

Rolling Stones - Sticky Fingers (1971)

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1 *Brown Sugar* 2 *Sway* 3 *Wild Horses* 4 *Can't You Hear Me Knocking* 5 *You Gotta Move* 6 *Bitch* 7 *I Got The Blues* 8 *Sister Morphine* 8 *Dead Flowers* 10 *Moonlight Mile* + 11 *Brown Sugar* 12 *Sway* 13 *Wild Horses* 14 *Can't You Hear Me Knocking* 15 *You Gotta Move* 16 *Brown Sugar (Live At Leeds University, 1971)* 17 *Let It Rock (Live At Leeds University, 1971)* Mick Jagger - vocals, guitar (2,9,10), percussion (1) Keith Richards - guitar, additional vocals Mick Taylor - guitar (1-7,9,10) Bill Wyman - bass, piano (5) Charlie Watts - drums, percussion + Ian Stewart - piano (1,9) Bobby Keys - saxophone (1,4,6,7) Nicky Hopkins - piano (2,4) Jim Dickinson - piano (3) Billy Preston - organ (4,7) Rocky Dijon - congas (4) Jimmy Miller - percussion (4) Jim Price - trumpet (6,7), piano (10) Ry Cooder - guitar (8) Jack Nitzsche - piano (8)

By 1970 the Stones had earned the right to take a little time to turn out their next album. Bedding in new boy, Mick Taylor, on their well-documented tour of the States the year before had also involved a little studio time at Muscle Shoals studio. The results of these sessions and songs held over from *Beggars Banquet* were also brought to the table when they reconvened, still a little bruised from the apocalyptic events at Altamont. These were now grown-up men with families, demons and more to cope with who assembled at Jagger's Stargroves mansion with their mobile studio in the summer of 1970.

In the topsy-turvy world of success they'd had more than their share of recent ups and downs. *Sticky Fingers* was destined to be the triumphant first release from their self-owned label but this success was leavened by the fact that they'd signed over their back catalogue to previous manager Allen Klein and had to give him the royalties from *Brown Sugar* and *Sway* to boot. The incessant touring meant that the band were now world citizens, but they still moved closer to their American roots. Using the usual support cast of Bobby Keys, Ry Cooder and Nicky Hopkins they turned their experiences into ten tracks of narcotic misery and sexual frustration. All wrapped in a very louche Andy Warhol sleeve.

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Narcotics are a major theme, of course, but also loss, frustration and incredible world-weariness. Reviews at the time complained that Sticky Fingers lacked the bite of previous releases like Let It Bleed or Beggars Banquet, but it's this very quality that makes the album special. Like Neil Young's Tonight's the Night, the sense of a wake creeps through tracks like Dead Flowers and Sister Morphine.

Elsewhere, the Delta serves as a touchstone for some of Jagger's most heartfelt wailing as on I Got the Blues and You've Gotta Move, while he's never bettered his lechery on Brown Sugar. Taylor's arrival is keenly felt on Can't You Hear Me Knocking?, with its Santana-esque coda. Sway and Bitch are hard-bitten rockers that couldn't exist without Charlie's taut snare.

Eventually the whole thing collapses in on itself with Moonlight Mile. A coked-out, somnambulant drift through an era's last days, and a beautiful end to a beautiful journey. While many hold their next album, Exile On Main St., as their zenith, Sticky Fingers, balancing on the knife edge between the 60s and 70s, remains their most coherent statement. ---Chris Jones, BBC Review

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