

# AFTER-MATH

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run of Jagger/Richard hits. As Keith was developing and refining his style, Brian, by his own admission gradually lost interest in the guitar and by the time of the May 65 recording sessions at RCA Hollywood, Keith was over-dubbing many of the guitar parts. Indeed it was not until the first 'Aftermath' sessions in December 1965 that Brian re-established himself, not solely as a guitarist but as a musical dilettante with his contributions on sitar, dulcimer, harpsichord and marimba adding a new and colourful dimension to the Stones' monolithic sound.

According to Bill Wyman, Brian's own proudest moment was the Stones' five-song recording stint at I.B.C. studio in March 1963 whereas most rock critics hail the Stones first album, recorded in January and February of 1964; but for me the Chess recordings have an added polish, no doubt enhanced by the 4 track recording technology compared to Regent studio's 2 track Revox, and the band sound so relaxed and confident.

For any younger Stones fans out there who haven't got round to listening to all these tracks, then I urge you to do so, and you will hear just how hot a band the Rolling Stones were forty years ago.

## 2120 SOUTH MICHIGAN AVENUE

### Rob Weingartner (# 1280) visits the legendary Chess Recording Studio

***"The Chess place where we did the recording was marvellous. There was everything there you could wish for. All the apparatus was so different to the stuff here. I'd like to go back to Chicago tomorrow just to do some straight session work. I wouldn't even let people know who I was or anything. The scene is so fantastic; you can't believe it until you've seen it".***

Brian Jones - New Musical Express 17<sup>th</sup> July 1964



© Rob Weingartner

On June 28<sup>th</sup> I made a trip to Chicago to see Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven Foundation which once housed the legendary Chess Recording Studios and Chess Records offices. Today it is a museum dedicated to the legendary blues artists who once recorded there many decades ago. As most Rolling Stones fans know, the band was heavily influenced by American blues and R&B from Chicago and in the early club days, and on their early demo tapes and records the Stones did mostly cover versions of songs by American blues artists whom they idolized.

Over the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> June 1964 while on their first U.S. tour, the Rolling Stones took the chance to record at Chess Studios producing marvellous results for the band. The Stones knew the Chess catalogue inside out and so to record at the same studio, and to use the same recording engineer, Ron Malo, as their idols had previously must have been a tremendous thrill for the band. This legendary 1964 recording session would also produce several firsts for the Stones: it would be the first time they recorded in America; the first time they recorded in stereo; and it would also produce their first number one hit ever – *'It's All Over Now'*, which topped the British charts in the summer of '64. To pay homage to their idols the Rolling Stones also recorded a blues instrumental *'2120 South Michigan Avenue'*, which is the actual street address of the recording studio.

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, as a publicity stunt by their manager Andrew Loog Oldham, the group held a press conference on the traffic island in the middle of Michigan Avenue, which held up traffic and caused the local police to intervene. The publicity stunt worked like a charm causing all kinds of media attention for the band as the Chicago Daily News

ran a story titled: *'Those Rolling Stones Gather The Wrath Of A Cop'*, and the Chicago Tribune with: *'Barber Gives Scare To Five Fuzzy Singers'*. The stunt was also reported on other local media outlets as well.

The Rolling Stones would make two more visits to Chess. They would return during their second American tour in the fall of 1964 and again in the spring of 1965 when they recorded early takes of *'(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction'*, on which Brian Jones played harmonica.

For me it was quite a thrill to visit the studio, not just because the Rolling Stones recorded there but because their musical idols recorded there as well. Let's face it – the music recorded at 2120 by such legendary blues artists as Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, Howlin'



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Wolf, Willie Dixon and Chuck Berry is what brought the Stones together as a band. The history of the studio and the influence of the artists who recorded there is enormous. Even if some of the blues artists were not household names themselves, they certainly influenced artists who became ones. The tracks recorded at Chess went on to influence many British R&B bands including The Rolling Stones, Yardbirds (who also recorded at Chess), and The Animals, just to name a few. It was no surprise to me therefore to see a plaque mounted on the street wall which said that the building is a landmark in Chicago.

The building was purchased in 1957 by two Polish immigrant brothers named Leonard and Phil Chess who immediately started their own record label. This was an ideal location for Chess Records because at the time Michigan Avenue was known as 'record row' because of all the buildings on the street that were part of the music business. You had Vee Jay at 2129, Mercury Records' distributor was at 2021 and Capitol Records' distributor was at 1449. The two-story 2120 building was, and still is, very small and narrow. Chess Records had their offices on the first floor and the second floor housed the actual recording studio. At the time, the artists used to enter through the rear of the building because of the difficulty in unloading equipment on Michigan Avenue.

In 1990 the building became a Chicago landmark and in 1993 the building was purchased by Willie Dixon's widow, Marie who donated the property to the Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven Foundation which was officially opened to the public in September 1997. Right next to the museum is an open lot known as Willie Dixon's Blues Garden which was donated by the city of Chicago.

The Blues Garden has a tiny stage where concerts are held throughout the summer and is decorated with banners of some of the legendary blues artists who recorded in the adjacent studio. For those of you who don't know much about Willie Dixon, he was probably the most talented songwriter on the Chess label. His songs were recorded by Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and many other Chess artists of the day. The Stones themselves recorded many of his songs as well including, 'I Want To Be Loved', 'I Just Want To Make Love To You', 'Down In The Bottom' and the British number one hit, 'Little Red Rooster'.

A tribute to Willie Dixon in the tour pamphlet quotes, "No single American songwriter can boast a body of work as prolific and influential as that of Willie Dixon. The songwriter/ singer/ bassist/producer contributed literally hundreds of song compositions to the burgeoning Chicago Blues scene. Dixon played a major role in putting Chicago on the map and dubbed it "the Blues Capitol of the World".

As the tour started we first went out onto the front entrance on Michigan Avenue where the tour guide, Kevin Mabry told us how the building became a landmark, after which we entered the lobby of the building, where the secretary's window was. Kevin told us that legend had it, when the Rolling Stones made one of their visits to the studio Brian Jones knocked on the secretary's window asking to speak with Leonard Chess. As he was making this request the great Willie Dixon came strolling out of the office and Brian was bowled over to actually come face to face with one of his all-time idols.



© Rob Weingartner

We moved into the area where the secretary used to sit, which is now a store where you can buy all sorts of memorabilia - books, posters, t-shirts, CD's, etc. Behind the store is where the Chess brothers had their office. We were then taken into a back room where the records used to be pressed. Today it has an array of photographs of all the artists who used to record in the studio and many glass display cases containing various items of clothing donated to the museum by some of the legendary artists including Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley. On the back wall we could see authentic mouldings of the faces of some of the Chess artists.

The tour then went upstairs (the same original stairs that the artists walked up), which was an amazing feeling to be actually treading the same boards as some of the most famous icons of the twentieth century. We were then on the second floor where the recording studios used to be. The second floor had two studios, 'A' and 'B' which are now rooms decorated with paintings and photographs of the recording artists, four of the paintings had been donated by Ronnie Wood. One of the rooms had a glass case with Willie Dixon's trademark hat and lyrics to some of the songs he wrote. In the back is where the recording engineers' booth was. Most of the rooms in the studio area were remodelled when it was being converted into a museum, so most of the rooms are not now original which was slightly disappointing.

The Foundation has many Programs to help people; *'American Blues Children'* is designed to encourage participation in musical career development. *'The Muddy Waters Scholarship'* is offered to a full-time Chicago college student studying Music, African

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American Studies, History, Journalism or a related field. *'Emergency Assistance'* is designed to help senior Blues musicians, with or without insurance to receive medical treatments and to protect its ailing and un-insured members from crippling illnesses and expenses. *'The Royalty Recovery Workshop'* is designed to answer basic questions to which all artists are entitled, removing the difficulties of complex administration and/or legal fees.

In the not too distant future, Willie Dixon's widow Marie will be looking for artists to record and write music to over 100 lyrics written by her late husband. The Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven Foundation attracts thousands of visitors every year from all over the world.

For anyone who would like to know more information about the museum, you can contact the Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven Foundation at:-

2120 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL. 60616 USA  
Phone # 312 808-1286  
[www.bluesheaven.com](http://www.bluesheaven.com)

## 3<sup>rd</sup> JULY 2004

### Fans meet up in Cheltenham to remember the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Brian Jones - by Trevor Hogley.

Saturday the third of July 2004; the weather forecasters had predicted a typical English summer's day, sunshine and showers expected with heavy rain developing from the west and it was west that we were heading - west towards Cheltenham and the cemetery where Brian was buried 35 years ago. Quite a few fan club members had written, e-mailed and phoned saying that they would be there for the reunion and it was to be a very pleasant surprise when around midday we chatted with the numerous people arriving at the graveside.

Early arrivals included Jo Wood, Angela Andrews and Jane Hepworth (Liam's mum from the letters page in AfterMath # 3) who'd travelled down from Essex the previous evening



and were in Cheltenham for the whole weekend. Old friends and regular visitors to the bi-annual reunions, Margaret Peach, Christine Ledsom, Claire Newell, Tracey Simmons and Phil Vokins were chatting to Pat and Dick Hattrell as newcomers joined in and enjoyed the atmosphere, quite sad at times as people laid their flowers on Brian's grave and read the dedications and comments on the cards accompanying the many floral tributes from others, including those from

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