoned looking alone and lost, when they unwittingly stumbled onto someone's blankets they are tossed around and out of the area. The idea of space, personal and communal, seemed to have changed. In Gimme Shelter everyone had their turf and defended it unless they were looking to take over someone's better turf. The idea of community and group tolerance was passed over in the individual hunger to get the best experience one could. There are no stage announcements warning of bad drugs or pointing out medical tents, rather there are scenes of people ignoring stoned or passed-out fans, saying they took the drugs and have to pay the consequences. Officials refused to tell the crowd about "bummers" that might fuel the sense of unrest and violence. The cameras pan in front of the stage and show frightened and disbelieving expressions on the crowd's faces, looking stunned and defenseless as the Hell's Angels push and beat other fans. Others look indignant, as if the crowd and especially the Hell's

Angels are not playing by the rules. Where Woodstock reinforced the popular myths spawned by that concert; Gimme Shelter exposed the realities and shattered myths of Altamont.

The Rolling Stones, who look and sound so powerful and controlling in the other concert footage, look and sound small at the Altamont show. They are no longer mediating between the power of their music and the energy of their fans; the power has taken on its own life. As the crowd opens and closes and fights like an amorphous monster in front of Mick Jagger he looks just as disbelieving and powerless as the fans. His cries of "Cool It" and "Brothers and sisters why are we fighting?" sound hollow and useless. A Hell's Angel stares menacingly at Jagger during "Sympathy For The Devil" with a contempt that seems to say he lives the evil that this skinny Englishman only sings about. The image of a Robert Johnson, kneeling at the crossroads, looking for salvation from the evil power of the music he plays, can be applied to these modern bluesmen facing the music that they can no longer control. Stanley Booth observed the crowd,

The biggest group of playmates in history was having recess, with no teachers to protect them from the bad boys, the bullies, who may have been mistreated children and worthy of understanding but who would nevertheless kill you. The Stones' music was strong but it could not stop the terror. There was a look of disbelief on the people's faces, wondering how the Stones could go on playing and singing in the bowels of madness and violent death.<sup>10</sup>

From the looks on the faces of the band they were playing to survive, to finish what they had started and get out, not knowing what kind of mayhem would ensue if they stopped. Jagger reflected afterward,

I thought the scene here was supposed to be groovy. I don't know what happened. It was terrible, if Jesus had been there he would have been crucified.<sup>11</sup>

Here The Rolling Stones recognized the failure of the concert. Like the audience, they expected their security to provide the "official" presence to keep the crowd and the ritual violence within certain boundaries. But in this case their security instigated the violence and threatened the safety

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley Booth, The True Adventures Of The Rolling Stones (New York, 1984) 518.

<sup>11</sup> Mick Jagger in Booth, 524.

of both the band and the crowd. The Stones and the audience woke up to the reality that they could neither police themselves nor live up to an ideal of mass harmony at such a powerful ritual.

Gimme Shelter emphasizes how distanced and cut off The Rolling Stones were from the day to day world not only from their fans who spend so much money and energy in seeing them perform but from most other aspects of "real" life. It is an implicit indictment of the band's aloofness in letting business managers "get it together" and the naive notion that San Francisco's "kids" would make any situation, no matter how badly planned, "groovy." One technique that the Mayles brothers used involved filming band members, particularly Jagger, watching Altamont footage with the camera probing for a reaction or an admission of guilt.

For The Rolling Stones, Altamont was a violent example of the distance between themselves and their audience. Keith Richards observed,

Somehow in America in '69 - I don't know about it now, and I never got it before - we got the feeling they really wanted to suck you out.<sup>12</sup>

The hunger that audiences had for something outside themselves contributed to the energy and intensity of rock performances. Rolling Stones music inherited this from blues culture, yet it also inherited the violent side of audience energy. Riots and violence had long been a part of Rolling Stones concerts. As Charlie Watts recalled, the routine for Stones concerts in their early days was to run on, play two or three songs that could not be heard above the screams of the crowd, and then run away before the stage was inevitably stormed by fans.<sup>13</sup> While some of this, in the style of the riots created by The Beatles, was harmless, it contained most of the elements that made up the violence at Altamont. Ian Stewart, the band's road manager and keyboard player, reflected,

It wasn't pleasant to see what the music did to people. It was the looks on their faces that you did not like to see, the straining, screaming faces of young English girls, sweating and squealing like pigs, not loose and happy and raving together at the Crawdaddy but reaching out for something separate from themselves, not the

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<sup>12</sup>Keith Richards in Peter Herbst, ed. and The Editors of Rolling Stone, 80.

<sup>13</sup>Charlie Watts in The Rolling Stones 25x5.

music but the musicians, to touch them, to tear them asunder to find out what manner of magical beings have let loose this madness.<sup>14</sup>

Both quotes from members of the band observe rock audiences' desire to consume the music, the energy, even the musicians at a rock concert. What had served over the years as a buffer between the crowd and the band had been the security presence. The chaos and security-instigated violence of Altamont brought the energy of the crowd response back at the band and they were frightened without their expected protection.

In 1969 The Rolling Stones encountered an American audience with a political agenda. Since they had been adopted as symbols of the counterculture they were expected to support the politics of their fans. Yet these feelings of identity were illusory; these were wealthy men from England who lived dramatically different lives than their fans. This was a band whose most obvious commitments were to its music and its own pleasure. The Rolling Stones were now being asked questions about the Viet Nam war and about radical political actions. Only their music could mediate between these differences, bridging the gap and giving powerful feeling of communication and connection. The problems came when fans expected more from The Rolling Stones as individuals and as social figures than they could deliver. Stanley Booth wrote,

We talked about the kids who came to the shows night after night, wondering how they really felt, a mystery to all of us. I thought of Mick onstage waving to the crowd with one hand in a V-sign, the other making a clenched fist. "I don't think they understand what we're trying to do," Keith said, "or what Mick's talking about, like on 'Street Fighting Man.' We're not saying we want to be in the streets, but we're a rock 'n roll band, just the reverse. Those kids at the press conference want us to do their thing, not ours. Politics is what we're trying to get away from in the first place."<sup>15</sup>

The "message" of Rolling Stones music was that of the blues: the search for good times and pleasure amidst the ups and downs of life. Yet the band's noise, their subversive sound and image, reflect and stimulated an audience engaged in the political act of setting themselves apart from the larger society. For a time, their music communicated to and mediated between people who linked

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<sup>14</sup>Stanley Booth, Dance With The Devil: The Rolling Stones And Their Times (New York, 1984) 134.

<sup>15</sup> Booth, 269.

the music with their own radical agenda and the mass of people who listened to The Rolling Stones simply because the music made them feel good. In the tradition of popular music, some fans wanted the Stones' music to fulfill their expectations and confirm their ideas and values. This contradicted one of the aspects of The Rolling Stones that had attracted their audience, their refusal to compromise their music and pander to the wants of a popular audience. The 1969 tour contained a shock of recognition for The Rolling Stones: the variety and intensity of response by American audiences, the band's status as cultural icons and leaders, and the accountability expected from them for the effect of their music. Like the backlash that resulted with their 1967 drug busts in England, The Rolling Stones were again paying the price for the noise they made, the image they cultivated, and the fame and freedoms they enjoyed.

The Altamont concert's status as a symbol for the violence of rock music and the failure of the counterculture can be attributed to the great amount of attention paid it by the media. Writers who had helped build up myths and anticipation for The Rolling Stones' tour now had to explain what went wrong at Altamont. Blame fell most easily on The Rolling Stones. It was their idea, their name that drew the crowds, their choice of the Hell's Angels as security, and their management team that put together the event. The prevailing mood was that the band had let down their fans, promising them something and then delivering something entirely different. David Dalton wrote,

The Stones' "image," the personalities of Mick and Keith especially, was always crucial to their music. We had cloned ourselves from the that imprint so it seemed particularly cynical of them to lead us out into the California scrubland and abandon us.<sup>16</sup>

Within the band the attention and blame fell most on Mick Jagger as the frontman, the one who wrote the lyrics and strutted onstage, flaunting the Stones' dangerous and dark image. He of all could be blamed for inciting the crowd to its violent pitch and at the same time turning away from his responsibilities as a leader for so many fans. Jonathan Eisen wrote,

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<sup>16</sup> Dalton, 126.

I don't think Jagger has had any sense of the kinds of implications his audience has been drawing from his music. HE was a prisoner of his own routine..."<sup>17</sup>

The contradictions and dualities that had characterized The Rolling Stones's sound and attitude and had made them so popular and heroic were turning against them; they were not only the scapegoats of the ritual but also of the finger-pointing that followed its failure. Their status as pampered cultural icons fueled public anger over their irresponsibility in staging the concert.

Pauline Kael wrote in her review of Gimme Shelter,

Mick Jagger's performing style is a form of aggression not just against the straight world but against his young audience, and this appeals to them, because it proves he hasn't sold out or gone soft. But, when all this aggression is released, who can handle it? Everyone - the people who came and the people who planned it - must have expected a big Dionysian freak-out.<sup>18</sup>

George Paul Ciscery echoed angry sentiments against those involved,

Until Saturday, evil was value-free, something to dig for its own sake. A lot of people who thought they were children of chaos dropped out of their sugar-coated camp trips Saturday to see the core of their religion at work.<sup>19</sup>

The hippie segment of the counterculture showed its weak side: dilettantism, lack of focus, emptiness of the gospel of pleasure, and a childish, middle-class distance from the "real" worlds.

The ideals of Woodstock, that the counterculture had a credo and a lifestyle different from and better than that the greed and violent bourgeois society, now had an event that stood as a testament against these ideals and those holding them to be true. Jonathan Eisen reflected,

Altamont was nothing in itself. It was not very special except to make people realize how similar we all are to the society we have no choice but to abhor. For many it destroyed in a few moments the dichotomies our people have been making with increasing relish, and sent them back to thinking how alike, how close, and how reflective everyone is of everyone else, despite the hair, despite the acid and the music.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Eisen, ed., Altamont: Death Of Innocence In The Woodstock Nation, (New York, 1970) 23.

<sup>18</sup> Pauline Kael in Dalton, 124-125.

<sup>19</sup> George Paul Ciscery, "Altamont, California, December 6, 1969," The Age of Rock 2, ed. Jonathan Eisen (New York, 1970) 146.

<sup>20</sup> Eisen, 22.



Altamont seemed to confirm the condescending view of Marxist popular music critics: that rock music was merely another form of capitalist consumption and thus empty of value and socially impotent. Ciscery wrote of the concert,

The locust generation came to consume the crumbs from the hands of an entertainment industry it helped to create.<sup>21</sup>

Rock music's ideals gave the illusion that attending concerts and buying albums involved one in a social or political movement. This illustrates again the distance between The Rolling Stones and their audience. The Rolling Stones could survive on a credo and a commitment to music, pleasure, and the individual because it was their job, they were musicians. A mass of young people calling itself a counterculture and trying to change society had to have something stronger at its core to keep from fragmenting. The easy path turned out to lead nowhere, or as at Altamont, to a violent end.

Most critics came to the conclusion that something, tangible or not, had been lost at Altamont by the rock music community. Ralph J. Gleason pronounced it the end of an era,

At Altamont, only four months after Woodstock, some beast was out in the open. Many of the most committed and intelligent people in the rock culture thought that something dismaying and irrevocable happened at Altamont. It was, perhaps, the end of rock's innocence, a warning that the vast amount of energy contained in the music and its immense worldwide audience had elements of danger that would have to be faced up to. And it seemed significant that it was presided over by the greatest live entertainer in rock history, Mick Jagger.<sup>22</sup>

The concert at Altamont and The Rolling Stones' 1969 tour revealed that the band's music was not, if it ever had been, enough to satisfy the wants of a mass audience that was fragmenting rapidly and mirrored the social conflicts and upheavals in America. The violence and chaos of the concert were a blow to romantic ideals about the "rock community," its ability to exist peacefully and its identity as a group whose lifestyle was different from and better than the larger society. Altamont showed The Rolling Stones the limits of their control over the power of their music and the effect it had on

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<sup>21</sup> George Paul Ciscery in Eisen, 146.

<sup>22</sup> Ralph J. Gleason in Dalton, 125.

their audience. It also showed that rock musicians and their audience weren't able to stage an control one of their rituals independent of the official control of the straight world they hated. Altamont was an awakening from a naivete' and a myth that proved not only foolish but destructive. It was a lesson The Rolling Stones should have learned from the bluesmen they emulated; men who regarded the power of their music and their performances with a mixture of awe and dread.

### EPILOGUE: THE END OF THE ROLLING STONES' NOISE

Altamont signalled the end of The Rolling Stones' noisemaking. They and their fans had found the limits of the social and political power that both had been testing. Rock music did not ultimately have the power to draw together the diverse elements of its audience that had called itself a counterculture. In America, the power of the establishment asserted itself in the conservative social and political backlash associated with the Nixon administration. The active elements of the counterculture, from political radicals to hippies in communes, retreated into less powerful, but still existent subcultural status. Those on the fringes slipped back into the mainstream.

Rock music was absorbed into the larger society. As had occurred after rock's initial impact in the late 1950s, the music's popularity crippled its subversive noise and gave it the economic security and social status of a mainstream commodity. The Rolling Stones, too, retreated from any contact with the front lines of social revolt. As the 1970s began, the band started to enjoy the financial fruits of their popularity. In time The Rolling Stones would start their own record label and sell more records than ever before. They became so wealthy that they were forced to leave England and live in France as tax exiles. The Stones became the models for the rock stars of the 70s, detached artists and icons living worlds apart from their audience. The bond between musicians and fans that had characterized rock's noise of the 60s was gone. By the time they returned to America for a concert tour in 1972, the Stones had become the rock music establishment. Their popularity gave them tremendous economic power and a good measure of what rock and rollers had always fought against, social respectability. The Rolling Stones' public image was so set by now that the band could not change it even if they had wanted to. In this way they had lost their edge as artists and noise-makers, giving their audience what was expected in the tradition of popular music.

The Rolling Stones' next two albums reflected their retreat from social confrontation. 1970s Sticky Fingers and 1971s Exile On Main Street were deep explorations of blues music. While the music remained strong, the topical concerns the band reflected were strictly the search for pleasure

in drugs and sex. But the treatment of these traditional blues subjects was not celebratory or subversive. There was an overtone of tired acceptance and simple escape in the pursuit of happiness. The Stones were no longer producers of the subversive blues but were instead blues stylists, playing the hard, blues-based rock that was now their standard sound. Their life and work as popular artists had given them no folk roots to return to. And the elements of their rebel image; the sexuality, the drugs, the anti-establishment posture, had become part of the standard vocabulary of rock music that they had created.

Mick Jagger has never written another political song since Altamont. Political comment was absent from most rock music by the early 1970s. If one section of rock reflected this the most it was the quiet, introspective sounds of what was called the singer/songwriter movement. These were musicians, like Simon and Garfunkel, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, and Neil Young who moved into the artistic turf staked out by Bob Dylan and offered self-centered, sometimes poetic lyrics with quieter, usually acoustic music. The politics of these sounds went back to the subculture status that had characterized the blues, where self exploration and improvement were chosen over aspirations of wide social change. The noises that audiences responded to were peaceful, "sounds of silence."

What had happened to blues culture after rock music had appropriated and synthesized elements of it in the popular culture? Blues artists enjoyed a renaissance of popularity. They finally received songwriting royalties when major artists, like The Rolling Stones, recorded their material and gave them credit. Blues singers sold more records than ever, often playing and recording with the white, wealthier rock musicians who had begun their careers imitating these men. Blues music's exposure through rock music changed it, especially its status as an exclusive experience of the African American community. B.B. King played Las Vegas. Muddy Waters played bigger venues but found that there he was attracting a mostly white, college educated audience, people worlds away from his own early life on the Mississippi Delta.

Blues music had also fragmented into black popular music. The Rolling Stones' exploration of the similarities and differences between black and white music opened up new territory in

mainstream rock for black artists. The dialogue in America between musical styles gained a measure of harmony that was harder to achieve in the larger dialogue between the two cultures. Starting from the popularity of soul music in the early 1960s, by the 1970s black artists were not only playing popular music but also gaining a foothold in the business end of pop. This was exemplified best by producer Berry Gordy and the success of his Motown label that defined and dominated black popular music. Gordy's success was followed by others like Philadelphia-based writer/producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. This music was softer and slicker than blues, created in the pop tradition to satisfy the tastes of a wider audience. Black popular music carried its own noise, mostly by the fact of its existence and the exposure of black songwriting and topical concerns to a wider audience. And in the continuum of rock history, this music also would get absorbed into the mainstream and black pop's noise would be quiet until the late 1980s when rap and hip-hop music loudly announced themselves.

Through their career in the 1960s The Rolling Stones offered mediation between elements of blues, popular, and the counterculture. From 1963 to 1970 they were a large part of changes in musical and cultural standards. They were also a major force in the ascendance of rock music to its position as the dominant form of popular music and a major shaper of popular culture. And whether it was revolutionary or mainstream or any place in between, rock was a synthetic, pluralistic, dynamic form of cultural expression whose popularity identified a greater degree of pluralism and tolerance in America.

In the changes of this period, the artists and audience of rock learned a lesson from the music they drew upon most deeply, the lesson of the blues that could not be learned by or listening to music but only through living one's life. To learn that,

It may be that the most interesting American struggle is the struggle to set oneself free from the limits one is born to, and then to learn something of the value of those limits.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Marcus, Mystery Train, 19-20.

The Rolling Stones and their music were born from and fed off the myths and realities of that blues struggle. Their exploration and celebration of that struggle became a paradigm for their times. It is understood by anyone who ever put on a Stones record or heard them on the radio, danced away their troubles and didn't feel alone.

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