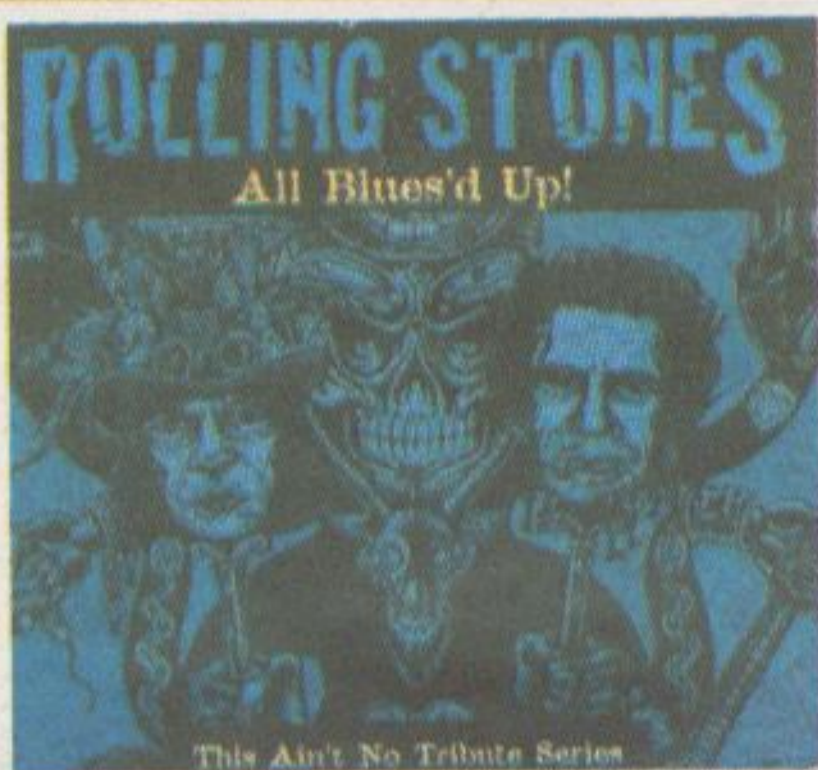


SOUNDS



Various Artists Songs of the Rolling Stones:

All Blues'd Up

Compendia Records

Now Available



By Daniel Q. Marek
College Times

During the summer of 1964

the Rolling Stones came to Chicago's infamous Chess Studios to get a glimpse of the Windy City blues. While recording their first American album, 12X5, they met influential blues artists like Willie Dixon and Muddy Waters and tracked blues standards like Bobby Womack's "It's All Over Now" and Little Walter's "Confessin' The Blues."

A 20 year-old Keith Richards had already taken up the bottle and actually told reporters later in life that he remembered seeing Waters painting the ceiling of Chess while they were recording - probably one of Keith's earliest hallucinations. By working at Chess, the Rolling Stones' appreciation for blues grew through co-founder Leonard Marshall's deep rooted blues origins and the crate of vinyl he gave them as they left. Almost 40 years after those Chess studio recordings, some of blues' greatest have captured the raw emotion of the Stones in their early days by recording them in the traditional style of the genre - capturing the essence of their early works. Starting off with gospel organ in "You Can't Always Get What You Want", Luther Allison sings "I saw her today at the reception/ glass of wine in her hand/ I know she was going to meet her connection" and then ups the ante with a pounding rhythm and a blues guitar sound that echoes right off Lake Michigan. The late Johnny Copeland appears on "Tumblin' Dice," his last recording before dying of complications from heart surgery in 1997, and pulls off a version that surpasses the scratchy and overdone Stones cut. With "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," Junior Wells pulls a Howlin' Wolf shuffle and really empties the space on the hit. Wells breaks down the track to its roots with a whining guitar and keyboard accompaniment.

Taj Mahal's "Honky Tonk Women" is the pinnacle of this album. The broken down version played only on the dobro and harmonica reminds you of the sound the Stones were originally looking for when they broke into the States. Starting off by simply humming the track, adding a plucked dobro that sounds more like a banjo than a steel guitar, and James Cotton on the harp makes this work a masterpiece. I can honestly say, this track beats the 1969, Through The Past track by a long shot. Taj Mahal has only surpassed our expectations when it comes to reinventing rock's favorite band.

On "Ventilator Blues" Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown brings a sense of southern hospitality starting off the track in a scratchy John Lee Hooker voice, then shows some range toward the chorus. At the end of the track, listen for his fiddle work, which defines the blues style of his time with ho-down stomps between gospel blues.

Willie Dixon and Sherman Holmes dish out "Beast of Burden" with more vocal talent than Mick had through his long career, but the track still comes off as a little campy with the chorus "pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty girls." Billy Womack takes back his "It's All Over Now" by dressing up the track with a jumpy rhythm the Stones missed first time around. The song, which was recorded at the Chess sessions in 64, grabs the soul of the Stones during this era, but steers closer to the version Womack recorded before the Stones saw the shores of the U.S.

With All Blues'd Up!, Compendia has captured the essence of the early Stones magic. Before 1964, Mick and Keith had to listen to the blues through a trashed record player in England. By the end of the year, they met Womack, Waters and some of the best artists Chess had seen through its doors. The influence was overwhelming and the musicians they met along the way never forgot the mopy-head kids that looked up to them. It's only natural for these artists (many 20 years older than the Stones themselves) to pay tribute to the genre that helped put rock on the map.