THE ROLLING STONES

The College of Marin

Week Four

Essential Listening:

1. *Beggars Banquet* (ABKCO, 1968). The Rolling Stones' return to their blues roots, though with mostly original songs and their own idiosyncratic lyrics and attitudes, including two of their most adventurous recordings in "Street Fighting Man" and "Sympathy for the Devil." There is also more of a Mississippi Delta/early rural blues influence here than there was on their early records. Brian Jones reportedly did not contribute much to the sessions, but did make his presence felt with the exquisite slide guitar on “No Expectations,” as well as sitar and tamboura on “Street Fighting Man.”

2. *Let It Bleed* (ABKCO, 1969). With Brian Jones on the way out and his replacement Mick Taylor on the way in as this album was finished, the band’s lineup was a little unsettled during the recording of their final LP of the 1960s. Like *Beggars Banquet*, it was more blues-oriented than their 1965-67 recordings, though it was a little less country-blues-tilted than *Beggars Banquet*, and a little more geared toward hard blues-rock. The standout tracks were “You Can’t Always Get What You Want,” which with its quasi-classical-choral feel demonstrated the group had a greater range than they’re usually given credit for, “Let It Bleed,” “Midnight Rambler,” and “Gimme Shelter.” Keith Richards take his first lead vocal on “You Got the Silver.” Note that the hit single from this period, “Honky Tonk Women,” is not here; instead there’s an inferior country version of the same song, retitled “Country Honk.”

Recommended additional recordings by the Rolling Stones, early 1968-late 1969:

1. From too many greatest-hits collections to count, like *Hot Rocks*: “Jumping Jack Flash,” the early 1968 hit that got them back on a blues-rock track after going into various forms of pop-influenced rock in the mid-1960s, and psychedelia in 1967; and “Honky Tonk Women,” their major 1969 classic hit single. *More Hot Rocks* also has the less memorable B-side of “Jumping Jack Flash,” “Child of the Moon.”

2. From *Metamorphosis* (ABKCO, 1975): Some marginal late-’60s outtakes, including a cover of Stevie Wonder’s “I Don’t Know Why”; “Family,” whose references to incest might have been too hot to handle even for the Stones back then; “Downtown Suzie,” the only Bill Wyman composition besides “In Another Land” to make it onto an official Rolling Stones record; and “Memo from Turner,” a much better Mick Jagger solo version of which was used in the movie *Performance*.

3. From *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* (ABKCO, 1995): The soundtrack to the TV special of the same name, filmed in December 1968 but not officially released until the mid-1990s, has five live Stones tracks, including four songs from *Beggars*
Banquet and one (“You Can’t Always Get What You Want”) that they wouldn’t issue until 1969. There’s also a song apiece by guests the Who, John Lennon (playing in a one-time band with Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, and Jimi Hendrix Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell), Marianne Faithfull, Jethro Tull, Taj Mahal, and Yoko Ono. The music is good, but it’s better experienced on *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* DVD (see below).

4. From *Performance* soundtrack (Warner Brothers, 1991): There are actually no Rolling Stones songs on this album (or used in the movie itself). But the sole strongly Stones-related track, Mick Jagger’s “Memo from Turner,” sounds a lot like late ’60s Stones in its vicious blues-rock and ironically sleazy lyrics. Some of the Stones flavor is due to the presence of Ry Cooder, who played on some of the group’s late-’60s sessions, on slide guitar.

**Recommended additional reading (in addition to sections on the 1968-69 Rolling Stones on general suggested reading list):**

*Blues-Rock Explosion*, edited by Summer McStravick and John Roos (Old Goat Publishing, 2001). Not the easiest book to find, but contains 42 decent profiles/overviews of influential US and UK blues-rock acts from the 1960s and early 1970s, from the most famous (the Allman Brothers, Eric Clapton) to the more obscure Chicken Shack, Graham Bond, the Artwoods). The Rolling Stones aren’t among the artists covered, but this helps document a scene that they more than any other act were responsible for creating.

*Brian Jones: Who Killed Christopher Robin? The Murder of a Rolling Stone*, by Terry Rawlings (Helter Skelter, 2005). Although the death of Jones is highlighted in the title, more than half of this is actually a biography of Brian, with a few sections about his controversial death at the end. This does an adequate if unspectacular job of covering the essentials of his life, and received some attention for its assertions that Jones was killed by Frank Thorogood, based on a deathbed confession to one witness. A better, and likely the best, biography of Jones is due soon from experienced rock writer Paul Trynka, though as of this writing it doesn’t have a publication date.

*Mick Brown on Performance*, by Mick Brown (Bloomsbury, 1999). As part of Bloomsbury’s series of movie guides, writer Mick Brown devoted an entire book to the cult film *Performance*. This has more information about the movie, its production, and its participants than anywhere else, drawing on some first-hand interviews (though not with Mick Jagger). The structure isn’t as accessible as it could be, though, with entries and essays detailing matters related to the film in an alphabetical “A-Z” format.

*Rolling Stones and the Making of Let It Bleed*, by Sean Egan (Unanimous, 2005). In-depth account of the making of one of the Stones’ most celebrated albums, drawing on interviews with some of the participants.
Recommended DVDs/videos:

**Sympathy for the Devil** (ABKCO, 1968). Originally titled *One Plus One*, this film by top French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard mixed footage of the Rolling Stones rehearsing and recording “Sympathy for the Devil” in the studio with incomprehensible fictional scenes of students and black power activists discussing or enacting radical politics (sometimes with voiceover narration seemingly taken from a porn novel!). The sections with the Stones are fascinating, as we follow the song’s genesis from an entirely different folky arrangement to the final recorded version (and, in the process, sadly view a barely functional Brian Jones). In contrast, the non-Stones scenes are stultifyingly boring and pointless.

**Performance** (1970). Sources are not definitive as to whether this movie, filmed in 1968 but not released until 1970, is available on authorized DVD. Mick Jagger plays a reclusive ex-rock star in his first and, still, most famous acting role. Though chaotic and often incomprehensible, it reflects the confusion of the late 1960s as times slipped from psychedelic euphoria to something more malevolent and decadent. There's no Rolling Stones music on the soundtrack, but Jagger memorably delivers one appropriate blues-rock song, "Memo From Turner." Also stars Keith Richards's girlfriend of the time (and ex-Brian Jones girlfriend), Anita Pallenberg.

**The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus** (ABKCO, 1995). Though filmed in December 1968, this concert movie, hosted by and featuring the Rolling Stones as well as other artists (including the Who, Jethro Tull, and Marianne Faithfull), wasn't released until 1995. The Rolling Stones reportedly shelved this because they weren’t happy with their performance, though it’s okay, and also the final time they were filmed with Brian Jones (who seems to be fading badly). Notable in Beatles history as the first instance in which John Lennon performed outside of the group, singing "Yer Blues" with a band including Eric Clapton, Keith Richards (on bass), and drummer Mitch Mitchell from the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

**The Films of Kenneth Anger, Vol. 2** (Fantoma, 2007). Among the several shorts of this underground filmmaker collected on this DVD (with optional commentary by Anger) is the ten-minute 1969 movie *Invocation of My Demon Brother*, with a harsh, jarring Moog synthesizer soundtrack by Mick Jagger that ranks as the most experimental piece of music he ever did. Marianne Faithfull and Jagger’s younger brother, Chris, make appearances in another short on the DVD, *Lucifer Rising*, completed in 1972 but not distributed until 1980. Anger’s dalliances with Satanic rituals and depiction of disturbing imagery guarantee that these works (and most of his others) are not for the squeamish or easily offended. Much of *Invocation of My Demon Brother*, it turns out, was actually filmed in late 1967 at the Straight Theater in Haight-Ashbury.
Notable People:


Mick Taylor: Replaced Brian Jones as guitarist in the Rolling Stones in June 1969. Had played for about the prior two years in Britain’s top blues-rock group, John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers (in which he replaced Peter Green, who went on to found Fleetwood Mac). Played in the Rolling Stones until resigning in December 1974.

Jean-Luc Godard: Legendary French New Wave director filmed the Rolling Stones rehearsing and recording “Sympathy for the Devil” in the studio in 1968. Footage from those scenes was used in his movie One Plus One, retitled Sympathy for the Devil in some markets/editions to capitalize on the Stones’ appearance.

Ry Cooder: Session guitarist on some late-‘60s Rolling Stones recordings, most notably (on mandolin) on Let It Bleed’s “Love in Vain” and Sticky Fingers’s “Sister Morphine.” Noted for helping Keith Richards to learn playing guitar in the open G tuning style.

Merry Clayton: American soul singer who put out obscure records on her own and as part of girl groups in the 1960s. Most famous, however, for singing the female part on “Gimme Shelter.”

Dave Mason: Multi-instrumentalist from Traffic who plays on some of Beggars Banquet, in part to make up for Brian Jones’s diminishing contributions.

Al Kooper: Plays keyboards and French horn on “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.” Also a noted session musician for Bob Dylan and many others, as well as being a key member of New York ‘60s rock groups the Blues Project and (for their first album) Blood, Sweat & Tears.

Rocky Dijon: Plays conga on “Sympathy for the Devil” and, on Sticky Fingers, “Can’t You Hear Me Knocking.”

Doris Troy: One of the backup singers on “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.”

Madeline Bell: One of the backup singers on “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.”

London Bach Choir: Featured on “You Can’t Always Get What You Want,” particularly in the extended vocals-only opening section and the long fadeout.

Watts Gospel Choir: Featured on “Salt of the Earth” from Beggars Banquet.

Byron Berline: Plays fiddle on “Country Honk” on *Let It Bleed*.

Nanette Workman: Backing singer on “Country Honk” and “You Can’t Always Get What You Want.”

Leon Russell: Plays piano and did the horn arrangement for “Live with Me” on *Let It Bleed*.

Steve Winwood: British rock superstar as part of Traffic, Blind Faith, and the Spencer Davis Group. Plays on Mick Jagger’s solo single “Memo From Turner.”

Jim Capaldi: Traffic drummer, plays on Mick Jagger’s solo single “Memo From Turner.”


John Mayall: Leader of John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers, one of the top British blues bands, noted for generating guitarists who went on to fame with subsequent groups – Eric Clapton, Peter Green (leader of the original Fleetwood Mac), and Mick Taylor. Recommended Taylor to the Stones when they were looking for a guitarist to replace Brian Jones.

The Dirty Mac: Joking name given a temporary, one-performance supergroup consisting of John Lennon on guitar and lead vocals, Eric Clapton lead guitar, Keith Richards on bass, and Mitch Mitchell on drums. They performed the Beatles’ “Yer Blues” on *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* in December 1968.

Michael Lindsay-Hogg: American-born, UK-based director of *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*. Had previously directed segments of the mid-1960s UK TV show *Ready Steady Go* featuring the Stones, as well as some of their promo clips. Also directed some promo clips for the Beatles and, more famously, their *Let It Be* movie.

Donald Cammell: Co-director of *Performance*, starring Mick Jagger and co-starring Anita Pallenberg.

Nicholas Roeg: Co-director of *Performance*. Went on to become one of the more renowned directors of adventurous, experimental feature films, including *Walkabout, Don’t Look Now, The Man Who Fell to Earth*, and *Bad Timing.*
**James Fox:** Alongside Mick Jagger, had the leading role in *Performance*, playing a gangster on the run.

**Michele Breton:** Another *Performance* co-star, as part of the film’s menage a trois with Jagger and Anita Pallenberg.

**Kenneth Anger:** Controversial American underground filmmaker whose ten-minute short *Invocation of My Demon Brother* has a soundtrack by Mick Jagger, playing avant-garde Moog synthesizer (and not singing). Anger has been cited as an influence on Jagger’s adaptation of a slightly Satanic persona.

**Barry Feinstein:** Photographer of the infamous graffiti-ridden toilet stall intended for the cover of *Beggars Banquet*, which was replaced with another design at the insistence of Decca Records.

**Albert DeSalvo:** The “Boston Strangler,” a rapist and alleged murderer of several women, who partially inspired the lyrics to “Midnight Rambler.”

**The Velvet Underground:** Mick Jagger has said that this great New York group’s song “Heroin,” written by Lou Reed and from the first Velvet Underground album, inspired a similar use of droning textures in *Beggars Banquet*’s “Stray Cat Blues.”

**Anna Wohlin:** Swedish girlfriend of Brian Jones who was living with him at the time he drowned on July 3, 1969. Gave her account of her brief time with Jones in the slim memoir *The Murder of Brian Jones: The Secret Story of My Love Affair with the Murdered Rolling Stone*.

**Frank Thorogood:** Builder living on site of Brian Jones’s home who has sometimes been suspected of being involved in Jones’s drowning.

**Notable Places:**

**Empire Pool, Wembley, London:** The Rolling Stones’ appearance at the New Musical Express Pollwinners Concert here on May 12, 1968 marked their only public concert between April 17, 1967 (in Athens, Greece) and November 7, 1969 (in Fort Collins, Colorado).

**Grosvenor Square:** Site of the American Embassy in London, and thus a major demonstration against the Vietnam War on March 17, 1968 that included some violence between police and demonstrators. Mick Jagger was at the demonstration, which partially inspired the song “Street Fighting Man.”

**48 Cheyne Walk:** Where Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull lived, in the Chelsea district of London near the Thames River, in the late 1960s.
**Cotchford Farm:** East Sussex home, once the property of *Winnie the Pooh* author A.A. Milne, where Brian Jones drowned in his swimming pool on July 3, 1969. Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and Charlie Watts drove here to meet with Jones and fire him from the band on June 8, 1969.

**Sunset Sound Studios:** Hollywood studio where the Rolling Stones did some recording and overdubbing for *Let It Bleed* in 1969, though the bulk of the recording was done in Olympic Studios in London.

**Elektra Studios:** Another Hollywood studio where the Rolling Stones did some recording and overdubbing for *Let It Bleed* in 1969.

**25 Powis Square:** The dilapidated house featured in *Performance*, in the Notting Hill neighborhood of London. Actually only exterior shots of this house are in the film; the interior ones were filmed elsewhere (see below).

**15 Lowndes Square:** Home in the Knightsbridge area of London where the interior scenes of *Performance* were filmed.

**Intertel Studios:** Studios in the Stonebridge area of London where *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus* was filmed on December 10 and 11 of 1968.

**Cheltenham Cemetery:** Site of Brian Jones’s grave in Cheltenham, England.

**Essential Albums by Other Artists That Were Influential On, Admired By, or Influenced By the Rolling Stones in early 1968-mid-1969:**

**The Beatles, The Beatles (aka The White Album) (EMI, the Beatles' tenth album, 1968).** Continuing to increase the technological sophistication of the production, yet for the most part moving away from psychedelic rock to earthier hard rock and folk-rock, this late-1968 double LP was easily the Beatles' most diverse album. While a "back to basics" approach informs much of the material, in fact some of this doesn't fall into that category, or indeed any easy label. Hard rock, 1950s-styled rock, blues-rock, folk-rock, folk, avant-garde, country, Tin Pan Alley, vaudeville, saloon music, lushly orchestrated pop – all can be heard on *The White Album*, with some styles mixing in the same song. In hindsight, it also shows the group becoming less united, with some tracks featuring just three, two, or even only one of the Beatles. Nonetheless, the standard of the songwriting in particular remained high, as did the imagination of arrangements and level of instrumental work. The record also marked a growth in the quality and quantity of George Harrison compositions. Besides standing alongside *Beggars Banquet* as a major entry into the “back to basics” trend in late-’60s rock, there is a coincidental Stones connection. The all-white cover design couldn’t help but generate speculation that the nearly-all-white *Beggars Banquet* cover was following the lead of *The White Album*, though the *Beggars Banquet* album was actually finished first (though released a bit later because of a dispute over the original cover, which showed a toilet). The similarity of covers is probably coincidental.
The Beatles, *Let It Be* (EMI, 1970). Mostly recorded in January 1969 before the sessions for *Abbey Road* started (but, confusingly, released in spring 1970 six months after *Abbey Road* was issued), this has often been characterized as a failed attempt by a splintering group to get back to basic rock’n’roll. But though it isn't one of their better albums, it has plenty of fine music that lived up to its ambitions, including "Get Back" and "Let It Be."

The Jeff Beck Group, *Truth* (Epic, 1968). In truth this British blues-rock turning into hard rock was not the best work of either Beck or singer Rod Stewart, due in part to a shortage of good original material. It was extremely popular, however, especially in the US, and has been seen by some as providing part of the model for Led Zeppelin. Its tie to Rolling Stones history is that Ronnie Wood was the bassist. The only other Beck album with Stewart as singer, 1969's *Beck-Ola*, is less impressive.

Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band, *Safe As Milk* (Buddah [sic], 1967). Since Ry Cooder’s first album did not come out until 1970, one assumes the Rolling Stones would be most likely to have heard his work as a guitarist on this record. This is by the most accessible record by Beefheart, a legendarily challenging avant-rock cult artist. Here Beefheart (real name Don Van Vliet) is more an off-kilter psychedelic blues-rocker than a defiantly inaccessible noisemaker, making weird but engaging tunes like "Abba Zabba," "Zig Zag Wanderer," and "Yellow Brick Road" with help from young guitar maestro Cooder.

The Byrds, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* (Columbia, 1968). The Byrds made a sharp turn from folk-rock-psychedelia to early country-rock (still including some Bob Dylan material), largely due to the input of newcomer Gram Parsons, who was only with the band for this one album. Parsons met the Stones while the Byrds were touring in England shortly after this release; he left the Byrds right after that tour. An expanded two-CD edition includes a lot of material from the sessions that didn't make the original LP.

Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Bayou Country* (Fantasy, 1969). In the few weeks between the time Brian Jones was fired and he died, he wanted to work on forming a new band. Apparently he had something like Creedence Clearwater Revival, and their hit “Proud Mary” in particular, in mind. This, their second album, has “Proud Mary” and other material (like the hit “Born on the Bayou”) that marked them as the hottest American roots-oriented band at the time Jones died, mixing updated rockabilly with some blues, country, folk, Southern R&B, and contemporary Americana lyrics.

Bob Dylan, *John Wesley Harding* (Columbia, 1967). Issued in the final days of 1967, this was the album that came to be regarded as the keystone "back-to-basics" statement turning rock music away from psychedelia and back to earthy country-rock. *Beggars Banquet*, along with the Beatles’ *The White Album* and the Byrds’ *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*, are often cited as major “back to basics” 1968 albums that followed in its wake. "All Along the Watchtower" is by the most famous song on what's mostly a very plaintive and stark record. His 1969 album *Nashville Skyline* would be yet more country-oriented and not nearly as good, but contains the classic hit single "Lay Lady Lay."
The End, *Introspection* (Universal, 1968). From 1965 onward, Bill Wyman wrote and produced some material for other artists, perhaps at least in part due to his lack of creative opportunities within the Rolling Stone. This obscure British psychedelic album is the most fully developed of those efforts, and more harmony pop-oriented than one might expect. A decent if not great record of slightly spaced out pop-psychedelia, it has something of a *Their Satanic Majesties Request* ambience in production, though much lighter and less menacing in feel. There is one little-known near-classic, “Loving Sacred Loving,” one of two songs here Wyman co-wrote, and unsurprisingly the one with the greatest resemblance to Wyman’s *Satanic Majesties* song “In Another Land” (in part because of the presence of Nicky Hopkins on harpsichord). Charlie Watts plays tabla on the other song Wyman co-wrote, “Shades of Orange.”

**Fleetwood Mac, The Best of Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac** (Sony, 2003). Fleetwood Mac were the best of the British blues-rock bands that emerged in the late-'60s British blues room. Though the selection isn't perfect, this is the best compilation of Fleetwood Mac's early days as a blues-rock-rooted band. They were best on the achingly soulful songs written and sung by original leader (and brilliant lead guitarist) Peter Green, particularly "Oh Well" and original version of "Black Magic Woman." Green, like Mick Taylor, had previously been in John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers; Taylor, in fact, replaced Green in the Bluesbreakers. Note that this music bears no resemblance to the pop-rock through which a much different lineup of Fleetwood Mac achieved superstardom in the mid-1970s.

**The Flying Burrito Brothers, Hot Burritos! The Flying Burrito Brothers Anthology 1969-1973** (A&M, 2000). You couldn’t do much better for a survey of the early work by the Gram Parsons-Chris Hillman lineup of this leading country-rock band, who via Parsons in particular influenced the Stones. This double CD has everything from their first two albums (including their version of “Wild Horses,” released a year before the Stones put it out), as well as some odds and ends from other compilations and a non-LP single. Note, however, that there’s also a good amount of less impressive post-Parsons material on disc two. If you want more consistency, you don’t lose much by opting for the single-CD *Sin City: The Very Best of the Flying Burrito Brothers*, whose 25 songs were all cut during the Parsons era, and include every track from the group’s first pair of LPs.

**Nicky Hopkins, Ry Cooder, Mick Jagger, Bill Wyman, & Charlie Watts, Jamming with Edward** (Rolling Stones, 1972). On April 23, 1969, most of the Rolling Stones (Keith Richards was conspicuously absent) jammed with Nicky Hopkins and Ry Cooder. Why exactly these extracts were thought to be worthy of release is not easily explained. These are half-baked, dull blues improvisations, and set an unfortunate precedent for the Stones sometimes issuing material (on records and otherwise) with their authorization that did not provide good value for money. From Mick Jagger’s liner notes: “As it cost about $2.98 to make the record, we thought that a price of $3.98 was appropriate for the finished product. I think that that is about what it is worth. No doubt some stores may
even give it away...I hope you spend longer listening to this record than we did making it.”

**Robert Johnson, The Complete Recordings** (Legacy, 1990). Two-CD compilation of everything recorded (all in the mid-1930s) by the most famous pre-World War II rural blues musician. Includes the original version of “Love in Vain,” done by the Rolling Stones on *Let It Bleed* and *Get Yer Ya Ya’s Out*.

**Alexis Korner, Both Sides** (Castle, 1970). After Brian Jones was fired from the Rolling Stones, he had plans to form a band with help from Alexis Korner. Who knows what they might have sounded like, but this record at least gives an idea of what Korner was up to around the time. There’s an almost manic stylistic diversity that ran from near-trad jazz and blues to near-blues-rock; a top-notch cast of supporting musicians; and seriously inconsistent quality, in large part because of Korner's hoarse lead vocals. This also has some nods to soul and heavy rock music along with the blues and jazz that were at his musical core, making substantial use of a horn section within a loosely blues-oriented format. Still, it must be acknowledged that the material was both erratic and wildly eclectic in nature. Korner came off best on the gentle folk-blues of his self-penned "To Whom It May Concern" and an interpretation of William Bell’s "You Don't Miss Your Water (Til Your Well Runs Dry)" that, while again no match for other versions, is heartfelt and doesn't over-reach itself. The 2006 CD reissue of the album added historical liner notes by Korner biographer Harry Shapiro and nine bonus tracks from 1969 studio and BBC sessions.

**The Master Musicians of Joujouka, Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Joujouka** (Rolling Stones Records, 1971). In July 1968, Brian Jones produced this recording of trance-like Moroccan music in the Moroccan town of Joujouka. Unlike anything the Stones did with or without Jones, it is indicative of his wide-ranging interests, and perhaps of an influence he might have exerted on the band had he lived longer and/or had stronger input into their direction.

**John Mayall, Crusade** (Decca, 1967). The material John Mayall cut while Mick Taylor was in his band the Bluesbreakers – including three studio albums, some singles, and some live recordings – was frankly spotty, and would be well-served by a compilation focusing on the best of the Taylor years. This was Taylor’s first album with Mayall, with the opening track, “Oh, Pretty Woman” (not the Roy Orbison hit), giving the best indication of his stinging blues-rock guitar style.

**John Mayall, Blues from Laurel Canyon** (Decca, 1968). The final album Taylor did with Mayall before joining the Rolling Stones, more noted for an indication of his style than for the rather average material and vocals. Some good non-album tracks Taylor did with Mayall show up on numerous compilations, like the 1967 single “Jenny” and the searing instrumental “Knockers Step Forward.”

**The Rising Sons, Rising Sons Featuring Taj Mahal and Ry Cooder** (Columbia/Legacy, 1992). The Rolling Stones wouldn’t have heard this in the 1960s, since the Rising Sons
only put out one official single while they were in existence in the mid-1960s. But as Ry Cooder and Taj Mahal were both in the band, it gives an indication of what might have made the Stones view them as kindred blues-rock spirits, Cooder playing on some late-‘60s sessions and Taj Mahal getting invited to appear on *The Rolling Stones Rock and Roll Circus*. The Rising Sons’ legacy is thankfully retrieved by this 22-track CD, which includes their single and much or all of what would have been on their unreleased album. It’s good if slightly schizophrenic folk-blues-pop-rock, somewhat ahead of its time in its anticipation of aspects of groups such as Moby Grape and Buffalo Springfield.

**Traffic, Mr. Fantasy (Island, 1967).** Like some other early British psychedelic bands, Traffic combined blues, soul, jazz, and rock, giving more weight to keyboards (by Stevie Winwood) than the usual rock group. They were lighter on the classical than Procol Harum or the Nice, however, and more inclined toward soul, particularly in Winwood's vocals. Their debut has plenty of strong songs with the kind of spacey lyrics in vogue in 1967 psychedelic rock, such as "Dear Mr. Fantasy," "Heaven Is in Your Mind," and "Coloured Rain." In the Rolling Stones story, this is important for including Jimmy Miller’s most notable production work before he started to produce the Rolling Stones. There are several expanded CD editions of this debut, but make sure to get one that has their two psychedelic pre-album singles, "Paper Sun" and "Hole in My Shoe."

**The Velvet Underground, The Velvet Underground and Nico (Universal, 1967).** Though sometimes characterized as anti-hippie/flower power, this debut album was certainly extremely experimental in both sound (blending rock with the avant-garde and fierce electronic distortions) and lyrics (with frank songs about sex, drugs, and street life). For all that, chief singer-songwriter Lou Reed could write some very pretty and melodic love songs, like "Femme Fatale" and "I'll Be Your Mirror." This is probably the most influential and popular (if that's not an oxymoron) cult album of all time, gaining untold number of additional fans with each passing decade. Mick Jagger definitely heard it, since he cited the Velvet Underground’s “Heroin” as an influence on the droning guitars of “Stray Cat Blues.”

**Robert Wilkins, Original Rolling Stone (Yazoo, 1990).** Though much less well known than Robert Johnson, Robert Wilkins was another Mississippi bluesman who recorded during the Depression. The Rolling Stones did his song “That’s No Way to Get Along” as “Prodigal Son” on *Beggars Banquet*; it can also be seen and heard on the expanded edition of *Get Yer Ya Ya’s Out*. This has most of the recordings he made between the late 1920s and mid-1930s, including the two-part “Rolling Stone,” though the band named themselves after the Muddy Waters song called “Rollin’ Stone,” not this one.

**Various Artists, Blues Masters Vol. 8: Mississippi Delta Blues (Rhino, 1993).** No single blues compilation, or likely even any large blues collection, could fully encompass the blues Keith Richards reportedly immersed himself in as the Rolling Stones prepared to go back into rootsier music on *Beggars Banquet*. This is a good collection of the earthiest strain of blues, however, and Richards is likely to have heard most or all of these songs. The accent is on pre-World War II acoustic rural blues by major figures in the style like Robert Johnson, Tommy Johnson, Charley Patton, and Son House, though there
are more modern electric blues sides that evolved out of the area by the likes of Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Elmore James, and B.B. King.

_Various Artists, Performance: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack_ (Warner Brothers, 1970). This has just one track on which a Rolling Stone performs (“Memo from Turner,” which Mick Jagger sings in the _Performance_ film). Yet the soundtrack is an effective document not only of the music heard to establish the creepy ambience in the movie, but also of some of the music the Stones were listening to and being influenced by at the time the film was made in the late 1960s. This includes bluesy and spooky cuts, vocal and instrumental, by Randy Newman, Buffy Sainte-Marie, and proto-rappers the Last Poets, and several important contributors to late-’60s Stones records: Jack Nitzsche, Merry Clayton, and Ry Cooder.