

Brian Jones

# Yesterday's children

## Rolling Stones Edited by David Dalton

(Amasco Music Publishing, £2.95.  
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78 Newman Street, W1)

Pop's an alternating current particularly suited to the young because its fashion swings so violently between the clear and catchy phrases of romantic love and a rebel's roar. Today, the fashion is romance. The latest pop rave a young Californian boy with brown sparkling eyes and slim wholesome body—David Cassidy—his face on every YWCA room wall. Come and get me. Hold my hand. I need you, please. His poses appeal to universal aahh. Most mothers, most men of homosexual tendency and every simple virgin girl will fall for Cassidy. Calculated. Innocuous. Marketed. Sold and won.

*Rolling Stones* is "an unauthorised biography" of yesterday's rave. The rebellious, bump and grinding, five malchicks who made the Rolling Stones. "Ugh!", said Pamela, an 11-year-old girl I showed this book to. "that Mick Jagger: weren't he ugly." Were—because the day when little girls screamed at the Rolling Stones is all over now.

They were never pure and clean, even when they began, their hair snört as crew cuts in the days of the Mods. Their songs were never clear or catchy so it is useful to have in this thick book the words and music they wrote printed out.

There are masses of photographs—of Jagger the singer with bagged eyes and slack buttocks. Scorn on his swollen lips and veins stand out like rope. A feast of photographs of all the five Stones—and every photographer gets a credit from Cecil Beaton to the Press Associa-

tion. *Rolling Stones* is that kind of rare book where an imagination has married meticulous attention to detail. The printing, done in the United States, is absolutely excellent: of the highest quality. No book can print the excitement fans felt at a Rolling Stones concert. No book can print the leering quality of Mick Jagger's voice—but *Rolling Stones* comes close. It is the most beautifully designed, superb, lavishly illustrated book on pop I have ever seen.

It is also the most informative: a compilation of interviews, history, description and explanation. There is a catalogue of the works and reviews of their major record albums and films. Credit is shared between a designer, Jon Goodchild, and an editor, David Dalton. The essays are mostly reprints from serious pop music papers. Sensible if a little dull. It's good journalism rather than creative writing of the George Melly or Jeff Nuttall kind. Only one essay, reprinted from the *New York Post* is outstanding—by Al Aronowitz about Brian Jones, the Stone who died after much drug trouble. "The dandy who ran out of toys to play with."

They were advertised at the time, by their own manager, with the tag—"The group parents love to hate." But it wasn't only parents. Most working class teenagers were frit of their outrageous campy music. In Blackpool on the final Saturday night of Glasgow Fairs Week the audience responded to the Stones' narcissistic fury by covering them in spittle. The Establishment hated them. There were show trials in court and the press, that looking back in the pages of the book make almost unbelievable reading.

You can see in these photographs their chameleon power. At one moment doe-eyed and in another macabre in satin shirt and white flappers. Limp then sud-

denly stiffen. Their stage act has been Rock's most sexual and convincing theatre. And their music—the kind John Birch puts posters against. ("Don't let your kids buy Negro records. Savage music. It will twist their minds.")

They had been hailed the first street fighters of a new sensibility—but the primeval instincts they called up lashed back in California at a free concert in December, 1969. Street Fighting Man degenerated into Sympathy for the Devil. They didn't know what they had set loose with their unpolished gurgling that schizophrenic Altamont day. Jagger, the rubber limbed cat who jack-knifed in the air, couldn't control the audience. Sexist buccaneers: they stood like gossamer butterflies in a Camp of the Huns. They screamed the catch phrases of the flower children into the microphone while Hells Angels fought with pool cues in the style of a pre-war Gorbals gang. The stick in the crowd beat louder than the drums.

Forty years younger they followed Oscar Wilde and settled like Somerset Maugham in the South of France. Did they leave to escape taxes? To set up their record company in Switzerland? The reader must make his own judgment. With Jagger marrying a Nicaraguan diplomat's daughter and taking part in European Society one era was over and it is all in *Rolling Stones*. The music continues but the phenomenon has passed. Sold out?

Magic has always been a part of both fashion and music. The phenomenon of pop is when half the excitement at a concert is the feeling set loose among the audience. That—and the music and the look of it all—has been captured better than I would have believed possible—in a book.

Ray Gosling