THE ROLLING STONES

The College of Marin

Week Six

Essential Listening:

1. *Exile on Main Street* (Universal, 1972). “Sprawling” is a word often used to describe this double LP (now a single CD), in part because it was so long, in part because it was put together from so many piecemeal sessions, many in Keith Richards’s villa in the south of France. The blues-rock base they’d been working on since 1968’s *Beggars Banquet* is still evident, but so is brassy soul and hard rock. There was a lack of the three or four instantly classic songs that had been on their prior three albums, although “Tumbling Dice” and “Happy” were hits. There was also a rather lethargic and murky cast to some of the production, perhaps due to increasing drug use (certainly on Richards’s part, anyway) and the humid, haphazard conditions in which much of the material was recorded in his house. Though it wasn’t their most popular album, over the years its critical esteem has risen, some championing it as their finest work, or at least certainly most complex. For many, this marks the end of the Stones’ body of classic work, which had lasted roughly a decade since their first performance as the Rolling Stones in mid-1962. A 2010 deluxe edition added a bonus CD of outtakes and alternate takes (one of them a brief instrumental from 1967), its integrity comprised by new overdubs, including numerous vocals by Mick Jagger.

2. *Goats Head Soup* (Universal, 1973). The first Rolling Stones album (other than perhaps *Their Satanic Majesties Request*) not to attract generally favorable-to-ecstatic attention upon release, *Goats Head Soup* is often in retrospect viewed as the beginning of the band’s long artistic decline. Certainly the formula of blues, rock, soul, and sleaze that had sustained them for about five years since the late 1960s was becoming less inspired, and with an ever-higher percentage of sleaze. Still, this had one of their biggest, if least typical, hits with the orchestrated ballad “Angie.” One of the better other tracks, the horn rocker “Doo Doo Doo Doo (Heartbreaker),” was a Top Twenty single, and “Star Star” created a splash for having some of the most profane lyrics in pre-1975 popular music (when naming the subject of the song, they do not simply call her a “star star”). This marked the last Rolling Stones album produced by Jimmy Miller.

3. *It’s Only Rock‘n’Roll* (Universal, 1974). The very title of this record seemed to indicate the Rolling Stones were taking their art less seriously, and it certainly seemed to find them treading water without breaking stylistic ground or, more crucially, writing much first-rate material. The last album recorded with Mick Taylor (and the first to be produced by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, under the pseudonym the Glimmer Twins), it did include a fairly big hit single with the title song, though lyrically that track was histrionically over-the-top. “Luxury” did see them try to incorporate reggae, and “Time Waits for No One” remains an overlooked highlight of their more sensitive melodic side.
Recommended additional recordings by the Rolling Stones, 1972-1974:

1. From *Rarities 1971-2003* (Virgin, 2005): The lone non-LP song to appear by the band during this period was “Through the Lonely Nights,” a passable soul-country hybrid of a ballad that was on the B-side of “It’s Only Rock ‘n’ Roll.”

2. *Brussels Affair (Live 1973)* (Google Music, 2011): Just a decade into their career, the Rolling Stones reached the point where their live concerts were more interesting than their contemporary records. Recorded on October 17, 1973, it’s entirely devoted to original songs spanning the previous five years, and serves as documentary evidence of how the band sounded in the latter part of Mick Taylor’s time in the lineup. A salacious, drawn-out 12-minute version of “Midnight Rambler” is the highlight. Available only as a digital download through Google Music, the authorized release of this 79-minute album and the 1975 live material below has made concert bootlegs of the Stones from this time unnecessary for all but the most fanatical fans.

Recommended additional reading (in addition to sections on the 1972-1974 Rolling Stones on general suggested reading list):

*Exile on Main Street*, by Bill Janovitz (Continuum, 2006). Part of Continuum’s “33 1/3” series of mini-books on classic albums, this is a decent if slim appreciation of *Exile on Main Street*. There’s not much original research involved, but it has a detailed song-by-song rundown of every track, along with some general observations of the album’s impact and significance.

*Exile on Main Street*, by John Perry (Schirmer, 1999). Easy to confuse with the identically titled volume above, this is an entirely different, if equally short, book about *Exile on Main Street*. It’s distinct from the Bill Janovitz book in that it’s part of the “Classic Rock Albums” series. There’s inevitably a lot of overlap between the two books’ coverage, and Janovitz’s might be a better read. But Perry does offer meticulous analysis of every song (even pinpointing specific seconds in tracks where something of note occurs), and has the advantage of some extensive first-hand interview material with Anita Pallenberg about the sessions for the record at the home she and Keith Richards shared in the south of France. There is also a section that reprints some reviews of the album shortly after its release.

*Exile on Main Street: A Season in Hell with the Rolling Stones*, by Robert Greenfield (Da Capo, 2006). The making of the Rolling Stones’ *Exile on Main Street* offers as much sleazily glamorous drugs, rock’n'roll, and sex as any tale in popular culture. Sadly, it's not told all that well in this unsatisfying overview, told with smarmy pomposness and little revelatory research. It’s not so much “recommended” as “available.” There's some guilty pleasure to be had by the pieced-together accounts of the junkie squalor of Nellcote, the mansion near Nice that served both as Keith Richards's home and recording studio when much of the record was cut in 1971. There are also a few good stories from recording engineer Andy Johns, Mick Taylor's ex-wife Rose, and Marshall Chess, though nothing
first-hand from the Stones themselves or Anita Pallenberg. Somewhat lost in the murk is the album itself, the author apparently feeling it beneath him to engage in much in-depth discussion of specific tracks or how the songs were written. Would you expect much of that from someone who identifies “Jumping Jack Flash” as a Sticky Fingers cut? The same author also wrote S.T.P.: A Journey Through America with the Rolling Stones (Da Capo, 1974), about his travels with the band on their 1972 US tour.

Rock Dreams, by Guy Peellaert and Nik Cohn (Taschen, 1973). There are only a few panels (and very interesting ones) on the Rolling Stones in this renowned, acclaimed book of illustrations of rock icons by Belgian artist Guy Peellaert, with text by noted British rock critic Nik Cohn. Its significance in the Stones’ career is that it brought Peellaert to the band’s attention, the artist subsequently designing the cover for It’s Only Rock’n’Roll.

S.T.P.: A Journey Through America with The Rolling Stones, by Robert Greenfield (Da Capo Press, 1974). Greenfield accompanied the Rolling Stones on their 1972 US tour, and this is his account. The instructor of this course finds much of it hard to read in its self-consciously hip and chatty reconstruction of events. Other readers and reviewers like it more, and it conveys something of the hedonistic chaos surrounding the Stones at this time, from their visit to Hugh Hefner’s mansion and altercation with photographers in Rhode Island. The eyewitness report of Robert Frank filming sex scenes on their private plane does not reflect well on the band’s sense of morality at all.

Recommended DVDs/videos:

Ladies and Gentlemen The Rolling Stones (Eagle Vision, 2010). Straightforward concert film drawn from four Texas shows during their 1972 US tour, with a diverse assortment of material from their 1968-1972 albums, the exception being a cover of Chuck Berry’s “Bye Bye Johnny” (which they’d done a studio version of back on an EP in early 1964).

Cocksucker Blues (unreleased, 1972). The most notorious rock documentary of all time, possibly (down to its don’t-ask-for-it-by-name title, taken from an equally profane unissued 1970 Rolling Stones outtake), and one of the most notorious unreleased films of any kind. Robert Frank (who art-directed the Exile on Main Street cover) filmed the band on their 1972 US tour and concentrated on the seamier side of life on the road, including scenes of drug use, hotel property wreckage, and sex with willing partners and, in an especially controversial airplane scene, an apparently not wholly willing partner. Some of the people in the entourage have said that some of these scenes were staged for the cameras, but it’s still not a wholly flattering view of the band and the scene around them. All that said, it’s actually not that interesting to watch, capturing perhaps too accurately the ennui surrounding a traveling band, making being on a rock tour (even for a band as big as the Stones) seem like one of the most boring things in the world. The black-and-white camerawork is fuzzy and haphazard, and there’s disappointingly little footage of the band onstage, though there’s the official Ladies and Gentlemen The Rolling Stones if you just want that. This has been screened in public occasionally, but it can only be
shown if the director is present. Nonetheless, it’s out there if you know where to look, though an authorized DVD release seems highly unlikely.

**Stones in Exile** (Eagle Rock, 2010). Hour-long documentary on the making of *Exile on Main Street*, including interviews with several of the Stones and key associates like Anita Pallenberg (who lived in the mansion Keith Richards rented in the south of France, where much of the album was recorded), engineer Andy Johns, and photographer Dominique Tarles. Though it’s entertaining and well done, there’s the feeling much more could have been said, and some things are being left unsaid. A notable early-’70s filmed performance that has not been issued on DVD was shot at two shows at London’s Marquee Club on March 26, 1971 for a television broadcast.

**Notable People:**

**The Glimmer Twins:** The pseudonym used by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards when they assumed production duties for the Rolling Stones in the mid-1970s.

**Bill Plummer:** Upright bass player on several songs on *Exile on Main Street*.

**Al Perkins:** Pedal steel guitarist on “Torn and Frayed” on *Exile on Main Street*.

**Clydie King and Venetta Fields:** Backing singers on “Tumbling Dice” and several other songs on *Exile on Main Street*. Other backup singers on the record included Joe Green, Jerry Kirkland, Dr. John, Tami Lynn, Shirley Goodman, and Kathi McDonald.

**Stevie Wonder:** Soul superstar who was support act for the Rolling Stones on their 1972 US tour, though given his popularity, he was really co-headliner. There were plans to issue a live album from the tour with material by both the Stones and Wonder, but these didn’t come to pass, in part because of problems in clearing the use of songs the Stones had recorded in the 1960s that were on records controlled by Allen Klein.

**Robert Frank:** Designed the cover for *Exile on Main Street*. Also director of the unreleased film documentary of the 1972 US Stones tour.

**Rollin Binzer:** Director of the *released* documentary filmed at Texas shows of the 1972 US tour, *Ladies and Gentlemen The Rolling Stones*.

**Dominique Tarle:** French photographer who took many photos of the Rolling Stones while they were tax exiles in France, especially when they were recording or hanging out at Keith Richards’s home there. A 2,000-copy limited edition book of these, *The Making of Exile on Main Street*, was built around these, with 90,000 words of text. The instructor of this course hasn’t read it, since it’s sold out, with copies reportedly auctioned online for $2000. But at a dollar a copy rate, how can you go wrong?

**Tucky Buzzard:** Undistinguished British rock band whose two albums, and singles, Bill Wyman produced in the early-to-mid-1970s.
Chuck Findley: Trumpet player on *Goats Head Soup*.

Nicky Harrison: Did the string arrangements on “Angie” and “Winter” for *Goats Head Soup*.

Rebop Kwaku Baah: Ghanaian percussionist, contributed percussion to “Dancing with Mr. D” and “Can You Hear the Music” on *Goats Head Soup*. Also a member of Traffic in the early 1970s.

Pascal (aka Nicholas Pascal Raicevic): Also contributed percussion to “Dancing with Mr. D” and “Can You Hear the Music.”

David Bailey: Renowned British fashion/celebrity photographer who did the cover photography and sleeve design for *Goats Head Soup*. The main character of the 1966 film *Blow-Up* is often considered to have been based on him.

Steve McQueen: Famous American film actor. Because of a line in *Goats Head Soup*’s “Star Star” about “giving head to Steve McQueen,” permission had to be secured from him that he wouldn’t sue.

Kenney Jones: Drummer for the Faces, Ron Wood’s pre-Rolling Stones band. Plays drums on the basic track of “It’s Only Rock ‘n’ Roll.”

Guy Peellaert: Belgian artist who designed the cover for *It’s Only Rock’n’Roll*. Peellaert came to the rock world’s attention through his illustrations of many rock icons (including the Rolling Stones) for the book *Rock Dreams*, with text by noted British rock critic Nik Cohn.

David Bowie: Friend of Mick Jagger during the early-to-mid-1970s. Sings background vocals on “It’s Only Rock ‘n’ Roll.” When Jagger told him that Guy Peellaert was going to design the cover for the *It’s Only Rock’n’Roll* album, Bowie got Peellaert to design his 1974 album *Diamond Dogs*, which appeared first. This prompted Jagger to say something like this about Bowie (the exact wording has been reported in different ways): “Never wear a pair of new shoes in front of him.”

Jack Bruce: Most known as bassist/singer-songwriter in Cream, and has also done numerous solo albums and played in numerous other groups, including the Graham Bond Organization, Manfred Mann, and John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers. When Mick Taylor left the Rolling Stones, he formed a new band with Jack Bruce. Also including jazz keyboardist Carla Bley and future Knack drummer Bruce Gary, the Jack Bruce Band played live in Europe in the mid-1970s, but never released anything while they were active.

Carly Simon: Mick Jagger sings backup vocals on Simon’s #1 hit “You’re So Vain,” released in late 1972, and has been rumored to have had an affair with her.
Angela Bowie: David Bowie’s first wife, and often rumored as the subject of “Angie.” Jagger and Richards have both denied this, and Richards has denied another theory that it’s about his daughter that was born shortly before the release of the song.

Notable Places:

Nellcote: Villa/mansion in the south of France where Keith Richards lived while the Rolling Stones were tax exiles in that country. Much of the principal recording for *Exile on Main Street* was done here by a mobile studio.

Sunset Sound Studios: Hollywood studio where much overdubbing and additional recording was done for *Exile on Main Street* in early 1972.

Dynamic Sound Studio: Much of *Goats Head Soup* was recorded at this Kingston, Jamaica studio. This was chosen as a location in part because there weren’t countries available in Europe and North America in which Keith Richards was not subject to legal problems.

Musicland Studios: Much of the recording for *It’s Only Rock’n’Roll* and *Black and Blue* was done at this studio in Munich, Germany.

The Wick: Ronnie Wood’s home studio in Richmond, on the outskirts of London, where much of the song “It’s Only Rock’n’Roll” was recorded.

3 Cheyne Walk: London residence of Keith Richards, where he, Anita Pallenberg, and some friends were arrested for cannabis possession in June 1973. Richards was also charged for possessing a gun and ammunition. He escaped prison, though he was fined about a couple hundred pounds.

Essential Albums by Other Artists That Were Influential On, Admired By, or Influenced By the Rolling Stones in mid-1972-1976:

David Bowie, *The Best of David Bowie 1969-1974* (Virgin, 1997). It's hard to reduce such an album-oriented artist, and one who changed a lot from album to album, to a twenty-song best-of, even if it only covers five years of his career. However, this is a good intro to the period during which Bowie rose to stardom, with expected classics like "Space Oddity," "Starman," "Rebel Rebel," and some of his strongest non-hit tracks. He had a lot of influences, but certainly some of his songs bore strong traces of the Rolling Stones, like “Rebel Rebel,” “Suffragette City,” “The Jean Genie,” and “Watch That Man.” He also did a version of “Let’s Spend the Night Together” (which is here), though his most obvious Stones rip-off, the R&B raver “Liza Jane,” was recorded way back in 1964 as his first single, when he was fronting Davie Jones and the King Bees.

like a reasonable guess that his early-to-mid-1970s work in particular, however, influenced some of the more funk-oriented songs on *Black and Blue*, like “Hot Stuff.” Here’s a two-CD collection of the best of it, including the hit title track.

**The New York Dolls, Rock’n’Roll** (Mercury, 1974). Though not big record-sellers, the New York Dolls are now regarded by many as ancestor of punk music, and were at the time of their two early-to-mid-’70s albums viewed by some as a sort of trashier, sloppier glam version of the Rolling Stones. This has all the original material from those two LPs.

**Liz Phair, Exile in Guyville** (Capitol, 1993). One of the most acclaimed alternative rock albums of the 1990s, with searing and occasionally profane songs about male-female relationships. It makes this list because Phair explicitly claimed that it was a response to and based upon *Exile on Main Street*, although similarities are not obvious.

**The Temptations, Anthology** (Motown, 1995). Two-CD compilation of Motown's top male vocal group, from their early sweet pop-soul hits (often written or co-written by Smokey Robinson) through their psychedelic funk of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Rolling Stones must have been listening to them since 1964, but they merit a mention in this section because the band covered “Ain’t Too Proud to Beg” for a Top Twenty single on *It’s Only Rock’n’Roll*.

**Stevie Wonder, Music of My Mind** (Motown, 1972). When Stevie Wonder toured with the Rolling Stones in 1972, he had just achieved the freedom to write and produce his albums with artistic freedom. Although this is not among his most famous or popular LPs, it’s the one he released a few months before the tour, and so the one that most reflects where he was in his stage of artistic evolution when he shared bills with the Stones.

**Various Artists, The Harder They Come** (Hip-O, 2003). The soundtrack to the classic early-1970s film starring Jimmy Cliff as a fugitive reggae singer in Jamaica was itself a classic that helped fuel reggae's popularity abroad, with cuts by Cliff, the Maytals, Desmond Dekker, and others. The two-CD 2003 expanded edition makes it that much more essential, with additional reggae hits and classics by Cliff, the Maytals, Johnny Nash, Desmond Dekker (his big late-'60s single "Israelites"), Dave & Ansel Collins, and more. Though the Rolling Stones were only occasionally influenced by reggae (in part by recording much of *Goats Head Soup* in Jamaica), they did cover one of the songs on the expanded edition, Eric Donaldson’s “Cherry Oh Baby,” on *Black and Blue*. 