

Michael Philip Jagger

Also known as: Mick Jagger, Michael Jagger

Born: July 26, 1943 in Dartford, Kent, England

Occupation: singer, songwriter

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BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Michael Philip Jagger (born 1943) was the lyricist and lead singer for the world's most enduring **rock** 'n' roll band, the Rolling Stones.

Michael Philip Jagger was born in Dartford, Kent, England, on July 26, 1944, one of two sons of Eva and Joe Jagger. As a student at Dartford Grammar School Jagger had varied interests that included sports, history, American **rock** 'n' roll music, and especially the rhythm and blues music that had spawned **rock** 'n' roll. His favorite and most influential musicians were Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, and Fats Domino. An excellent student, Jagger graduated from Dartford in 1962 and traveled to London to attend the London School of Economics on a government grant.

On a London train, Jagger recognized Keith Richard, a childhood Dartford acquaintance who played guitar and was studying art in London. They discovered that they shared an interest in music and decided to start a band. The third member, Brian Jones, was found at a Soho pub, and the three moved to a Chelsea flat to form their band. Their first performance was at the Marquee, a small London jazz club. Before their gig, they chose the name "The Rolling Stones" from Muddy Waters's song "The Rolling Stone Blues." Drummer Charlie Watts and bassist Bill Wyman completed the band, and they struggled for a year's time playing in mostly working-class London barrooms. Their first big break came in 1963 when they played at the Crawdaddy Club in Richmond, outside London. Their audience was a college crowd, and it was this age group, along with the even younger "teeny-boppers," that propelled them to fame and fortune. By the end of 1964 they had released three albums through Decca Records, were the most popular band in England, and were, at least for that year, more popular than the Beatles.

The Rolling Stones reached two milestones in the summer of 1965 with their first international hit single, "Satisfaction." First, it marked the beginning of their great American popularity, as it was number one on the American charts for six consecutive weeks. Second, it marked the emergence of Jagger and Richard as **rock** 'n' roll composers. While they had previously echoed the music of their mentors, they had now developed their own creative individual sound--that of a gutsy, hard-driving derivative of rhythm and blues. The sound was distinctively new, yet well-rooted in Black

American music. From the *December's Children* album (1966) came "Get Off My Cloud," followed by "Paint It Black" from *Aftermath* (1966), and then "Let's Spend the Night Together" and "Ruby Tuesday" from *Between the Buttons* (1966).

At the core of the Rolling Stones was the harsh-voiced Jagger with his daring, racy, and raucous lyrics. Just as significant was his stage presence. Bedecked in tights, large belts, loose shirts, long scarves, and an occasional cape, Jagger pranced, preened, and strutted his slender frame about the stage. America first witnessed these theatrics briefly in 1964 and later in the group's major US tours in 1965 and 1966. As the Beatles became beloved, so too did the Rolling Stones, but in a completely different fashion. The Beatles, though long-haired and clothed in the "mod" fashions, had the good guys image, while the shaggy-haired Jagger and his ragged crew were branded as the bad boys of **rock** 'n' roll. Their rebellious young fans served to heighten that image.

The bad boy, evil reputation caught up with the group in 1967, and those that scorned them--including a hostile press--reveled as Jagger, Richard, and Jones received stiff prison sentences for a relatively mild drug offense that consisted of possession of "pep pills" from Italy. The convictions were overturned by a higher court, but new dissension problems faced the group. Their concerts stopped briefly, and a commercial low point was reached with their 1967 album, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, an attempt at psychedelic music that was universally panned. This nadir was short-lived, however, as the group bounced back in 1968 with their best artistic efforts. The *Beggars Banquet* album featured "Street Fightin' Man" and Jagger's famous essay on world history from the viewpoint of Satan, "Sympathy for the Devil." *Let It Bleed* soon followed, with the Jagger/Richard masterpieces "Gimme Shelter" and "You Can't Always Get What You Want." Also released in 1968 was Jagger's imaginary biography--and Rolling Stone trademark--"Jumping Jack Flash." Off-stage Jagger had become a connoisseur of art and expensive cars. Upon the heels of success came tragedy, when the dissension-causing Brian Jones was dropped from the group in June 1969 and his drug difficulties caused his drowning death a month later. Mick Taylor was hired in his stead, and the release of "Honky Tonk Woman" (1969) set the stage for the Stones' successful American concert tour in the fall of 1969. Their final tour stop was at Altamont Speedway near San Francisco, a fateful one, as the infamous Hell's Angels motorcycle gang, hired as bodyguards, beat fans until one was stabbed to death. This scene was captured on film in *Gimme Shelter* (1970), and it fueled and typified the criticism Jagger had received about inciting his audiences. Indeed, many of his concerts had been accompanied by violence, and Jagger decided to keep the group away from the United States, an exile that lasted for almost two years. During this time Jagger married Bianca Perez Morena de Macais, a model from Nicaragua, in 1971. His daughter Jade was born later that same year.

Jagger returned triumphantly to America in the summer of 1972 on a widely celebrated concert tour that earned Jagger vindication from the media. The group had outlasted the Beatles despite its problems, and their critically acclaimed *Exile on Main Street* album (1972) was the first of many more albums and singles released throughout and beyond the decade. These included *Sticky Fingers* (1973) with "Brown Sugar" topping the charts; *Goat's Head Soup* (1973) with the number one single "Angie"; *It's Only **Rock** and Roll* (1974); *Some Girls* (1978); *Tattoo You* (1981) with "Start Me Up" and "Waiting on a Friend"; *Under Cover of the Night* (1983) and *Dirty Work*.

Jagger and Bianca divorced in 1980 after twelve years of marriage. Jagger was involved with Texas-born model Jerry Hall, with whom he had four children and finally married in 1990. In January 1999 Hall filed for a divorce from Jagger following the announcement of Brazilian model Luciana Morad that she was carrying Jagger's child. Jagger claimed that his marriage to Hall in 1990 was not legally binding. The couple agreed to an annulment settlement in early July 1999. The settlement reportedly paid Hall \$15 million and gave Hall their 26-room mansion in London. Later that month, on his 56th birthday on July 26, Jagger was informed that blood tests confirmed he was the father of Morad's baby boy born in May.

At the helm of the world's most enduring **rock** 'n' roll band, it was fitting that Jagger, clad in his usual stage garb, gave the most rousing performance of the record-setting Live Aid concert telethon before 92,000 fans in Philadelphia's John F. Kennedy Stadium and a worldwide television audience estimated at over one billion in 1985.

In 1981, the Rolling Stones were one of the first bands to accept corporate sponsorship (from Jovan Perfumes). Now a common occurrence, the band was criticized for "selling out" and, in fact, released two disappointing albums: *Undercover* (1983) and *Dirty Work* was released, Jagger and guitarist Keith Richards split up as a result of their ongoing struggle for creative control of the band. Jagger began a solo career and released *She's the Boss* (1985) and *Primitive Cool* (1987) to lukewarm reviews.

In 1989, Jagger and Richards not only resolved their differences, but re-grouped the band, were inducted into the **Rock** and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, OH, released their first hit album, *Steel Wheels* in a decade, and went on tour for the first time in seven years.

In 1993, Jagger turned fifty and became a grandparent (his daughter Jade, by Bianca Jagger, gave birth to a daughter). The Rolling Stones were still together after thirty years. They signed to Virgin Records for \$30 million. Jagger released his third solo album *Wandering Spirit* to good reviews and, despite replacing the retired Bill Wyman on bass with Darryl Jones, the Stones released *Voodoo Lounge* to critical acclaim. The album was said to be "the best Stones LP of the past two decades," by Jas Obrecht of *Guitar Player* magazine (October 1994) and compared to *Exile on Main Street* and *Beggar's Banquet*. The band went on a world tour to support the album--their first US tour in thirty years.

Along with Stones guitarist Ron Wood and blues virtuoso Willie Dixon, Jagger released a predominantly acoustic album--*Stripped* in 1995, re-working such songs as Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," "Shine a Light" from *Exile on Main Street*, "The Spider and the Fly" and "Love in Vain."

Jagger started his own film company, Jagged Edge, in 1996 and has been devoting his time to film projects and his family while working on new Stones material.

FURTHER READINGS

- Mick Jagger was not a man of mystery but simply an extremely creative entertainer as well as an imaginative and excellent lyricist. Anthony Scaduto's biography *Mick Jagger*

(1974) is mediocre at best and attempts to create a mystery about a man who was simply well-educated and brilliant. Jagger was also the subject of *Jagger Unauthorized* (1993): a revealing and, at times, embarrassing biography by Kate Meyers. The various **rock** music encyclopedias, especially *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock* (1978) by Nick Logan and Bob Woffinden, are informative. Most elucidating is Mick Jagger's autobiography, *Mick Jagger In His Own Words* (1982) and interviews.

- "The Rolling Stones at 50," *Maclean's*, Feb. 15, 1993.
- "Mick Jagger," *Esquire*, April 1993.

Recent Updates

December 12, 2003: Jagger was knighted at Buckingham Palace in London, England. **Source:** CNN.com, www.cnn.com, December 12, 2003.

January 16, 2005: Jagger shared the Golden Globe award for best original song from a motion picture (for "Old Habits Die Hard" from *Alfie*) with David Stewart. **Source:** Hollywood Foreign Press Association, www.hfpa.org, January 18, 2005.

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