

### **The Blues Revival**

American music typically made its way to Britain where it was consumed by the British people and “copied” by British performers. American rock and roll did make it across the ocean in the late 50’s and became popular in Britain. As the rockabilly style gave way to the pop-oriented styles made popular on American Bandstand, pop stars in Britain rose and became popular. But, there was also a large audience in Britain that could not stand the pop-style music. This audience became disillusioned with rock and turned to the more gutsy style in which the 50’s music was rooted---the blues.

British musician Chris Barber started a band in 1954 that played a variety of musical styles, including blues. As his band grew in popularity, blues clubs sprang up all over London and blues musicians began groups. Among the more successful bands were Cyril Davies’ Rhythm and Blues All-Stars (formed in the late 50’s), Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies’ Blues Incorporated (formed in 1961), the Rolling Stones (formed in 1962), John Mayhall’s Bluesbreakers (formed in 1963), The Spencer Davis Rhythm and Blues Quartet (formed in 1963), the Yardbirds (formed in 1963), and the Graham Bond Organisation (formed in 1963). These groups played covers of American blues hits and created original material based on the blues style.

Most of the British covers of American blues hits were not sanitized versions of blues originals. Rather, they were as close to the style and feel of the originals as they could get, including the use of bottlenecks and string-bending techniques. Some of the covers added more interesting and active bass or lead guitar lines than were heard on the original. Regardless of the changes that did take place, they were not changes in the basic character of the music. The British were not covering the blues in order to make commercial hits, they were playing them out of a genuine love and respect for the music.

In the early 50’s, Cyril Davies played banjo in a trad jazz band, but he became more and more attracted to the blues and concentrated on singing and playing the harp (harmonica). With guitarist Alexis Korner, Davies formed the amplified blues group Blues Incorporated, which became the training ground for many blues-styled rock artists, including Charlie Watts and Mick Jagger.

### **The Rolling Stones**

The Rolling Stones of the 60’s was not a blues band, but in the 60’s it was one of Britain’s best. The Rolling Stones led a bohemian lifestyle that shocked most conventional Britons. The group never cared to appeal to the conventional. Both the rough music and their rebellious image appealed chiefly to younger audiences. They attracted untold blues fans and became one of the longest lived groups in the history of rock. In the course of their career, they moved away from blues in their original compositions, but the continually revived the blues in their concerts.

The original members of the Rolling Stones were Mick Jagger---singer, Keith Richards---guitarist, Brian Jones (1942-1969)---guitarist, Bill Wyman---bass, and Charlie Watts---

drummer. Ian Stewart joined the group when it began, but was taken off the group's official roster and did occasional work with the band until his death in 1985.

Mick Jagger and Keith Richards attended high school together, but lost touch. They both became blues fans after hearing Muddy Waters in concert in England. When they ran into each other in 1960, they began to work together in blues groups in London. They started the Rolling Stones in 1962. They named the group after the "rolling stone" that represented a tough and independent man in blues songs like *Rollin' Stone* and *Mannish Boy* (both recorded by Muddy Waters).

Although they started out playing the blues, most of the Stones popular early recordings were covers of other rock artists. Their first two big hits were covers of Chuck Berry and the Beatles. Their third big hit was a 1964 cover of Buddy Holly's *Not Fade Away*.

***Listen to Buddy Holly---Not Fade Away*** (v.1:1)

***Listen to Rolling Stones---Not Fade Away*** (v.1:2)

The pop/rockabilly style was turned into a R&B piece in *Not Fade Away*.

The Beatles had already become an international sensation and the Stones followed along. They were seen as the nasty opposites to the Beatles. Unlike the Beatles, the Stones wore anything they wished and looked scraggly. They did their best to repulse adult society. At first, American teens preferred the Beatles but soon the Stones gained a huge following. Rebellion had been a significant part of rock and roll from the beginning. It continued with the Rolling Stones.

The early American releases by the Stones most closely resembled that of blues and blues-rock artists Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Willie Dixon, and Muddy Waters. They also covered *Route 66*, a hit for Nat King Cole, recorded by Chuck Berry 1961 and covered by the Stones. The stones roughened the sound to be closer to that of Muddy Waters.

***Listen to Nat King Cole---Route 66*** (v.1:3)

***Listen to Chuck Berry---Route 66*** (v.1:4)

***Listen to the Rolling Stones---Route 66*** (v.1:5)

The Stones also covered American soul and Motown on their early albums. The influence of soul is heard in *Satisfaction*.

***Listen to the Rolling Stones---Satisfaction*** (v.1:6)

The group's manager, Andrew Oldham, knew that groups who relied on outside writers for their material could not last as long as groups that created their own songs. So, he pushed the Stones to improve their songwriting skills.

When Mick Jagger and Keith Richards wrote more songs, a change in musical style became apparent. Blues and soul roots were still evident, but other cultures were also

being explored. On their first all-original album, the group included a sitar and dulcimer. Brian Jones included the sitar in *Paint it Black*.

**Listen to the Rolling Stones---Paint it Black (v.1:7)**

A harpsichord and marimba are used in *Under My Thumb*

**Listen to the Rolling Stones---Under My Thumb (v.1:8)**

*Under My Thumb* enraged anyone sensitive to women's issues.

The album, *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967), was musically experimental. Brian Jones had become intrigued with the possibilities available with electronic instruments. Jones played the *mellotron* on *2000 Light Years from Home*.

**Listen to the Rolling Stones---2000 Light Years from Home (v.1:9)**

The influence of drugs is heard in some of the wandering, unfocused instrumentals. Also, the album had psychedelic artwork on the cover that was reminiscent of other drug-influenced albums that were being produced in San Francisco during the same period. The Stones had experienced trouble as a result of their drug use. Fans in England felt that the title of the album was taken from their troubles with authorities. The Stones had been unable to tour freely as a result of drug arrests of members of the group. British passports contained a line which read *Her Britannic Majesties...Request.....*

The Stones' *Beggars Banquet* (1968) again demonstrated that the Stones would do anything they wished to challenge society's standards of what was acceptable. *Street Fighting Man*, one of the cuts from the album, sang of fighting in the streets in much the same way that Martha and the Vandellas had sung of dancing in the streets. While Motown was trying to promote peace, the Stones were presenting an image of macho fighters. In addition, Brian Jones was experimenting with distorted sounds in *Street Fighting Man* playing an Indian tamboura.

**Listen to the Rolling Stones---Street Fighting Man (1:10)**

Jones left the stones after *Beggars Banquet*. Soon after leaving the group, he drowned in his pool in July, 1969. Mick Taylor replaced Jones as the group's second guitarist.

The Stones faced another tragedy that same year. Because of the success of Woodstock that summer, they felt the time was right to have another large outdoor gathering of rock fans. They decided to give a free concert at Altamont Speedway, in California. In doing so, the Stones followed the advice of the Grateful Dead and hired members of the Hell's Angels as their security for the event to avoid using uniformed guards that would be resented by their fans. A young African American man was stabbed to death in front of the stage by these security officers. This event was widely publicized and lessened the enthusiasm for rock festivals.

While the Stones had begun as a blues group, by the early to mid-70's they had become one of the most eclectic groups in rock and roll. By then, almost all of their recordings were original compositions by Jagger and Richards and the duo had learned to assimilate many of the existing styles of popular music. Their music used the styles present in ballads, gospel, country, R&B, and folk styles. Their cover of the Temptations hit, *Ain't Too Proud to Beg*, showed Mowtown's influence.

***Listen to the Temptations---Ain't Too Proud to Beg*** (v.1:11)

***Listen to the Rolling Stones---Ain't Too Proud to Beg*** (v.1:12)

The Stones were even affected by the disco craze of the 70's!

***Listen to the Rolling Stones---Miss You*** (v.1:13)

The output of the Rolling Stones from 1962 through the 90's was huge and gave fans a broad spectrum of styles. They borrowed from many other peoples and styles. Regardless of the style of choice, they remained the Rolling Stones.

*Postscript from 11/13/03:*

*Los Angeles (Billboard---ABKCO Records will on Nov. 25 release 11 Rolling Stones titles in vinyl, following reissues last year of the albums in hybrid Super Audio CD (SACD) format.*

*The ABKCO series will comprise the Stones' initial recordings from 1963 through the live set "Get yoer Ya-Ya's Out!," as well as several compilations. All albums will be released in "extremely limited" quantities, according to a spokesperson. They will be pressed in 180-gram virgin vinyl and struck from the same digital masters as the hybrid SACDs. The 10 single LPs will retail for \$19.98, and the one double-LP, "Hot Rocks," will carry a list of \$24.98.*

### **Other Important Blues Revival Bands**

The Rolling Stones were unusual in having stayed together for so long with so few personnel changes. For the most part, it was common for blues musicians to move from one group to another frequently. The blues was such a distinct style that, as long as a band stuck with the standard blues form, a musician could quickly perform with any other blues band.

One important group that functioned as a training ground for many blues-rock musicians was John Mayhall's Bluesbreakers. Formed in 1963, the group remained faithful to blues traditions. Among the musicians to be members of the Bluesbreakers were guitarists Eric Clapton, Mick Taylor, and Peter Green; bassists John McVie, Jack Bruce, and Andy Fraser; and drummers Keef Hartley, Aynsley Dunbar, and Mick Fleetwood. John Mayhall was sometimes called the Father of the British Blues because of the Bluesbreakers' importance to the blues revival.

Among the British blues singers was Eric Burdon. He had been an art student until becoming involved with the blues. He joined with the Alan Price Combo as their lead singer in 1962. The group became a popular club attraction with such a wild stage act

that their fans began to call them The Animals. That name stuck. The group performed covers of American blues groups with Burdon being very successful imitating African American blues singers. The Animals also did non-blues songs such as *House of the Rising Sun*. That and their original songs made them less of a blues group and more of a rock group rooted in blues styles.

***Listen to Bob Dylan---House of the Rising Sun*** (Folk v. 1:6)

***Listen to The Animals---House of the Rising Sun*** (v.1:14)

Another British blues band was The Yardbirds. The group was formed in 1963. The original lead guitarist was replaced after only four months by Eric Clapton. They started out playing covers of American blues and gained a following in London. With the success of the Beatles, the group decided to stop playing the blues and try a more commercial style of music. The idea worked and they achieved stardom with their recording of *For Your Love*.

***Listen to the Yardbirds---For Your Love*** (v.1:15)

But, they paid a price. Eric Clapton refused to play guitar on anymore pop recordings so he left the group. The replacement they found was Jeff Beck. This was a good choice to help the Yardbirds in developing their commercial, psychedelic stage act. He would play his guitar behind his head and he experimented with amplifier feedback. He also imitated the sound of a sitar in their recording of *Heart Full of Soul*.

***Listen to the Yardbirds---Heart Full of Soul*** (v.1:16)

Clapton remained attached to the blues for most of his career. When he left the Yardbirds he joined Mayhall's Bluesbreakers. Because of the frequent personnel changes in the Bluesbreakers, Clapton had a chance to work with a variety of musicians. He particularly liked Jack Bruce (bass) and Ginger Baker (drums) and asked them to work with his as a trio. They only planned to play the blues in small clubs and could not foresee the success they would have as Cream. The group made its debut at the Windsor festival in England in 1966.

Cream's 1968 recording of *Crossroad Blues* was a successful link between the old country blues and the new blues-based rock. While Cream liked the rough style of Johnson, they needed to perform using a more polished style which their fans had grown accustomed to.

***Listen to Robert Johnson---Crossroad Blues*** (v.1:17)

***Listen to Cream---Crossroad Blues*** (v.1:18)

Cream broke up after just two years. They felt they had made the musical statement they had come together to make and all three wanted to move on to other things. Clapton and Baker formed another group, Blind Faith, which produced only a single album. After Blind Faith broke up, Clapton worked with a variety of groups, including Derek and the

Dominos. Derek and the Dominos recorded *Layla*, one of Clapton's greatest musical and personal statements. The piece was inspired by Clapton's infatuation with George Harrison's wife---whom Clapton later married and divorced. The piece included a quote from Robert Johnson's *Love in Vain*.

***Listen to Derek and the Dominos---Layla* (v.1:19)**

Personal depression led Clapton to a heroin addiction that limited his performances for much of 1971 and 1972. But, with the help of Pete Townshend, he kicked the habit and recorded and performed more. His career hit a new peak in 1993 when he received six Grammys. He received another Grammy in 1994 for Best Traditional Blues Album with *From the Cradle*.

### **The American Blues Revival**

When British blues recordings became popular in America, rock promoters became interested in the blues again. Blues clubs and groups began to spring up around the country, starting with traditional blues centers like Chicago. The blues also became an important part of the psychedelic sound in San Francisco.

From Los Angeles came the blues revival group Canned Heat. They had originally formed as a jug band, but decided to replace the jug with amplified instruments playing a boogie woogie beat when urban blues became popular again. Their performance at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 put them in the spotlight as an important new rock band. Some of their songs didn't follow the traditional blues form but were, instead, based on a single chord (*On the Road Again*). *Going Up the Country* (1969) was in the traditional 12-bar blues form and earned them a spot in the Woodstock Festival.

***Listen to Canned Heat---Going Up the Country* (v.2:1)**

Women were an important part of the early blues tradition. The rock singer who best captured the essence of the blues tradition was Janis Joplin. After moving to San Francisco, Joplin joined the group, Big Brother and the Holding Company. Together, they stole the show at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967. Among the songs recorded by the group were *Down on Me* and *Piece of My Heart*.

***Listen to Janis Joplin---Piece of My Heart* (v.2:2)**

By 1968, Joplin had tired of singing with a group that used only guitars, bass, and drums. She left Big Brother and the Holding Company and formed the Kozmic Blues Band which included organ, bass, and drums, plus the jazz-band sound of a horn section. She recorded *Try (Just a Little Bit Harder)* in 1969 and broke up in 1970.

***Listen to Janis Joplin---Try (Just a Little Bit Harder)* (v. 2:3)**

Her last recordings were made with another band, the Full-Tilt Boogie Band, which included organ, electric piano, guitar, bass, and drums. She was planning to get married and make other changes in her life when she died of a heroin overdose in October, 1970.

***Listen to Janis Joplin---Me and Bobby McGee*** (v.2:4)

Blues singers took from whatever sources were available. Here are three recordings from the aria in *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin.

***Listen to opera recording of Summertime---from anthology***

***Listen to Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong---Summertime*** (v.2:6)

***Listen to Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix---Summertime*** (v. 2:7)

Feedback became an important tool for the blues guitarist, but none used it with as much control as Jimi Hendrix. Like Joplin, Hendrix made the blues one of the most important ingredients of American rock in the late 60's. Unfortunately, Hendrix, like Joplin, did not live to carry the style into the 70's.

Hendrix served two years in the army, but was discharged because of a back injury suffered from a parachute jump in 1961. Since Hendrix had served in the military, his performance of the National Anthem at Woodstock carried new punch! His release from the army left him free to pursue his love of music. To that end, he began working with various groups in clubs and bars. By 1964 he had moved to New York City and quickly gained a reputation that enabled him to work behind some of the finest groups of the day--Sam Cooke, Ike and Tina Turner, Wilson Pickett, Little Richard, and B.B. King. Chas Chandler of the Animals became so impressed with him that he invited Hendrix to leave his own band and come to London to begin a new one, The Jimi Hendrix Experience. The group became very successful in Britain before ever appearing before an American audience. Hendrix's reintroduction to his homeland came in 1967 at the Monterey Pop Festival. There, he sacrificed his guitar by setting it on fire during the act. That did not become a regular part of the group's act because it was too distracting, and expensive. Hendrix preferred to concentrate on playing the blues and influenced many rock musicians who followed him.

***Listen to Jimi Hendrix---Red House*** (v.2:9)

***Listen to Jimi Hendrix---National Anthem*** (v. 2:10)

***Listen to Jimi Hendrix---Purple Haze*** (v.11)

Hendrix toured a little, early in 1970, but choked to death in an unconscious state after taking an overdose of barbiturates.

The original home of the blues was in the south and the revival of the blues was most successfully carried out by bands originating in the south, like the Allman Brothers Band and ZZ Top.

As had been the case with other revivals of the blues, the Allman Brothers Band took covers faster, added more and longer instrumental sections, and stressed the backbeat more than Muddy Waters did in his originals. Rather than removing the sexual innuendo as 50's country singers did in their covers, the revival bands amplified them.

***Listen to The Allman Brothers---Trouble No More*** (v.2:12)

This is a cover of a Willie Dixon song.

ZZ Top was formed in Texas in 1970. The group was sometimes referred to as a power trio because the three members pushed their instruments to a very high volume level. Not all of the group's output was in blues form, though much of it was, including its 1975 release, *Tush*.

***Listen to ZZ Top---Tush*** (v.2:13)