

# The **Exile** Speaks

In 1971, as the Stones made a masterpiece in the South of France, Keith opened up like few rock stars could  
**BY ROBERT GREENFIELD**

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## **Rocks Off**

In 1971 at Villa Nellcôte in France, where the Stones cut much of *Exile on Main Street*

# Keith plays in a rock & roll band. Anita is a movie-star queen. They

currently reside in a large white marble house that everyone describes as “decadent looking.” The British Admiral who built it had trees brought from all over the world in ships of the line, pine and cypress and palm. There is an exotic colored bird in a cage in the front garden, and a rabbit called Boots that lives in the back. A dog named Oakie sleeps where he wants.

Meals are the only recurring reality, and 23 at a table is not an unusual number. The ceilings are 30 feet from the floor, and some nights, pink lightning hangs over the bay and the nearby town of Villefranche-sur-Mer, which waits for the fleet to come back so its hotels can turn again into whorehouses.

There is a private beach down a flight of stairs and a water bed on the porch. Good reference points for the whole mise-en-scène are F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender Is the Night* and the Shirelles’ greatest hits. There is a piano in the living room and guitars in the TV room. Between George Jones, Merle Haggard, Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry, Keith Richards manages to sneak in a lick now and then like a great acoustic version of “The Jerk” by the Larks one morning at 4 a.m.

A recording studio will soon be completed in the basement, and the Stones will go to work on some tracks for the new album, Mick Jagger having returned from his honeymoon. They will tour the States soon.

Most of it is in the tapes, in the background. Two cogent statements, both made by Keith, may be kept in mind while reading the questions and answers (which were asked and answered over a 10-day period at odd hours).

“It’s a pretty good house; we’re doing our best to fill it up with kids and rock & roll.

“You know that thing that Blind Willie said? ‘I don’t like the suits and ties/They don’t seem to harmonize.’”

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*What were you doing right at the beginning of the Stones?*

I was hanging out at art school. Yeah. Suburban art school. I mean in England, if you’re lucky, you get into art school. It’s somewhere they put you if they can’t put you anywhere else. If you can’t saw wood straight or file metal. It’s where they put me to learn graphic design because I happened to be good at drawing apples or something. Fifteen... I was there for three years, and meanwhile, I learned how to play guitar. Lotta guitar players in art school. A lot of terrible artists too. It’s funny.

*Your parents weren’t musical?*

Nah. My grandfather was. He used to have a dance band in the Thirties. Played the sax. Was in a country band in the late Fifties, too, playin’ the U.S. bases in England. Gus Dupree... King of the Country Fiddle. He was a groove, y’know... a good musician... He was never professional for more than a few years in the Thirties.

*What did your father do?*

He had a variety of professions. He was a baker for a while. I know he got shot up in the first World War. Gassed or something.

*Were you raised middle class?*

Working class. English working class... struggling, thinking they were middle class. Moved into a tough neighborhood when I was about 10. I used to be with Mick before that... We used to live close together. Then I moved to what they’d call in the States a housing project. Just been built. Thousands and thousands of houses, everyone wondering what the fuck was going on. Everyone was displaced. They were still building it, and really, there were gangs everywhere. Coming to Teddy Boys. Just before rock & roll hit England. But they were all waiting for it. They were practicing.

*Were you one of the boys?*

Rock & roll got me into being one of the boys. Before that, I just got me ass kicked all over the place. Learned how to ride a punch. It’s strange, ‘cause I knew Mick when I was really young... five, six, seven. We used to hang out together. Then I moved and didn’t see him for a long time. I once met him selling ice creams outside the public library. I bought one. He was tryin’ to make extra money.

*Rock & roll got to England about ’53, ’54, you were 11...*

Yeah. Presley hit first. Actually, the music from *Blackboard Jungle*, “Rock Around the Clock,” hit first. Not the movie, just the music. People saying, “Ah, did ya hear that music, man.” Because in England, we had never heard anything. It’s still the same scene: BBC controls it. Then, everybody stood up for that music. I didn’t think of playing it.

I just wanted to go and listen to it. It took ‘em a year or so before anyone in England could make that music. The first big things that hit were skiffle – simple three-chord stuff. It wasn’t really rock & roll. It was a lot more folksy, a lot more strummy. Tea-chest

## Highway Child

With Anita Pallenberg and their son, Marlon, in London, 1969





basses. A very crude sort of rock & roll. Lonnie Donegan's the only cat to come out of skiffle. But we were really listening to what was coming from over the Atlantic. The ones that were hitting hard were Little Richard and Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis. Chuck Berry was never really that big in England. They dug him but... all his big, big hits made it... but maybe because he never came over. Maybe because the movies he made like *Go, Johnny, Go!* never got over because of distribution problems. Fats Domino was big. Freddie Bell and the Bellboys too; all kinds of weird people that never made it in America.

*Did you start really playing in school then?*

Yeah. It's funny going back that far. Things come through but... I'll tell you who's really good at pushing memories: Bill [Wyman]. He's got this little mind that remembers everything. I'm sure it's like he rolls a tape. How things were at the start is something. It's when everybody's got short hair. And everybody thought it was long. That's the thing. I mean, we were really being put down like shit then for having long hair. Really. Now, people go into offices with longer hair.

*So you spent three years and it was coming to degree time....*

That's when they got me. It was 1958, they chucked me out. It's amazing - Lennon, all those people, were already playing. I hadn't really thought about playing. I was still just jivin' to it. And one day, I met Jagger again, man. Of all places, on the fucking train. I was going to the school, and he was going up to the London School of Economics. It was about 1960. I never have been able to get this one together, it's so strange. I had these two things going and not being able to plug 'em together, playing guitar like all the other cats - folk, a little blues. But you can't get the sounds from the States. Maybe once every six months someone'll come through with an album, an Arhoolie album of Fred McDowell. And you'd say, "There's another cat!" That's another one. Just blowin' my mind, like one album every six months. So I get on this train one morning, and there's Jagger, and under his arm he has four or five albums. I haven't seen him since the time I bought an ice cream off him, and we haven't hung around since we were five, six, 10 years. We recognized each other straight off. "Hi, man," I say. "Where ya going?" he says. And under his arm, he's got Chuck Berry and Little Walter, Muddy Waters. "You're into Chuck Berry, man, really?" That's a coincidence. He said, "Yeah, I got a few more albums. Been writin' away to this, uh, Chess Records in Chicago and got a mailing list thing and... got it together, you know?"

So I invited him up to my place for a cup of tea. He started playing me these records, and I really turned on to it. We were both still living in Dartford, on the edge of London, and I was still in art school. He found out I could play a little, and he could sing a bit. He knew Dick Taylor from another school they'd gone to and the thing tied up, so we try and do something. We'd all go to Dick Taylor's house, in his back room; some other cats would come along and play, and we'd try to lay some of this Little Walter stuff and Chuck Berry stuff.

Alexis Korner really got this scene together. He'd been playin' in jazz clubs for ages, and he knew all the connections for gigs. So we went up there. The first or the second time Mick and I were sittin' there, Alexis Korner gets up and says, "We got a guest to play some guitar. He comes from Cheltenham. All the way up from Cheltenham just to play for ya."

Suddenly, it's Elmore James, this cat, man. And it's Brian [Jones], man, he's sittin' on his little... he's bent over... da-da-da, da-da-da... I said, what? What the fuck? Playing bar-slide guitar.

**Luxury**  
Pallenberg and Richards with Gram Parsons (seated from left) at Nellcôte

We get into Brian after he finishes "Dust My Broom." He's really fantastic and a gas.

We speak to Brian. He'd been doin' the same as we'd been doin'...thinkin' he was the only cat in the world who was doin' it. We started to turn Brian on to some Jimmy Reed things, Chicago blues that he hadn't heard. He was more into T-Bone Walker and jazz-blues stuff. We'd turn him on to Chuck Berry and say, "Look, it's all the same shit, man, and you can do it." But Brian was also much more together. He was in the process of getting a band together and moving up to London with one of his many women and children. God knows how many he had. He sure left his mark, that cat. I know of five kids, at least. All by different chicks, and they all look like Brian.

He was a good guitar player then. He had the touch and was just peaking. He was already out of school, he'd been kicked out of university and had a variety of jobs. He was already into living on his own and trying to find a pad for his old lady. Whereas Mick and I were just kicking around in back rooms, still living at home.

I left art school, and I didn't even bother to get a job. Mick was still serious. He was still serious. He thought he was; everyone told him he ought to be serious about a career in economics.

But Brian, he was already working at it. We said, "We're just amateurs, man, but we dig to play." He invited me up to listen to what he was getting together in some pub in London. It's then it starts getting into back rooms of pubs in Soho and places. That's where I met Stew [Ian Stewart]. He was with Brian. They'd just met. He used to play boogie-woogie piano in jazz clubs, apart from his regular job. He blew my head off, too, when he started to play. I never heard a white piano like that before. Real Albert Ammons stuff. This is all '62.

A lot of these old cats had been playin' blues in those clubs for ages, or thought they were playin' blues. Just because they'd met Big Bill Broonzy at a party or played with him once, they thought they were the king's asshole.

Music was their love. They all wanted to be professional, but in those days a recording contract was a voice from heaven. It was that rare. Not like now when you get a band together and hustle an advance. It was a closed shop.

*Were you and Mick and Brian very strange for them?*

That's right. They couldn't figure us out. Especially when I tried to lay Chuck Berry shit on them. "What are ya hangin' with them rock & rollers for?" they'd ask. Brian kicked a lot of them out, and I really dug it. He turned around and said, "Fuck off, you bastards: You're a load of shit, and I'm going to get it together with these cats." This cat Dick Taylor shifted to bass by then. We were really looking for drums. Stew drifted with us for some reason. I sort of put him with those other cats because he had a job. But he said no too. "I'll stick around and see what happens with you."

*Were you playing electric then?*

Yeah. With homemade amps, old wireless sets. It took a while to get the electric bit together. At the time we thought, "Oh, it just makes it louder," but it ain't quite as simple as that.

Brian was the one who kept us all together then. Mick was still going to school. So we decided to live in London to get it together. Everybody left home, upped and got this pad in Chelsea.

*Different Chelsea than now?*

Edith Grove. World's End. Every room got condemned slowly. It was like we slowly moved till we were all in the end room. Every room was shut up and stunk to hell, man. Terrible. Brian's only possession was a radio-record player. That, and a few beds and a little gas fire. We kept on playin', playin', playin'.

Brian kicked his job. He was in a department store. He got into a very heavy scene for nickin' some bread and just managed to work his way out of it. So he thought, "Fuck it. If I work anymore I'm gonna get in real trouble." Get into jail or something.

He only nicked two pound...but he quit his job and his old lady had gone back to Cheltenham, so he was on the loose again.

*Is everybody still straight?*

It was very hard to find anything. No one could afford to buy anything anyway. A little bit of grass might turn up occasionally but...everybody'd dig it...everybody's turn-on was just playing. It didn't matter if you were pissed. That was it. That was the big shot.

Mick was the only one who was still hovering because he was more heavily committed to the London School of Economics,

and he was being supported by a government grant and his parents and all that. So he had a heavier scene to break away from than me because they were very pleased to kick me out anyway.

Brian and I were the sort of people they were glad to kick out. They'd say, "You're nothing but bums; you're gonna end up on Skid Row," and that sort of thing. Probably will anyway. But Mick was still doing the two things. Brian and me'd be home in this pad all day tryin' to make one foray a day to either pick up some beer bottles from a party and sell 'em back for thruppence deposit or raid the local supermarket. Try and get some potatoes or some eggs or something.

I went out one morning and came back in the evening, and Brian was blowing harp, man. He's got it together. He's standin' at the top of the stairs sayin', "Listen to this." *Whoooooow. Whoooooow.* So then he started to really work on the harp. He dropped the guitar. He still dug to play it and played very well, but the harp became his thing.

*Is there anything going in London in terms of music then?*

Alexis had that club together, and we'd go down once a week to see what they were doing, and they wanted to know



**Out of Their Heads**

On tour, 1965. "They used to tell us, 'There's not a dry seat in the cinema,'" Richards said.

what we were doing. "It's coming," we'd tell 'em. "We'll be gigging soon." We didn't know where the fuck do ya start? Where do ya go to play?

*But you were living together, unlike Cyril Davies or the older blues musicians, because you were young and broke...*

Yeah. Just Mick and myself and Brian. We knew Charlie [Watts]. He was a friend. He was gigging at the time, playing with Alexis. He was Alexis' drummer. We couldn't afford him.

One day we picked up a drummer called Tony Chapman, who was our first regular drummer. Terrible. One of the worst... We did say, "Hey, Tony, d'y'know any bass players?" He said, "I do know one." "Tell him come to next rehearsal." So we all turned up and in walks... Bill Wyman, ladies and gentlemen. Huge speaker he's got, and a spare Vox 830 amp, which is the biggest amp we've ever seen in our lives. And that's spare. He says, "You can put one of your guitars through there." Whew. Put us up quite a few volts goin' through there.

He had the bass together already. He'd been playin' in rock bands for three or four years. He's older than us. He knows how to play. But he doesn't want to play with these shitty rock bands anymore because they're all terrible. They're all doing that Shadows trip, all those instrumental numbers, Duane Eddy, "Rebel Rouser." There was no one who could sing very good.

*You stood in for Alexis at the Marquee in the West End a couple of times. Was Charlie drumming?*

No. Our first gig was down at the Ealing Club, a stand-in gig. That's the band without Charlie as drummer. We played everything. Muddy Waters. A lot of Jimmy Reed.

*Still living in Chelsea?*

Yeah. We had the middle floor. The top floor was sort of two schoolteachers tryin' to keep a straight life. God knows how they managed it. Two guys trainin' to be schoolteachers; they used to throw these bottle parties. All these weirdos, we used to think they were weirdos, they were as straight as... havin' their little parties up there, all dancing around to Duke Ellington. Then when they'd all zonked out, we'd go up there and nick all the bottles. Get a big bag, Brian and I, get all the beer bottles, and the next day, we'd take 'em to the pub to get the money on 'em.

Downstairs was livin' four old whores from Liverpool. Isn't that a coincidence. "Allo dahlin', 'ow are ya? All right?" Real old boots they were. I don't know how they made their bread, working... They used to sort of nurse people and keep us together when we really got out of it.

I guess the craziness comes from the chemistry of the people. The craziness sort of kept us together. When the gigs become a little more plentiful and the kids started picking up on us was when we got picked up by Giorgio Gomelsky. Before he was into producing records. He was on the jazz-club scene. I don't know exactly what he did, promoting a couple of clubs a week. He cottoned on to us and sort of organized us a bit.

We still didn't have Charlie as a drummer. We were really lacking a good drummer. We were really feeling it.

All I wanted to do is keep the band together. How were we going to do it and get gigs and people to listen to us? How to get

a record together? We couldn't even afford to make a dub. Anyway, we didn't have a drummer to make a dub with.

By this time, we had it so together musically. We were really pleased with the way we were sounding. We were missing a drummer. We were missing good equipment. By this time, the stuff we had was completely beaten to shit.

*And the three of you get on? Are you the closest people for each other?*

We were really a team. But there was always something between Brian, Mick and myself that didn't quite make it somewhere. Always something. I've often thought, tried to figure it out. It was in Brian, somewhere; there was something... he still felt alone somewhere... he was either completely into Mick at the expense of me, like nickin' my bread to go and have a drink. Like when I was zonked out, takin' the only pound I had in me pocket. He'd do something like that. Or he'd be completely in with me tryin' to work something against Mick. Brian was a very weird cat. He was a little insecure. He wouldn't be able to make it with two other guys at one time and really get along well. I don't think it was a sexual thing. He was always so open with his chicks... It was something else I've never been able to figure out. You can read Jung. I still can't figure it out. Maybe it was in the stars. He was a Pisces. I don't know. I'm Sag, and Mick's a Leo. Maybe those three can't ever connect completely all together at the same time for very long. There were periods when we had a ball together.

*What are some of the first things you wrote?*

They're on the first album. "Tell Me," which was pulled out as a single in America, which was a dub. Half those records were dubs on that first album, that Mick and I and Charlie and I'd put a bass on, or maybe Bill was there and he'd put a bass on. "Let's put it down while we remember it," and the next thing we know is, "Oh, look, track eight is that dub we did a couple months ago." That's how little control we had; we were driving around the country every fucking night, playing a different gig, sleeping in the van, hotels if we were lucky.

*Did you have an image thing already?*

It's funny. People think [Andrew Loog] Oldham made the image, but he tried to tidy us up. He fought it. There are photographs of us in suits he put us in, those dogtooth checked suits with the black velvet collars. Everybody's got black pants and a tie and a shirt. For a month on the first tour, we said, "All right. We'll do it. You know the game. We'll try it out." But then the Stones thing started taking over. Charlie'd leave his jacket in some dressing room, and I'd pull mine out, and there'd be whiskey stains all over it or chocolate pudding. The thing just took over, and by the end of the tour, we were playing in our own gear again because that's all we had left. Which was the usual reason.

*Did you develop a stage act?*

Not really. Mick did his thing, and I tried to keep the band together. That's always what it's been, basically. If I'm leapin' about, it's only because something's goin' drastically wrong or it's going drastically right. Mick had always dug visual artists himself. He always loved [Bo] Diddley and Chuck Berry and

**“Rock & roll got me into being one of the boys. Before that, I just got me ass kicked all over the place.”**

Little Richard for the thing they laid on people onstage. He really dug James Brown the first time he saw him. All that organization... \$10 fine for the drummer if he missed the offbeat.

*What was Brian like onstage?*

He'd worked out these movements. In those days, little chicks would all have their favorites. Yeah, when you think the Rolling Stones magazine, the Beatles magazine came out once a month. Big sort of fan thing. It was a very old thing that one had the feeling had to change. All those teenyboppers.

*It might have been a great last gasp.*

Yeah, I think so. Chicks now maybe they feel more equal. I think chicks and guys have gotten more into each other, realized there's the same in each. Instead of them having to go through that completely hysterical, completely female trip to let it out that way. Probably now they just screw it out.

*Was it innocent hysteria?*

They used to tell us, "There's not a dry seat in the cinema." It was like that.

*You have to get a little crazy from that.*

You get completely crazy. And the bigger it got, America and Australia and everywhere, it's exactly the same number. Oh, we were so glad when that finished. We stopped. We couldn't go on anymore. And when we decided to get it together again, everybody had changed.

*Was it the same kind of madness in the States before it changed?*

Completely different kind of madness. Before, America was a real fantasyland. It was still Walt Disney and hamburger dates, and when you came back in 1969, it wasn't anymore. Kids were really into what was going on in their country. I remember watching Goldwater-Johnson in '64, and it was a complete little show. But by the time it came to Nixon's turn two years ago, people were concerned in a really different way.

*Was it a big thing to finally see the black lifestyle in America for the first time?*

It was a real joy. It was like I imagined but even better. Always a gas to see Etta James or B.B. King work for the first time. Some of those old blues cats. Wherever I go I still try and see whoever I can [that] I've heard is good or is still alive. I saw Arthur Crudup and Bukka White last time. Incredible. We all went to the Apollo Theatre the first time. Joe Tex and Wilson Pickett and the complete James Brown Revue. Could never get over the fact that they were into that soul bag in '64. Those suits, those movements, the vocal groups. It became obvious then they were going to change their music. They were into that formal, professional thing, which is not half as exciting as when they just let it go. And music ties in with all the rest. Like a real rebellion against that soul thing. Like "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag." You were always told it was going to be heavy going up there, but it never was.

*Brian had some kind of genius for finding people, didn't he?*

He did. He got us together: Charlie, Mick and me.

*He brought Nico to the Velvet Underground.*

He was into Dylan too, very early on. He was the only one of us who hung out with Dylan for a bit. A lot of people know Brian that I don't know, that I didn't know knew him who come up and say, "Yeah, I knew Brian."

He was great. It was only when you had to work with him that he got very hung up. ... Brian got very fragile. As he went along, he got more and more fragile and delicate. His personality and physically. I think all that touring did a lot to break him. We worked our asses off from '63 to '66, right through those three years, nonstop. I believe we had two weeks off. That's nothing - I mean, I tell that to B.B. King, and he'll say, "I been doing it for years." But for cats like Brian... He was tough, but one thing and another he slowly became more fragile. When I



first met Brian, he was like a little Welsh bull. He was broad, and he seemed to be very tough. For a start, people were always laying stuff on him because he was a Stone. And he'd try it. He'd take anything. Any other sort of trip too, head trips. He never had time to work it out 'cause we were on the road all the time, always on the plane the next day. Eventually, it caught up. Right until the last, Brian was trying to get it together. Just before he died, he was rehearsing with more people.

*Do you think his death was an accident?*

Well, I don't want to say. Some very weird things happened that night, that's all I can say. It could have as well been an accident. There were people there that suddenly disappeared. ... The whole thing with Brian is...

Anita Pallenberg: They opened the inquiry again six months after his death.

Keith: But nothing happened. None of us were trying to hush it up. We wanted to know what was going on. We were at a session that night, and we weren't expecting Brian to come

## Dirty Work

At Nellcôte, 1971. "Mick did his thing, and I tried to keep the band together," Richards said.

along. He'd officially left the band. We were doing the first gig with Mick Taylor that night. No, I wouldn't say that was true. Maybe Mick had been with us for a week or so, but it was very close to when Mick had joined. And someone called us up at midnight and said, "Brian's dead." Well, what the fuck's going on? We had these chauffeurs working for us, and we tried to find out... some of them had a weird hold over Brian. There were a lot of chicks there; they were having a party. I don't know, man, I just don't know what happened to Brian that night.

*Do you think he was murdered?*

There was no one there that'd want to murder him. Somebody didn't take care of him. And they should have done because he had somebody there who was supposed to take care

of him. Everyone knew what Brian was like, especially at a party. Maybe he did just go in for a swim and have an asthma attack. I'd never seen Brian have an attack. I know that he was asthmatic. I know that he was hung up with his spray, but I've never seen him have an attack. He was a good swimmer. He was a better swimmer than anybody else around me. He could dive off those rocks straight into the sea.

He was really easing back from the whole drug thing. He wasn't hitting 'em like he had been; he wasn't hitting anything like he had. Maybe the combination of things. It's one of those things I just can't find out. You know, who do you ask?

Such a beautiful cat, man. He was one of those people who are so beautiful in one way and such an asshole in another. "Brian, how could you do that to me, man?" It was like that.

*How did you feel about his death?*

We were completely shocked. I got straight into it and wanted to know who was there and couldn't find out. The only cat I could ask was the one, I think, who got rid of every-

# How I Got That Interview With Keith

For Robert Greenfield, scoring one of rock's greatest interviews meant getting sucked into the nonstop party at Nellcôte

**I**N MAY 1971, I WAS 25 YEARS OLD AND WORKING ON a regular basis as a freelance writer in the London bureau of Rolling Stone. Shortly after "Goodbye, Great Britain," my firsthand account of the Rolling Stones' 10-day farewell tour of their homeland, had appeared in the magazine, I was on my way to cover the Cannes Film Festival when I got a phone call informing me that I had been chosen to conduct the Rolling Stone interview with Keith Richards in the South of France.

As I soon discovered, the nonstop party that was life at Villa Nellcôte, the stately pleasure dome by the sea where Keith was then residing in tax exile, was already in full, riotous progress. Having thrown open the front door of the villa to a fairly spectacular assortment of their international jet-set friends and acquaintances, Keith and Anita Pallenberg were comporting themselves like characters from a rock & roll version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*.

Bright and early the morning after I arrived, I dutifully unpacked my battery-operated tape recorder and walked out on to the back steps of the house to begin interviewing Keith. With his legs crossed beneath him and a newly rolled joint in his hand, he sat without a shirt or shoes, basking in the warm sunshine of a perfect spring day in the South of France.

Apparently completely at peace now that he and Anita and their 19-month-old son, Marlon, had landed safely here on the French Riviera, Keith never dodged a single question I asked him. His focus and level of recollection were so extraordinary that a simple inquiry about what he had been doing at art school evoked an astonishingly detailed nine-paragraph answer.

At some point, Anita decided to join the conversation. In the tiny leopard-skin bikini that was her outfit of choice at Nellcôte, Anita looked good enough to make a dead man come. Unlike me, Keith remained so centered on what he was saying that not even she could distract him.

The session was so intense that when I finally turned off the tape recorder an hour and a half later, I felt as though I had just done a full day's work. When I asked Keith if we could do this again tomorrow, he said we could just pick it all up right from where we had left off whenever we sat down to talk again.

I then spent days waiting for this to happen. Depending on how Keith felt when he came downstairs in the morning, he

might have someone bring around the motorboat so we could all go water-skiing in the bay. Or he might spend a few hours reading the day-old English newspapers that had just been delivered. Lunch out on the patio was always a major production. What with all the fuming hash joints and bottles of ice-cold white wine being passed around the table, the meal would sometimes go on for hours.

Once it was over, Keith might want to go for a drive in his red Jaguar XKE. Stopping at some deserted beach, he might spend half an hour skipping stones off the water. The point being – if Keith was happy, then so was everyone else. Whatever he chose to do became the central activity in which everyone else at Nellcôte also wanted to be involved. Nonetheless, all I could really think about was when I would get to talk to Keith again.

Fueled by tequila, my second interview session with Keith took place right after lunch a few days later. While we were talking, our conversation seemed utterly brilliant to me. When I played back the tape later that afternoon, I realized the gaps between my questions and Keith's answers kept increasing in proportion to our continuing intake of tequila. By the end of the interview, we were communicating in monosyllabic grunts.

Days passed without another session. At Nellcôte, everyone but me still seemed to be having a fine time. Unlike them, I had an interview to do with Keith. But no matter how hard I tried, I could not get him to cooperate with me. And so all I could do was wait.

At some point, Keith and I did a third session together, which was far more scattered than I would have liked. And then, nothing. For reasons known only to him, Keith had lost all interest in the project.

Between the two of us, everything was still cool. Just like always, he was nice to me. But in his mind, the interview was now a thing of the past. Because Keith thought it was something he had already done, I soon became part of the scenery. Like everyone else at Nellcôte, I was now staying here because I had no place else to go. After a few more days had passed without my being able to get Keith to talk to me, I went into panic mode and called Marshall Chess in London. The son of the founder of the legendary Chess Records label, Marshall was then running Rolling Stones Records. I told

him that if Keith did not sit down to talk to me again, the *ROLLING STONE* interview with him was never going to appear in the magazine because it would not exist.

Getting on the case as only he could, Marshall immediately flew to the South of France. After he and Keith had vanished behind closed doors for what I later learned was a prolonged sit-down, Marshall told me that I would have as much time as I needed with Keith the next morning.

On what I still remember as a particularly lovely day in the South of France, Keith and Marshall and I sat down at a wooden table beneath some trees behind the house. Taking one hit after another off a tightly rolled joint, Keith was as good as his word. Once the session was over, I had no more questions to ask.

At long last, I was done. Packing my bag as quickly as I could, I said goodbye to one and all and walked out the front door of Villa Nellcôte for what I thought was the last time. As I began driving, I realized I could not submit the interview until I had given Keith a chance to read it. Which meant that I would have to go back to Nellcôte again.

After spending a week listening to Keith talk as I pounded away on the portable typewriter I had brought with me from London, I finally finished what amounted to nearly a hundred pages of transcript. Sliding the original into a manila envelope along with the carbon copy, I made my way back to Nellcôte.

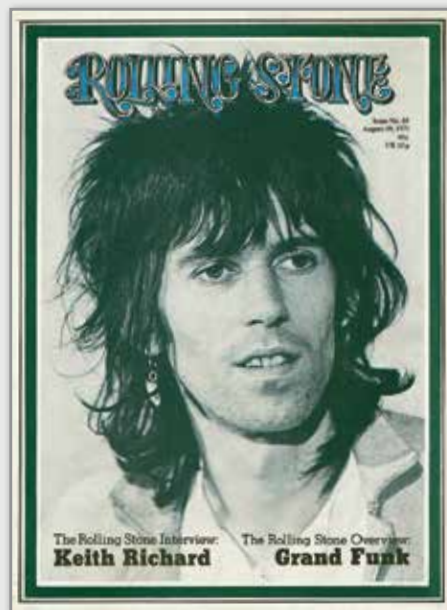
As always, the front door was unlocked. Because the Stones had started jamming until all hours of the night down in the basement where they would soon begin recording *Exile on Main Street*, the house seemed unusually quiet. When I finally found Keith, he was standing in the dining room. Explaining that I needed him to go over the interview to make sure I had quoted him accurately, I handed him the transcript. That Keith could also take out anything he did not want to see in print went without saying.

For the next 30 minutes, I stood there in silence watching Keith smoke one cigarette after another as he read each page before flinging it across the table. For any writer, watching someone read what you have written is always a nightmare. When what you have written is about that person, the experience becomes 10 times worse. Would Keith hate the interview? Would he ask me to tone down some of the very explicit language? Or would he just sadly shake his head and tell me it would be better for all concerned if the interview never saw the light of day?

Coming at long last to the bottom of the final page, Keith tossed it aside. Squinting sideways at me through the cloud of cigarette smoke that always seemed to be hanging around his head, he said, "Yeah, man. I said it. Go on and print it."

And that was it. No corrections. No additions. No subtractions. Keith did not care what anybody might think about what he had said because insofar as he was concerned, it was all true. In that moment, Keith Richards let me know who he really was.

ROBERT GREENFIELD



## Tender Is the Keith

The cover of RS 89. The original interview ran at more than 30,000 words.

body and did the whole disappearing trick, so when the cops arrived, it was just an accident. Maybe it was. Maybe the cat wanted to get everyone out of the way so it wasn't all names involved, et cetera. Maybe he did the right thing. I don't know. I don't even know who was there that night, and trying to find out is impossible.

Maybe he tried to pull one of his deep-diving stunts and was too loaded and hit his chest and that was it. But I've seen Brian swim in terrible conditions, in the sea with breakers up to here. I've been underwater with Brian in Fiji. He was all right then. He was a goddamn good swimmer, and it's very hard to believe he could have died in a swimming pool.

But goddamn it, to find out is impossible. Especially with him not being officially one of the Stones then, none of our people were in direct contact, so it was trying to find out who was around Brian at that moment. It's the same feeling with who killed Kennedy. You can't get to the bottom of it.

Anita: He was surrounded by the wrong kind of people.

Keith: Like Jimi Hendrix. He just couldn't suss the assholes from the good people. He wouldn't kick out somebody that was a shit. He'd let them sit there, and maybe they'd be thinking how to sell off his possessions. He'd give 'em booze and he'd feed 'em, and they'd be thinking, "Oh, that's worth 250 quid, and I can roll that up and take it away." I don't know.

Anita: Brian was a leader. With the Stones, he was the first one that had a car. He was the first into flash clothes. And smoke. And acid. It was back when it seemed anything was possible. Everybody was turning on to acid, young and beautiful, and then a friend of Brian's died, and it affected him very much. It made it seem as if the whole thing was a lie.

*It was a thing when the Beatles and the Stones came over on that first wave – in New York, they were on the radio all the time with Murray the K.*

Ah, Murray. The fifth Beatle and the sixth Rolling Stone. Nobody realizes how America blew our minds and the Beatles too. Can't even describe what America meant to us. We first started listenin' to Otis [Redding] when we got to the States, and picked up our first Stax singles. And Wilson Pickett. That's what's so amazing about Bobby Keys – that cat, man, he was there from the beginnin'.

*If you come from the city, somehow you're aware of black music, but if, say, you're from Nebraska...*

Nebraska. We really felt like a sore pimple in Omaha. On top of that, the first time we arrived there, the only people to meet us off the plane were 12 motorcycle cops who insisted on doing this motorcade thing right through town. And nobody in Omaha had ever heard of us. We thought, "Wow, we've made it. We must be heavy." And we get to the auditorium, and there's 600 people there in a 15,000-seat hall. But we had a good time.

*The 1967 bust at your country estate in England was arranged, wasn't it?*

The *News of the World* got hold of someone who was working for us. I think it was the cat who was driving me at the time. They knew we were going to be down there at a party. Really, just something I'd done a million times before and I've done a million times since. I simply said, "Let's go down to my place for a weekend." We all took acid and were in a completely freaked-out state when they arrived. They weren't ready for that.

There's a big knock at the door – 8 o'clock. Everybody is just sort of gliding down slowly from the whole day of sort of freaking about. Everyone has managed to find their way back to the house. TV is on with the sound off, and the record player is on. Strobe lights are flickering. Marianne Faithfull has just decided that she wanted a bath and has wrapped herself up in a rug.

*Bang, bang, bang* – this big knock at the door, and I go to answer it. “Oh, look, there’s lots of little ladies and gentlemen outside.” He says, “Read this,” and I’m goin’, “Whaa, whaa.” All right.

There was this other pusher there who I really didn’t know. He’d come with some other people and was sittin’ there with a big bag of stash. They even let him go, out of the country. He wasn’t what they were looking for.

When it came down to it, they couldn’t pin anything at all on us. All they could pin on me was allowing people to smoke on my premises. It wasn’t my shit. All they could pin on Mick was these four amphetamine tablets that he’d bought in Italy across the counter. It really backfired on them because they didn’t get enough on us. They had more on the people who were with us who they weren’t interested in. There were lots of people there they didn’t even bring up on charges.

*Was the bust physically heavy?*

No. It might have been. But we were just gliding off from a 12-hour trip. You know how that freaks people out when they walk in on you. The vibes were so funny for them. I told one

## “Altamont – it could only happen to the Stones. Let’s face it, it wouldn’t happen to the Bee Gees or Crosby, Stills and Nash.”

of the women with them they’d brought to search the ladies, “Would you mind stepping off that Moroccan cushion? Because you’re ruining the tapestries.” We were playin’ it like that. They tried to get us to turn the record player off, and we said, “No. We won’t turn it off, but we’ll turn it down.” As they went, as they started going out the door, somebody put on “Rainy Day Women” really loud. Everybody must get stoned. And that was it.

What usually happens is that someone gets busted, the papers have it the next day. For a week they held it back to see how much bread they could get off us. Nothing was said for a week. They wanted to see. Unfortunately, none of us knew what to do, who to bum the bread to and so went via slightly the wrong people, and it didn’t get up all the way.

Mick can tell you how much. It was his bread. Quite a bit of bread.

*The rumor was that there was an orgy going on, too.*

Nobody was in the state for an orgy, man. They should have come some other times, they would have really... They tried to make it seem as bad as they could. So OK, here come the sentences. Mick and Robert Fraser, who was another cat who got done, already been in the local jail for two days, waiting. They’d already been found guilty. They were waiting for their sentence until they’d gone through with my one. Mick gets three months for those four amphetamine pills. They give me a year, for allowing people to smoke in my house.

Now Wormwood Scrubs is 150 years old, man. I wouldn’t even want to play there, much less live there. They take me inside. They don’t give you a knife and fork; they give you a spoon with very blunt edges so you can’t do yourself in. They don’t give you a belt, in case you hang yourself. It’s that bad in there.

They give you a little piece of paper and a pencil. Both Robert and I, the first thing we did is sit down and write. “Dear Mum, don’t worry... I’m in here and someone’s workin’ to get me out, da-da-da.” Then you’re given your cell. And they start knockin’ on the bars at six in the morning to wake you up.

All the other prisoners started droppin’ bits of tobacco through for me, ‘cause in any jail, tobacco is the currency. Some of them were really great. Some of them were in for life. Shovin’ papers under the door to roll it up with. The first thing you do automatically when you wake up is drag the chair to the window and look up to see what you can see out the window. It’s an automatic reaction. That one little square of sky, tryin’ to reach it.

It’s amazing. I was going to have to make those little Christmas trees that go on cakes. And sewing up mailbags. Then there’s the hour walk when you have to keep moving, ‘round in a courtyard. Cats comin’ up behind me, it’s amazing – they can talk without moving their mouths, “Want some hash? Want some acid?” Take acid? In here?

Most of the prisoners were really great. “What you doin’ in here? Bastards. They just wanted to get you.” They filled me in. “They been waiting for you in here for ages,” they said. So I said, “I ain’t gonna be in here very long, baby, don’t worry about that.”

And that afternoon, they had the radio playing, this fucking Stones record comes on. And the whole prison started, “Rayyyyy!” Goin’ like mad. Bangin’ on the bars. They knew I was in, and they wanted to let me know.

*Was “Between the Buttons” cut after the bust?*

No, after the American tour. The album that was done while we were waiting to go in and on trial was *Satanic Majesties*. It was made between court sessions and lawyers with everyone sort of falling apart. I ended up with chicken pox. At the appeal, when I got up, I was covered with spots, man. It was too much. It was the last thing; they couldn’t take it. They couldn’t even get me into court because I was diseased.

*Flowers* was put together in America by Andrew Oldham, just to put something out because they were begging for product. In fact, all that stuff had been cut a year or so before and rejected by us as not making it. I was surprised when people dug it, when it even came out. Andrew was kind of getting pissed off with us by then because we were getting stoned and been busted. It hung him up that he couldn’t carry on hustling because he didn’t know if we were going to jail or what. And we kept saying, “Andrew, Andrew...”

*I remember “Dandelion” as a single in the States in flower-power summer.*

With the other side, “We Love You,” with the sound of the jail door. We didn’t have a chance to go through too much flower power because of the bust. We’re outlaws.

*But there’s a time in everybody’s life when they come out, when they bloom, and it was just about then for the Stones.*

Keith: Brian was like that at Monterey.

Anita: He was on STP at Monterey.

### Hear Me Knocking

Richards at Nellcôte, where he battled heroin addiction



*Did he come back from there with a lot of things in his head?*

Keith: Yeah, he did.

Anita: With a lot of STP.

*Do you and Mick still write now the way you used to?*

Well, I haven't seen him for a couple weeks because he went and got married, but basically yes. We do bits that we hear, and then we throw them all together on a cassette or something and listen to it. Mick writes more melodies now than he used to.

The first things, usually I wrote the melody and Mick wrote the words. It's not gotten like the Lennon-McCartney thing got where they wrote completely by themselves. Every song we've got has pieces of each other in it. The only thing in *Sticky Fingers* I don't have anything to do with is "Moonlight Mile," 'cause I wasn't there when they did it. It was great to hear that because I was very out of it by the end of the album, and it was like listening, really listening. We were all surprised at the way that album fell together. *Sticky Fingers* – it pulled itself together.

*How about "Satisfaction"?*

I wrote that. I woke up one night in a hotel room. Hotel rooms are great. You can do some of your best writing in hotel rooms; I woke up with a riff in my head and the basic refrain and wrote it down. The record still sounded like a dub to me. I wanted to do... I couldn't see getting excited about [it]. I'd really dug it that night in the hotel, but I'd gone past it. No, I didn't want it out – I wanted to cut it again. It sounded all right, but I didn't really like that fuzz guitar. I wanted to make that thing different. But I don't think we could have done, you needed either horns or something that could really knock that riff out.

*Do you think "Let It Bleed" is the Stones' best album?*

I haven't heard it for a long time, and I believe things like "Midnight Rambler" come through better live, because we've extended it more. Sometimes when you record something you go off half-cocked because maybe you haven't ever played it live. You've just written it, and you record it. From then on, you take it and keep on playing it, and it gets different. I remember I was into 12-string bottlenecked then.

*That song is Mick's way out on his persona, isn't it?*

Usually when you write, you just kick Mick off on something and let him fly on it – just let it roll out and listen to it and start to pick up on certain words that are coming through, and it's built up on that. A lot of people still complain they can't hear the voice properly. If the words come through, it's fine; if they don't, that's all right too because anyway they can mean a thousand different things to anybody.

*But the song's almost psychotic, isn't it?*

It's just something that's there, always been there. Some kind of chemistry. Mick and I can really get it on together. It's one way to channel it out. I'd rather play it out than shoot it out.

*People come to Stones concerts to work it out.*

Yeah, which in turn has been interpreted as violence or "a goddamn riot" when it's just people letting it out. Not against

anybody but with each other. That rock & roll thing, even when it was young, those songs created a domestic revolution. When the parents were out, there were all those parties. Eddie Cochran and all those people, they created some kind of thing which has followed through now and is being built on.

*Like "Street Fighting Man"?*

The timing of those things is funny because you're really following what's going on. That's been interpreted thousands of different ways because it really is ambiguous as a song. Trying to be revolutionary in London in Grosvenor Square. Mick went to all those demonstrations and got charged by the cops. The basic track was done on a mono cassette with very distorted overrecording, on a Phillips with no limiters. Brian is playing sitar. He's holding notes that wouldn't come through if you had a board, you wouldn't be able to fit it in. But on a cassette, if you just move the people, it does. Cut in the studio and then put on a tape. Started puttin' percussion and bass on it. That was really an electronic track, up in the realms. Some songs, with a 16-track, I don't really need all that. It's nice to make it simpler sometimes. "Parachute Woman" is a cassette track.

*How did that picture of the band in drag come about?*

There was a big rush for "Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby?" Jerry Schatzberg took the picture and Andrew ordered a truckload of costumes, and Brian just laid on me this incredible stuff. We walked down from Park Lane in that gear.

*Wearing high heels?*

Yeah, and the whole bit. Bill in a wheelchair. It took a while to get this picture and going back, what do you do? Do you take half the stuff off and walk back... or do you keep it on? Anyway, I'm thirsty, let's go and have a beer. We all zip down to this bar. Hey, what voice do you do? We sat there and had a beer and watched TV, and no one said

anything. But it was just so outrageous because Bill stayed in his wheelchair and Brian was pushing him about.

*Along with "Stupid Girl" and "Under My Thumb" and other songs of that time, there's a real down-on-chicks feeling in it.*

It was all a spinoff from our environment... hotels, and too many dumb chicks. Not all dumb, not by any means, but that's how one got. When you're canned up – half the time it's impossible to go out, it's a real hassle to go out – it was to go through a whole sort of football match. One just didn't. You got all you needed from room service. Limousines sent tearing across cities to pick up a bag of this or that. You're getting really cut off.

*John Lennon said that the Stones did things two months after the Beatles. A lot of people say "Satanic Majesties" is just "Sgt. Pepper" upside down.*

But then I don't know. I never listened any more to the Beatles than to anyone else in those days when we were working. It's probably more down to the fact that we were going through the same things. Maybe we were doing it a little bit after them. Anyway, we were following them through so many scenes. We're only just mirrors ourselves of that whole thing. It took us much longer to get a record out for us, our stuff was always coming out later anyway.



### Hand of Fate

Richards and Jones in 1967. "Brian was a very weird cat," said Richards.

*Did "Let It Bleed" have anything to do with "Let It Be"?*

Not a thing. Just a coincidence because you're working along the same lines at the same time at the same age as a lot of other cats. All trying to do the same thing basically, turn themselves and other people on. "Let It Bleed" was just one line in that song Mick wrote. It became the title... we just kicked a line out. We didn't know what to call that song. We'd gone through "Take my arm, take my leg," and we'd done the track. We dug that song so... maybe there was some influence because "Let It Be" had been kicked around for years for their movie, for that album. Let it... be something. Let it out. Let it loose.

*Do you sing for the first time alone on that album?*

Please. My voice first appeared solo on the first verse of "Salt of the Earth." We did the chorus together, me and Mick. If I write a song, I usually write it all, but it's difficult. Somebody's always got their finger in there. I thought I wasn't on "Moonlight Mile," but the last riff everybody gets into playing is a riff I'd been playing on earlier tapes before I dropped out. "Wild Horses," we wrote the chorus in the John of the Muscle Shoals recording studio 'cause it didn't finish off right.

*Does it have to do with Marlon's birth?*

Yeah, 'cause I knew we were going to have to go to America and start work again, to get me off me ass, and not really wanting to go away. It was a very delicate moment, the kid's only two months old, and you're goin' away. Millions of people do it all the time, but still...

*How about earlier stuff like "Paint It Black"?*

Mick wrote it. I wrote the music, he did the words. What's amazing about that one for me is the sitar. Also, the fact that we cut it as a comedy track. Bill was playing an organ, doing a take-off of our first manager, who started his career in show business as an organist in a cinema pit. We'd been doing it with funky rhythms and it hadn't worked, and he started playing it like this and everybody got behind it. It's a two-beat, very strange. Brian playing the sitar makes it a whole other thing. There were some weird letters, racial letters. "Was there a comma in the title? Was it an order to the world?"

*"Mother's Little Helper"?*

In those days, Mick and I were into a solid word-music bag unless I thought of something outstanding, which could be used in the title or something. I would spend the first two weeks of the tour, because it was done on the road, all of it was worked out... an American tour meant you started writing another album. After three, four weeks, you had enough, and then you went to L.A. and recorded it. We worked fast, and when you came off a tour, you were shit-hot playing, as hot as the band is gonna be.

*"19th Nervous Breakdown," "Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby," "Mother's Little Helper" – they're all putting down another generation.*

Mick's always written a lot about it. A lot of the stuff Chuck Berry and early rock writers did was putting down that other generation. That feeling then, like in '67. We used to laugh at those people, but they must have gotten the message right away because they tried to put rock & roll down. Obviously they saw some destruction stemming from... they felt it right away.

The mayor of Denver sent us a letter asking us to come in quietly, do the show as quietly as possible, and split the same night. I've got that letter with the seal of Denver on it. That's what the mayors wanted to do with us. They might entertain the Beatles, but they wanted to kick us out of town.

### Dive Deeper

Read the full text of this article, plus dozens more stories from classic issues of ROLLING STONE, with our brand-new Cover Wall experience at [RollingStone.com/coverwall](http://RollingStone.com/coverwall).

*Part of the Stones' image is sex trips.*

Yeah, on our first expedition to the United States, we noticed a distinct lack of crumpet, as we put it in those days. It was very difficult, man. For cats who had done Europe and England, scoring chicks right, left and center, to come to a country where apparently no one believed in it. We really got down to the lowest and worked our way up again. Because it was difficult. In New York or L.A., you can always find something in a city that big if that's what you want. But when you're in Omaha in 1964 and you suddenly feel horny, you might as well forget it. In three years, in two years, every time you went back it was... the next time back it was like, it only took someone from outside to come in and hit the switch somewhere.

*Was the Hyde Park concert scheduled before Brian's death?*

It was. It was our first thing with Mick Taylor. We wanted to get Mick Taylor up onstage to be seen. We wanted to do something in London. And we wanted it to be free. Which is also a bastard. Because the two free things we've done have been that and Altamont. Both so totally different. People trying to pull that old riff on us, going there in armor. Maybe it was the wisest thing. So we went in an armored ambulance. Took about two hours to drive through the crowd. And we played pretty bad. Until near the end, 'cause we hadn't played for years. And nobody minded 'cause they just wanted to hear us play again. It was nice they were glad to see us because we were glad to see them. Coming after Brian's death, it was a thing we had to do. We had that big picture of him onstage, and it comes out looking like a ghost in some pictures.

*The Satan trip really comes out after "Beggars Banquet."*

I think there's always been an acceptance... I mean, Kenneth Anger told me I was his right-hand man. It's just what you feel. Whether you've gotten that good and evil thing together. Left hand path, right hand path, how far do you want to go down?

*How far?*

Once you start, there's no going back. Where they lead to is another thing.

*The same place?*

Yeah. So what the fuck? It's something everybody ought to explore. There are possibilities there. A lot of people have played on it, and it's inside everybody. I mean, Dr. John's whole trip is based on it. Why do people practice voodoo? All these things bunged under the name of superstition and old wives' tales. I'm no expert in it. I would never pretend to be, I just try to bring it into the open a little. There's only so much you can bring into the open.

There's got to be people around who know it all, man. Nobody ever really finds out what's important with the kinds of government you've got now. Fifty years after, they tell you what really went on. They'll let you know what happened to Kennedy in a few years' time. It's no mystery. An enormous fuck-up in the organization, a cog went wrong, and they'll say who did it. But by then it won't matter, they'll all be dead and gone and "Now it's different, and in this more enlightened age..."

*"I shouted out, 'Who killed the Kennedys?'" Does that thing hold for Mick too, or is it more a show-business thing?*

Mick and I basically have been through the same things. A lot of it comes from association and press and media people laying it on people. Before, when we were just innocent kids out for a good time, they're saying, "They're evil, they're evil." Oh, I'm evil, really? So that makes you start thinking about evil.

What is evil? Half of it, I don't know how much people think of Mick as the devil or as just a good rock performer or what? There are black magicians who think we are acting as unknown agents of Lucifer and others who think we are Lucifer. Everybody's Lucifer.



*Does that produce things like Altamont?*

As I said, I particularly didn't like the atmosphere there by the time we went on. After a day of letting some uniforms loose, what can you expect? Who do you want to lay it on? Do you want to just blame someone, or do you want to learn from it? I don't really think anyone is to blame in laying it on the Angels.

If you put that kind of people in that kind of position... but I didn't know what kind of people they were. But when the Dead told us, "It's cool. We've used them for the last two or three years, Kesey cooled them out," I was skeptical about it, but I said, "I'll take your word for it. I've taken everybody's word for it up till now that they know what they're doing when they put on a show." You have to accept that for a start, that it's gonna be together when you get there or else you never get to any gigs.

*Who put the Angels in that position? Specifically.*

Specifically?... We asked the Dead basically if they would help us get a free concert together. First we had this idea we want to do a free concert, and we want to do it in Frisco because that's where they do a lot of free concerts. Who do you ask and who's done more free concerts than anybody - the Grateful Dead. It's very nice, man, we hung around, talked about lots of things, played a bit. They said this is how they done it and this is a big one, and they think they can get it together.

It comes down to how many people can you put together. In India, they're used to that many people turning up for a religious occasion. But this was not a religious occasion, and also it was in the middle of the fucking desert, in California with freeways. We were so hassled. We were in Muscle Shoals, trying to make a record. Meanwhile, they're going through all these hassles with people saying, "Yeah, you can set up a stage and put up all your equipment," and then saying, "Fuck off." We'd been going through it the whole tour, man. "Golden Gate Park, yes, it's on. No, no. City officials say no." Then they pack across the Bay.

We're still in Alabama, making records. So we have to take people at their word. We have to trust them. And they could do it, and they did. But it wasn't their fault they didn't have enough time to think about the parking or how people are going to get there or the johns or the... they thought of them to a certain extent, but nobody knew exactly how many people were coming.

*Did you consider not going on?*

Can you think what that would have caused on top of getting all the people to the place? Talk about one cat getting killed.... On top of that, everybody was very sensitive. America suddenly seems to have developed this hyper-sensitivity to life and death that I'd never seen them concerned with before. I never saw them concerned when a cop got crushed at Long Beach.

*Did you wait purposely until it was dark to go on to heighten the effect?*

I'd been there 24 hours; I couldn't wait to get out of that place. It was fuck-ups, beat-ups, chaos, our people telling us not to go on yet, let the people cool down a bit. Those campfire sessions - they always go on longer than expected anyway.

*What happens when you come onstage?*

Perfectly normal. It felt great and sounded great. I'm not used to bein' upstaged by Hells Angels - goddamn it, man, somebody's motorbike. I can't believe it. For a stunt. What is the bike doin' there anyway, in the fourth row of the fucking...

### **Don't Stop**

In 1969. "I can't even imagine what it's like to be 70," he said.

So the cat left his bike there and it got knocked over, so that was the first one. "Oh, dear, a bike's got knocked over." Yes. I perfectly understand that your bike's got

knocked over - can we carry on with the concert? But they're not like that. They have a whole thing going with their bikes, as we all know now.

*What if someone tried to do your guitar? They'd get punched out very quickly, wouldn't they?*

I don't kill him, man. And I don't get 500 buddies of mine to come down and put their boot in too. I don't have it organized to that extent. If someone tries to do my guitar, and I don't want it to be done, it's between him and me. I don't call in Bill Wyman to come in and do him over for me.

*Mick seemed to try to cool it out.*

For all the control one can have over an audience, it doesn't mean you can control the murderers. You can't make someone's knife disappear by just looking at him. Somehow in America in '69 - I don't know about now, and I never got it before - one got the feeling they really wanted to suck you out.

Like at the Rainbow Room press conference. So ridiculous, cats asking what to do about the Vietnam War. "What are you asking me? You've got your people to get that one together." And they're asking you about everything, about your third eye... it's very nice. But you can't be God. You can't ever pretend to play at being God... Altamont, it could only happen to the Stones, man. Let's face it. It wouldn't happen to the Bee Gees, and it wouldn't happen to Crosby, Stills and Nash.

*People listen when you sing, and "Sticky Fingers" is a heavy drug album, one way or another.*

I don't think *Sticky Fingers* is a heavy drug album any more than the world is a heavy world. In 1964, I didn't used to run into cats in America who'd come up to me and say, "Do you want some skag? Do you want some coke? Do you want some acid? Do you want some peyote?" And then go through all those initials and names. Now you have trouble avoiding them.

People who think you're ready to finance every drug-smuggling expedition in the world. "Hey listen, I'm not interested. You got the wrong idea." The cats that are into it are into it because they're good at... they've taken their chances at it. They're not doing it for nothing - it's either they're getting their rocks off or they're into it for bread. A lot of cats get their kicks going through customs. So what, man?

*How about a 12- or 13-year-old kid who buys "Sticky Fingers" and that's the first time he hears about cocaine, or he finds out that "Brown Sugar" has another meaning?*

Well, I didn't find out that "Brown Sugar" had another meaning... we wrote it in '69. And as far as I can tell they weren't calling it "brown sugar" then.

*Cocaine?*

Horse, in some places. Apparently what they get in L.A., it's light brown with brown lumps in it. These people don't know what they're getting. If you don't know what you're getting, you don't know what you're putting into yourself. If you don't know that, you're a dummy. Nobody would eat meat with maggots crawling out of it, but people will shoot up shit they don't know about.

Don't take my example. Take Jimi Hendrix. Or not. Depending on where you are and how you feel. Who says you've got to live threescore and 10 years? There's only one source of information I know that says that, and even that doesn't say everybody's got to make it. Everybody can't make 70.

*Do you want to make 70?*

I can't even imagine what it's like, to be 70. When I was 20, I couldn't imagine what it would be like to be 28.

*Can you imagine 30?*

It's only two years away. I don't know, not really. Thirty still seems like a real trip to me. And I know 33 is a real trip: 33 is a year.