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# Frail-Looking Little Guys with Gray Skin

"Mick Jagger was sitting in a corner by himself.... He was afraid they weren't going to get paid."

It was printed right there on the ticket: "Rain or shine," and 12 hours before showtime, the storm delivered. As the downpour pounded San Diego County, announcements from promoter Bill Silva's office reiterated that the Rolling Stones concert would proceed. Phone calls to stores specializing in rain gear indicated that the 55,000 or so ticket holders were not taking chances.

"We're completely out of ponchos, raincoats, all that stuff," one clerk told me. "They're gone. They've been gone. Since this morning." The thought of thousands of Southern Californians paying \$60 and up (way up) to stand in a cold rain in order to watch the Rolling Stones at Qualcomm Stadium seemed incongruous, like something you'd see on *The Simpsons*.

At the stadium, shortly before nine the evening of February 3 — as I stood on a platform beneath the stage, preparing to photograph the band (within the constraints of a prearranged two-song limit) — a Jurassic-looking Keith Richards passed by quietly in the dark. In leopard-skin trench coat, sunglasses, and headband, the guitar legend assumed position center stage. The audience howled as a beaming white light illuminated his grin. He launched into the three-pitch riff that begins "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," the band's most recognizable tune. The rain, which had fallen heavily during Santana's opening set, subsided. Still, the Stones seemed tentative. "Actually, I knew this would happen," Richards announced between songs. "I did my rain dance this morning."

At 35 years and counting, the Stones' career has weathered internal struggles, personnel changes, death (original leader Brian Jones), retirement (original bassist Bill Wyman), drug busts, poor management, and a tussle with the Hell's Angels during the show at Altamont where one audience member died.

The San Diego show was less dangerous. An immense video monitor high above the proceedings brought the performers seemingly within arm's reach, dwarfing the stage. For about an hour the Stones forged ahead, despite intermittent rain. Then, as the light on the huge stage dimmed, a large metal frame telescoped out in a low arc above the stadium floor. The lumbering show, suggestive of a Las Vegas carnival with gilded, gargantuan set pieces, seemed poised to go over the edge. Stagehands docked the frame to a small stage at the

50-yard line.

One by one, the band's five principals stepped across this "Bridge to Babylon" into a light drizzle, squeezing onto the auxiliary riser and situating themselves under a single, large umbrella that covered the stage. They seemed awkward and disconnected as stage crew scrambled to meet their needs. No backing singers and musicians, pyrotechnic explosions, or

inflatable women kneeling overhead (as they'd had on their previous stage). Just five guys, three guitars, and a small set of drums. There were sound problems, wind gusts, wrong notes — and a rousing audience response. The Rolling Stones had suddenly become...small. Like they were on a chilly November 1 in 1964 when, as a band of white blues imitators adrift in the English Invasion, they played San Diego for the first time in Balboa Park.

Now 60, Willie Kellogg — drummer, raconteur, and self-described greaser from Ocean Beach — remembers that night. Kellogg was 26, and an established musician in San Diego when he took the stage at Balboa Park Bowl (now Starlight Bowl) with Joel Scott Hill and the Invaders, a local rhythm and blues band that appeared that Sunday evening with the Rolling Stones. It too was an outdoor show with gusty winds and possible rain in the forecast.

"We taught our set that night with 'Whole Lotta Love,' that B.B. King thing. I looked over in the wings and there were those Rolling Stones, watching everything we did. I was, like, 'Hey, look at me, fuckers! I'm an American! This is our music, man!'"

Kellogg had encountered the Stones backstage and was unimpressed. "They were just these frail-looking little guys with gray skin — they don't get much sun over there in England, you know. I thought, 'I bet I could whip all their asses right now, by myself. Just beat the shit out of 'em!'"

"Why did that cross your mind?"

"Because they were comin' off like hard guys! Jeez, that's a challenge, man! Here they were, playin' our music and playin' it shitty, and everybody's lovin' 'em. They weren't talking to anyone. Mick Jagger was sitting in a corner by himself.... He was pissed off about money or something. He was afraid they weren't going to get paid. They didn't sell very many tickets."

Kellogg felt they were trying to create a mys-

tique with their aloofness, "so I decided to start grilling them." He cornered Keith Richards and Bill Wyman. "Do you know Lightning Hopkins?" "Yeah." "How about Muddy Waters?" "Yeah." They knew all the cool American blues guys all right, but we could tell they were just little rich kids. Actually, I was embarrassed to be there," Kellogg admits. "We were older and used to playing to the over-21 crowd in the clubs, and this was definitely a teenybopper scene. The Stones were like kids to me. After we were done, I just wanted to get my stuff and cut out fast." That proved to be difficult, and Kellogg wound up watching the Rolling Stones' San Diego debut from the side of the stage.

"We were laughin' at those guys," Kellogg remembers. "Jagger was doin' all this jerky shit, singin' the blues with that heavy English accent. That band was hittin' a lot of clams, man. There was just a lot of wangin' and dangin' goin' on up there."

Ultimately, it was the untethered female response that infuriated the locals.

"To anything with an English accent, American women were easy," Kellogg concludes. "The deafening sound of girls' panties hitting the floor for Englishmen...that's what pissed us off!"

Musicians who have worked with Kellogg will tell you he has been known for his ability to lift a band with his playing. Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts has made history with the same characteristics. Kellogg maintains the likeness is more than coincidence.

"Charlie Watts stole my backbeat!" charges a bemused Kellogg. "That night down at the bowl, he was playin' like a jazz drummer, kind of light, lettin' the stick rebound off the drum. I dig the fat part of the stick into the drum and leave it there, like an R&B drummer. A couple of months later, I saw him on TV, and he was playin' just like me!"

Kellogg would continue to cross paths with the Stones when the Invaders became the house band at the Action, a popular club in Hollywood. Brian Jones and Bill Wyman were frequent visitors and would sometimes sit in with the San Diegans. Kellogg recalls Wyman struggling with the Fender bass, an instrument known for its considerable size and weight. The mysterious Mr. Jones, communicating with head nods and eye gestures, would blow blues harp. "Now he could play," Kellogg admits. "He was a good musician."

Over the years, Kellogg has warmed up to the Stones and is more willing to accept them. "I was driving down a freeway in Seattle in '65 when I heard 'Satisfaction' for the first time. That thing



Keith Richards

was groovin', man. I thought, 'Yeah! They've got it, those arrogant little bastards.'"

If Mick Jagger was discouraged before the Balboa Park show back in 1964, it was not without reason. San Diego was a sleeper town. Airplay on local radio was minimal. They were laboring to extricate their band from the shadows of Beatlemania, and in L.A. two days before, they'd been successful. That Friday they had filmed the legendary TAMI Show (Teen Age Music International) at Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. In spite of participation by the likes of Chuck Berry, James Brown, the Beach Boys, the Supremes, and others, the Stones were considered headliners. Saturday evening found them at Swing Auditorium in San Bernardino before 5000 screaming fans. And on Sunday afternoon, they whipped a crowd of 13,000 into a frenzy at the Long Beach Arena. Then it was on to San Diego. When the curtains parted at Balboa Park Bowl a few hours later, the Rolling Stones gazed out over a crowd of under 300.

"A couple of promoters I knew in Los Angeles called me one day and told me they had this English band coming to town, and they wanted me to take them for a show in San Diego. They were looking for exposure at the time. I never even had a contract!" Danny Millsap, who, in conjunction with running a downtown record store, was responsible for booking many national-level acts into San Diego venues in the early '60s, explains how the Stones first came to San Diego. Millsap had squandered a chance to bring the

## Calendar MUSIC SCENE

Beatles to town a few months earlier and was wary of repeating the mistake. Now 79, he chuckles at the details.

"I think I paid [the Rolling Stones] \$400. I paid Rosie and the Originals \$500!"

Rosie and the Originals were one of four local bands on the bill. A few years prior, the band had found fame with a modestly produced single, "Angel Baby."

"I needed the Originals on the show to sell tickets," Millsap explains. "They were the hottest thing going around here. Nobody had heard of the Rolling Stones."

I was barely 14 the day a plane dropped the Rolling Stones onto the runway at the old Lindbergh Field terminal on Pacific Highway. At my parents' house in Pacific Beach my anxiety had begun to peak. Word had come down that I could not attend the show alone and attempts to find an interested companion had become a struggle. A couple of months earlier I had snatched a Rolling Stones album from a pile of promotional discards after I had won a call-in radio contest. I had never heard them, but the banner proclaiming them "England's Newest Hitmakers" and the shadowy rendering of the band on the cover was irresistible. When that piece of vinyl plopped onto the family hi-fi and spit out a sinewy reworking of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," I stood transfixed. The sound, highlighted by a pounding Bo Diddley rhythm and a biting harmonica wail, seemed to echo my teenage existence.

My parents were disgusted. So were my Beatlemania friends. This was not bouncy Liverpudlian pop played by guys in matching suits. Consensus was that the Rolling Stones were

just too ugly. As showtime neared, hopes that I would attend my first rock and roll concert began to fade. I started calling people from school I hardly knew. No luck.

Across town, near La Mesa, another 14-year-old was having a similar experience but bringing it to a happier conclusion. Clutching a pass won on a radio contest and dressed in a black turtleneck and boots "to look as much like a Rolling Stone as possible," Jan Tonnesen hung a camera around

*"That band was hittin' a lot of clams, man. There was just a lot of wagin' and dangin' goin' on up there."*

his neck and slid into his dad's car for a ride to the airport to attend a press conference following the Stones' arrival. When we met recently in a downtown bookstore to swap stories, Tonnesen tried to console my envy.

"I guess my parents, being from the 'old country' [Denmark], were a little more liberal than most," he laughs.

Tonnesen had become a Rolling Stones fan after he fished an album from the record bin at Unimart, a discount store in his area. "I hadn't heard of them. I just thought they looked really cool — kind of dangerous. These guys weren't even wearing uniforms! I talked my dad into letting me buy it."

Late in the afternoon on the day of the show, Tonnesen stood at the airport with a group of about 25 contest winners and radio DJs.

"We watched their plane fly in from a long way off," he says. "Then they got off, climbed into a series of cars, and...drove away! We all stood there with our jaws dropping."

Tonnesen produces three rough-looking photographs of the Stones onstage in Balboa

Park. "I printed these myself at Horace Mann Junior High. I just wish I had been a better photographer," he laments.

The pictures show the band clustered near the edge of the stage, surrounded by several security guards. In one photo, Brian Jones plays his white, teardrop-shaped Vox guitar. In another, a boyish Keith Richards (the sat at the end was added later) smiles at the camera.

Most of the audience surged forward when the Stones took the stage. "There were no prob-

lems," Millsap says. "The kids were very well behaved."

Tonnesen does not agree. "I was surprised at how aggressive everyone was. I was using a camera that required a new flash bulb after every shot. Whenever I popped one out, this guy next to me would grab it and throw it at the stage. I couldn't understand why someone would do that!"

Willie Kellogg also witnessed the pelting of band members. "The girls were throwing small model paint bottles at some of the guys. Inside were little pieces of paper with phone numbers on them. At one point, Jagger stopped and said something like 'Hey, stop throwing that shit — you're hittin' us!'"

Standing slightly offstage to the left, then sometimes to the right, and occasionally sticking his head out from between the curtains behind the band was Louis Lacayo, a 12-year-old kid who was no stranger to local rock shows. Lacayo, who now operates a bootery in Old Town, had made it his business to arrive early to such events. His offers to help with the equipment and stage sets often led to privileges. Stagehands knew



The Rolling Stones at Balboa Park, 1964

him, as did security people, and local performers. They would look the other way as Lacayo wandered backstage areas, sidling up to the musicians he'd been hearing on the radio. Lacayo was standing in the loading area when the Stones pulled in.

"They arrived in a bunch of station wagons. I didn't recognize them as the band at first. I thought they were business people. They were wimpy-looking dudes."

While helping to unload equipment from the vehicles, Lacayo befriended Brian Jones. He would spend the next few hours stringing and tuning several guitars under Jones's tutelage. "I still string a guitar exactly the way he showed me," Lacayo says. "We talked about guitars and amplifiers, and he taught me the parts to 'It's All Over Now.' He was completely in charge of how that band sounded."

How the Rolling Stones sounded that night remains in debate. Kellogg and his crew of journeymen heard them as young, inexperienced interpreters of American music, posing stiffly, and unable to "dig in."

"Their goddamn hands were too small," Kellogg scoffs.

Danny Millsap's son Mike, a junior at San Diego High at the time, said, "Because the crowd was so small, you could actually hear what the Stones were playing... They sounded better that night than any time I've heard them since."

"What set the Stones apart from everyone else on the show was their sense of production," Lacayo adds. "It was not so much what they played as how they played. It was simple and spare, but they were a stage show."

Guy and Eileen Denicola had left their home in Clairemont that evening for a stroll in Balboa Park with their three young children when the concert's ample sound system introduced them to the Rolling Stones.

"I wondered, 'What's this mess of noise?' and walked over to the bowl to see what was going on," Eileen recalls. The Denicolos passed by a makeshift billboard mounted on an easel near the entrance. Scrawled lettering announced, "Direct from England, The Rolling Stones." Eileen, a native of Great Britain, admits her interest was piqued.

"We just walked in — nobody stopped us. They were letting everyone in free."

Danny Millsap explains that this was a common practice at his shows at the time. About halfway through a show, if there were people outside without tickets, they would open the doors. "We figured, what the hell; we had made everything we were going to, might as well let everyone enjoy themselves."

A few days later, Eileen Denicola wrote a letter to her sister back in England. "Have you ever heard of the Rolling Stones?" Back came a downcast reply. "Yeah, we know them. They're a scruffy bunch."

Still scruffy, despite leopard-skin coats, and inflatable women to back them up, the Stones are famous because of their scruff. As they returned to the main stage over their suspended bridge, Richards strode to the edge, guitar in hand, gesturing to the crowd. Having survived drug addictions, blood transfusions, and countless "this could be the last time" puns, Richards stood with arms outstretched, absorbing the most direct drenching of the night. Wearing a sleeveless T-shirt with the colors of the Mexican flag, Richards mocked El Niño. He then fingered the fretboard for the beginning of "Brown Sugar." The band continued to rock. At song's end, they hustled off through a side door. A fireworks display ended the show, accompanied by a cloud of confetti. The Stones were seen sailing through the parking lot toward Friars Road in a couple of unmarked white passenger vans before most people had left their seats.

The "gentleman's agreement" that Danny Millsap had used to facilitate the Rolling Stones' first trip to San Diego now seems impossible, even laughable. What was handled with hundreds of dollars then now requires millions.

"I think I lost about 500 bucks on that show," he laughs. "It was no big deal. The kids had a good time." ■