

The Rolling Stones A Bigger Bang

The Title

The Rolling Stones exploded into the 21st century of music and their fifth decade of rock 'n' roll with their first album of the new century *the Rolling Stones A Bigger Bang*. The Stones' started the cover ball rolling with the title they had chosen, for reasons that still elude this author, *A Bigger Bang*. Anthony Michael and Stephanie Nash, art directors, said, "The title '*A Bigger Bang*' had a number of connotations including colliding particles and physical relationships." The Stones said in a statement that the album's title reflects "their fascination with the scientific theory about the origin of the universe." In July of 2005 Charlie Watts added, "I'm not a great lover of the title for this tour and record, but what it conjures up is fantastic, and that's what sold me." This is the story of what that title conjured up for the album art for this 22nd British and 24th American studio album by The Rolling Stones. The title was confirmed in a July 26, 2005 press release.

The Process

The Stones' team was aware that this album might be the last studio album the Stones would produce. The brief provided by the Stones was the title, *A Bigger Bang*. As has frequently been their practice, the Stones entertained ideas for the album cover from about a dozen studios.



One competitor was William Wegman, "The Dog Photographer", who specialized in compositions involving dogs, usually weimaraners (left).

Gregory Crewdson was another competitor. His work depicted that moment of transcendence, where one is transported into another place, into a perfect, still world (above right).



Anthony Michael and Stephanie Nash, as Michael Nash Associates LTD, were asked by the late Ray Cooper to present some ideas to the Stones for the album cover. Cooper played percussion on "If You Can't Rock Me", "Ain't Too Proud To Beg", "Time Waits For No One", and "Luxury" on *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll*. Cooper also played with some of Bill Wyman's solo efforts. Anthony Michael takes up the story, "Stephanie and I were asked by the late, legendary Ray Cooper to present some ideas to The Rolling Stones, alongside a dozen other studios, for a new studio album. We had just the title '*A Bigger Bang*' and the instruction to think of how to photograph portraits of the band as this might be the last studio album. We presented several ideas, some fell on stony ground, the William Wegman route caused some consternation. Mick was fascinated by Gregory Crewdson and met with him in New York, but the timeline was impossible."

The Concept

One of Michael Nash's ideas was inspired by a 17th century Italian painter. Let Anthony Michael continue the story, "Stephanie and I found Caravaggio's work fascinating and the National Portrait's 'The Supper at Emmaus' had been featured at The National Portrait Gallery. The hidden messages in the paintings resonated with us and the interaction of the characters gave us a reason for them to be together and animated. We wondered how we might describe a concept such as 'A Bigger Bang' the moment when the Gods created 'everything' with a modern-day Caravaggio?"

A Diversion Into Great Painters

Stones albums have relied on the talents of many great painters. Usually, they are contemporaries, like Guy Peellaert on *It's Only Rock n Roll*, *Still Life* by Kazuhide Yamazaki, or *GRRR* by Walton Ford. *Their Satanic Majesties Request* employed the work of many great artists of the past including Nicolas Poussin, Raphael, Nihâl Chand, Leonardo Da Vinci, Antonello da Messina, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Master of Flora, Antoine Caron, William Bouguereau, Ingres, Francois Bernier, and others. In *A Bigger Bang* a talented pair of art directors teamed up with an equally talented photographer to take up the painting style of Michelangelo Merisi de Caravaggio a Baroque painter born 29 Sep 1571 in Milan, Italy on an album cover.

Anthony Michael and Stephanie Nash, together with Nick Knight, employed a brilliant adaptation of Caravaggio's painting style to photography in creating the cover for *therollingstonesabiggerbang*. Let's begin with Caravaggio, his work is the story behind the scenes of *A Bigger Bang's* album art. Wikipedia describes Caravaggio's style, like this: "Caravaggio employed close physical observation with a dramatic use of chiaroscuro that came to be known as tenebrism. He made the technique a dominant stylistic element, transfixing subjects in bright shafts of light and darkening shadows. Caravaggio vividly expressed crucial moments and scenes, often featuring violent struggles, torture, and death."

Caravaggio used chiaroscuro/tenebrism, composition, co-extensive space, action items and symbolism in his paintings, the design team (Michael, Nash, Knight) deftly employs each of these stylistic techniques in this album cover photograph. Caravaggio's paintings were almost always recognizable by the dramatic contrast between an

Chiaroscuro is an Italian term that refers to the contrast of light (chiar) and dark (oscuro) in an artwork.

intensely dark and somber background-such as we see in the album cover-and an interest in playing with the effects of light-which is the central focus of the cover. Tenebrism is especially pronounced chiaroscuro that incorporates violent contrasts of light and dark, such as we see on the album cover. Darkness often is the dominating feature of an image that can, then, be dramatized through a spotlight effect. Knight's photo mimics Caravaggio's interest in the dramatic contrast between inky darks and brilliant, white light that illuminates the rest of the cover's oeuvre.



Let's consider "The Supper at Emmaus" that inspired Michael and Nash to see how it influenced the Rolling Stones 500 years later. The painting, completed in 1601, depicts the moment when the incognito resurrected Christ reveals himself to two followers, presumably Luke and Cleopas, in a shadowy interior of an inn in the town of Emmaus just before Christ vanishes from their sight.

Notice the plain dark background, the non-specific location. Notice the central position of the items on the table. One is a glass pitcher of water, the vessel next to it could almost be an alarm clock by its shape. All play a role on the album cover. We will return to the basket of fruit after considering motion and the moment we witness.

For those of us who grew up with movies, TV, and videos there has been little reason to think about how one depicts motion in a painting. How did Caravaggio depict this moment when the seated man in red revealed he was the risen Christ, just before he disappeared? Christ's uncle

Cleopas is depicted as pushing himself up from his chair astonished by the words his nephew has spoken. Luke reacts by flinging his arms out wide in response to what he has heard. It is a moment of spiritual awakening for both men. The innkeeper fails to react despite hearing the same words because he is unable to grasp their significance. Notice the layered clothing of the men. A millisecond later and Christ would be gone. This was, figuratively, the moment just before a big bang.



Caravaggio is credited with a stroke of hidden symbolism genius in this painting. Look at the bowl of fruit about to fall off of the table. Notice the flaw in the weave of the basket, the two



loose ends of the straw. These ends form two intersecting curves, one swerving upwards, the other down, to form a stylized fish, the "Ichthys" or "Jesus fish". It is a sign of Christian belief that functioned like a secret handshake for followers who feared persecution from non-believers. A believer could trace a semi-circular arch on the ground and if that innocuous gesture was reciprocated with a mirroring arch drawn by the stranger the silent ritual of acknowledging their shared Christian belief was completed. Caravaggio conscientiously accented only half of the Ichthys. One twig is shown in a sliver of light while the other one remains in relative shadow. The observer gets to choose whether to receive and acknowledge the hidden gesture. If you've read enough Dan Brown to question such interpretations look at the fishtail shadow cast on the tablecloth. This cements the validity of the interpretation of this symbol. Caravaggio painted a second version of this scene in a 1605 painting now in Milan. It is considerably darker. Perhaps reflecting the artist's life on the lam from a murder charge. The gestures of the figures give life to movement.



There are numerous similarities between *The Supper at Emmaus* and the album cover. Both works are set in a neutral, undefined space. The figures in each work are milliseconds from crucial, perhaps profound, moments. Objects placed in the images are transfixed by bright shafts of light and darkening shadows. The figures have three-dimensional qualities.

Caravaggio is said to have had a remarkable talent for extending the action of his composition

Caravaggio was, himself, a bit of a rolling stone as he fled Rome with a price on his head after committing a murder. For five years, from 1606-10, he was constantly on the run, from Naples, to Malta, to Sicily, painting all the way. During this time of intense fear and personal trauma his works were grim, somber and unsettling.

beyond the picture plane and into the viewer's space. Knight's photograph achieves this effect by making the viewer feel he is in this dark space opposite Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. We are almost the fifth participant at this big bang, we observe. The Caravaggio style of lighting in the photograph gives the characters on the album cover a three-dimensional aspect. The design team's ability to capture Caravaggio's style is phenomenal.



On the album cover, you see the reflected view of the principles. This is evocative of Caravaggio's Narcissus (left). Notice the reflected Narcissus looks different in the reflection than the real Narcissus. A careful look at the Stones album cover will reveal the same reflective effect. Each Stone is transformed in the reflection.

In correspondence with the author, Michael said, "In your letter you are exactly right in the reference to Narcissus and the difference in the reflection gave us

the idea to have the 'good' Gods in the light and the 'bad' Gods in the dark reflection. Stephanie and I felt if we were to achieve a convincing interpretation then we would need to work with a photographer who could create more than a regular photograph whilst not being over awed by perhaps such a famous group of musicians. We had worked with Nick before, and we knew he had the professionalism to take a brief and then enhance it to a new level. Thankfully he said yes."

Nick Knight was hand-picked by Michael Nash Associates. A fastidious worker, Knight always wears the same outfit to shoot in, jeans. When the jeans went out of production, reproduction of them for Knight were specially commissioned. Nick Knight is described as a British documentary photographer, web publisher and a renowned fashion photographer. He is regaled as a photographer who relishes innovation and walks in alignment with the latest trends. It is said that he is not so much interested in any one aspect of the image as he is with

the whole of what the photograph reveals. This is in keeping with Caravaggio's interest in all the details of his work. Knight has said he is always open to inspiration. In *therollingstonesabiggerbang* he found that inspiration in the work of a 17th century Italian artist. Michael said, "The photograph was shot in numerous sections and then Nick meticulously pieced it together. We visited him and his retouching team several times to adjust and manipulate the image until we had what we felt was the perfect version for the sleeve. William Gilchrist helped with clothes and subsequently went on tour with the Stones."

Is there hidden symbolism in the Stones album cover? If there is, this author has not encountered it but you may.

The Clothes

The Stones don't go through the clothes hamper smelling items they can get another day out of when they shoot an album cover. The look we see on stage is and has been carefully crafted by one William Gilchrist, who first decked out the Stones for their cover shoot for *A Bigger Bang* in 2005. He gelled so well with the band and their aesthetic that he joined them on their tour for the album. Gilchrist described his job like this, "Each member of the band is an individual in their own right. But when they come together collectively they become the Rolling Stones, and it's my job to build on that." He also works with them on photoshoots and other appearances.

It has been said that the Stones have redefined men's fashion more than any other band. Jagger's androgynous style and his borrowings from his girlfriends' wardrobes ushered in "new proportions and a more fluid, feminine aesthetic in the 1960." Gilchrist said, "I source and scour constantly for pieces, and after a while you get a sense of what works and what doesn't. You get to know the nuances of each individual. I know that Keith likes Saint Laurent, for example; I know that with Ronnie he tends to be much more eclectic, but they all have strong ideas about what works."

Gilchrist styles the band, but Richards and Jagger have personal stylists. Jagger's late girlfriend, L'Wren Scott was his stylist for some time. Gilchrist explained, "I work with them at the start and then perhaps for a while when the tour gets under way, but I'm a small component. It's a very, very tightknit family. I'll then usually come out during the tour at certain stages to make adjustments, make sure that everything is working properly. It's a strange world when you're out there - you're very much in a bubble. I get back to reality and find myself wanting to ask someone, 'OK, when do I eat? 'What are we meant to be doing next?'" Gilchrist's hand is clearly evident in the colorful outfits we see. Carefully layered as is the 1601 Caravaggio.

Cover Reactions

Hot take: Only the Titans were present at the moment of creation. They, the children of the primordial parents and former gods, were there from the beginning. Are we witnessing the creation of rock 'n' roll or some lesser event like the birth of the British invasion? Or is it simply

the birth of the band that played the soundtrack for my life and the lives of so many others? Epic events, all. The Stones are every bit of the part of Titans in the music world.

Some fans liked it. "Seriously, "Bigger Bang" may be one of the best album covers of all time. I want to get a poster of that. I just think it's awesome. Definitely the best by The Stones. Or The Beatles. I LOVE it".

"I'm not being contrary, but I really like the cover art for A Bigger Bang. I think it's a pretty cool little composite, very contemporary but reflective of the band's dark/light dichotomy (big word, that!). It's a much better representation of a bunch of 60-something year-old rock musicians than the usual "standing around in semi-shadow, with bad sunglasses to cover the wrinkles and attempt to look young" job."



Some fans (?) had cooler hot takes about the album cover.

"Am I the only one who thinks that the cover is kinda like the "Back To The Egg" cover?" (Author's note. Wings 1979. As for the comment, yes, I think maybe you are the only one.)

"I remember thinking that the record would be nothing special as soon as I saw the album cover in the record store..." to which another fan replied, "Not sure how you determine that. Don't judge a book by its cover. (Not even sure why anyone really cares much about the cover)."

"The cover is a joke if we're talking CD here. May look good on vinyl but you can't really see anything in CD cover size. "

"I find it boring, especially in comparison with Bridges Of Babylon."

"Terrible sound and front-cover.....best songs."

"No more meaningful than any other cover, but not ugly either."

"I think it's awful. Every time I see it I think of "Close Encounters..." or something of that kind."

"It doesn't hold a candle to covers like Exile, Beggars Banquet, Let It Bleed, etc. It doesn't even hold a candle to the Back To The Egg cover."

"That ABB cover is a smeller... it's like they didn't even try..."

"It's them with a bright light? Big deal?"

"Cover was ass...record was great."

Richards made a peripheral reference to that album cover in 2005 when he said, "There was a time when Mick and I could have argued forever over the most mundane things. The color of the album cover could turn into a life-and-death debate. I used to think he was getting too big for his boots, and he probably thought I was a cantankerous sod. If you're working with Mick in

a room, it's great fun. It's just getting to those moments when it IS cool. We're like quarrelsome brothers. It's sibling rivalry, without having the same parents. Mick and I spent so many years living in the same room. And you have all the baggage that goes with life: women and babies. It's amazing that we're still working together and liking it, that we can still put up with each other."

The album cover is dark. It was easy to look at it and not see it. Here's an example, one writer said the cover returns to the original spirit of the group with neither the band's name nor the title showing on the front. This is not true, both the band name and the album title are found in the margin of the upper left corner. This writer went on to say the album featured a dark cover image such as the band had started to cultivate in the sixties. Wood, Richards, Jagger, and Watts form a circle in the dark, illuminated only by white light that irradiates their faces. The whole thing evokes a supernova inviting a play of words on a Bigger Bang and a Bigger Band. More than one writer wondered if Charlie Watts, recovering from throat cancer at the time, was the Bigger Bang?

The Cover

A casual look reveals the Stones around a bright light. That might qualify as ass, but a closer look reveals a great deal more. Few of us saw the album cover and thought, ah a Caravaggio knock off, how cool. Even so, the Caravaggio-esque composition works at so many levels. There is an amazing 3-D quality to this photo, just grab a magnifying glass and look at the faces. The tenebrism draws the viewer right in to the photo. We sit opposite the Stones in this enclosed cave-like space on just the other side of the brilliant explosion that looks as if we are seeing it at its very beginning, a millisecond before it becomes something much grander, like an expanding universe. The changes in the Band, found in the deep dark pool of the reflection are menacingly clever. The good gods are shown on the top of the photo, the bad gods in the reflection below.

Among the good gods, Ron Wood is transfixed by the scene before him. It appears as if he is looking down on creation. Keith Richards hangs back, finger against his nose, reflected light in his hair, satisfied-looking as if to say, "This is what we have done." Mick Jagger grins the self-satisfied mad scientist grin of a man or a god who has just completed a successful experiment. Charlie Watts remains the poker-faced observer of the room, eyes on Woody and Keith rather than the explosion. If he is the bigger bang he is unimpressed by that status. He looks as if he might be wondering when he will get home from this shoot.

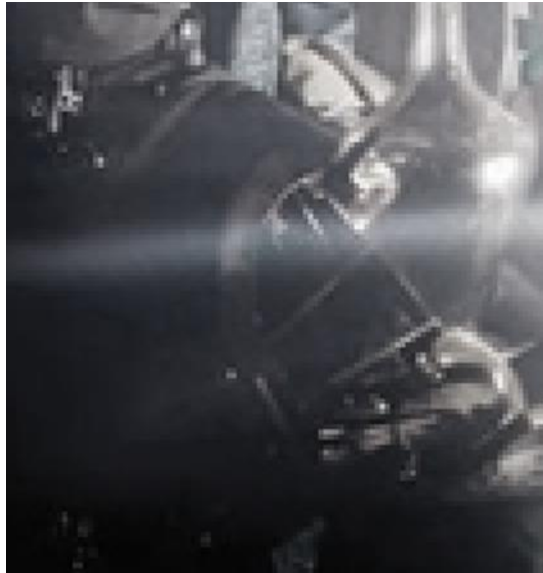
Rotate the album and the bad gods appear. Watts is looking slightly up but he remains shrouded in shadows, his thousand-yard stare recognizable through the shadows. To his right is an exultant Jagger, hands raised toward the heavens his mouth wide and possibly forming an exultant cheer of triumph of some sort. Richards looks like Mephistopheles right after he has usurped Satan's powers. His union with his guitar reveals the source of his power. A deeply shadowed Wood leans stiffly into the semi-circle of Stones, a burgeoning toothy grin begins to

consume his face. He looks rather like a puppet from the plays, adopted and developed by Marlowe in his tragic history of Dr. Faustus. The entire area around the photo is black.

Now, let us have a closer look. Let's return to the top half of the picture. Ronnie is on the left in brown t-shirt, yellow button shirt and a blue (denim?) jacket. He is looking down toward the flash. A silver water pitcher (4-see photo below for index) is in front of him, there is a green butterfly (5) on the pitcher's handle. To Ronnie's right there appears to be an amplifier (1). It is barely visible. If you can find a cover for the vinyl LP and look about where the "1" appears, you will see the outline of a dial and other faint specks of light reflected (see close-up comparison photo below). His disembodied right-hand floats in the darkness behind him. He appears to be mesmerized by the flash of light. There is something near his lap that sits atop the amplifier (2 & 3, which may be one item) that bears a slight resemblance to a guitar neck, but on closer examination it is not. Friends have guessed it to be a catcher's mask, a zither, a steel guitar, a hurdy gurdy, and similar odd objects. Item 3 looks like it might be some sort of carrying case or gig bag to some people. The unidentified object looks more like some sort of athletic helmet in this close-up view. Note what appears to be some sort of fabric flap beneath the chin area of the suspected helmet. The album item does not seem to match up with cricket or soccer gear,



more UK choices and perhaps more likely, but the comparison with vintage hockey and baseball catchers' masks show a similar wire cage for the face with padded forehead and chin protection. A black and white close-up of items 2 and 3 appears below. Items 2 and 3 seem, to me, to be part and parcel of the same thing. For now, this item remains an unidentified object.



To the right of Ronnie is Keith in a blue t-shirt and a black jacket with a green lining. A guitar strap (6) runs over his right shoulder as he stares into the camera lens, or perhaps the viewer's face. His right hand is pensively wrapped around the guitar strap just below his face, skull ring visible, with his index finger poised against the side of his nose. There is a red bandana extending out from his belt. A second (Shamrock-like) green butterfly (7) has alit on the bandana. Something reflects a glint of light from Keith's hair (9). Might it be the shining fishing gear Keith affected years before? I think not.

To Keith's right is Mick smiling, his face is brightly illuminated and he seems to be wearing a seafoam green shirt under a purple shirt, beneath a red jacket. He has grabbed the neck of an electric guitar (8) that could be Keith's. Mick, like Keith is looking out of the scene toward the holder of the album sleeve. The chiaroscuro lends a three-dimensional depth to the Stones' faces. Under close examination with a magnifying glass they leap off the cover. This is Caravaggio's Trompe-l'œil painting style perfected in photography.

To Mick's right is Charlie, deep in the shadows sporting a lavender shirt inside a dark jacket. He sits behind a church-sized candle (10), recently risen from the dead of throat cancer. In front of the candleholder is a glass of wine (11). To the right of the glass is an alarm clock (12). The time on the clock appears to be five past nine. (We now have our answer to the question, when was



the big bang?) Just before the clock is what might be an oversized red translucent die (13). Perhaps these gods do play dice with the universe?

There appear to be about three spotlights (14) visible in the bright burst of light. But I would not argue hard against anyone who says something different. Two lights are clearly visible near the guitar that Mick holds. One is square the others are round. The other side of the light burst is less



obvious. The shape just to the right of center of the burst of light may be a round spotlight or it could be a chalice of some sort. Near the church candle, two orbs can be distinguished (15), the larger one of them may be a crystal ball! So, we see a brilliant flash of light that illuminates some orbs and perhaps a chalice but likely a spotlight (right most 14) in the shadow of the light.

The Photoshopped image below shows some of the items more clearly. The first of these shows the orbs appearing as celestial bodies (a large one on the left a small one on the right) floating in the clouds. A spotlight is visible at the center left, the candlestick, candle, glass of wine, alarm clock, and die and their reflections are seen to the bottom right.



Turn the album 180 degrees so that Watts is now on the far left. The image is bathed in darkness. The red die casts a slim red shadow (16) across Watts' shirt. Directly on top of the 9:05 alarm clock is a darkened outlined image of the clock (17). To its immediate right we see dark version of the candlestick (18) with a shadow-darkened candle that casts the slightest light on Watts' face, which is cocked slightly to the side rather than staring straight ahead. An inverted wineglass is now filled with an opaque libation (19). To the left of the lavender

material of bad Watts' shirt there appears to be a digital image of some sort (20). It looks as if it could be a digital 61, with part of the 6 missing.

Jagger's face is shanghaied by a mouth that appears as if it could be open in an ancient incantation. His arms are now raised slightly above his shoulders. To his immediate right we see Richards grinning in devilish detachment and delight. The guitar he holds has morphed from an electric to an acoustic guitar. Wood leans into the circle like a mannequin, the beginnings of that toothy grin now on his face.

Here is what Anthony Michael had to say when asked about the items, "The image is a multi-part composite and many objects were shot independently of the band. Most of the objects were chosen to describe a facet of the moment of creation but some were chosen to depict unrelated ideas. Not every object was included in the final version, there were a lot of stakeholders. I feel that I would be unfaithful to Caravaggio if I attempted to justify each object so I am going to just say that the central idea is depicted but the details and their meanings are open to interpretation, just as with Caravaggio." Mystery preserved.

The clock is a moment in time, the candle represents the end of darkness, wine is sustenance, the die is randomness and chance, guitars mean music? Shamrock butterflies are life? The crystal orbs are other planets/realities? Feel free to speculate. But I am certain if we only knew what lies in front of Wood, all would be revealed!

The cave-like space they occupy looks like it is wood paneled. In the upper left corner, running from the top to a third of the way down the album one finds, "therollingstonesabiggerbang."

The Rear Cover

The rear is a simple black color. If we stretch the big bang analogy just to be annoying, then this is where the big bang began. In total inky blackness. The rear cover is the void that preceded the big bang. This two-disc LP includes the track list for all four sides (first four columns top right). License and rights statements appear in the middle with a trademark statement at the bottom.



Gatefold

The gatefold for the double LP is shown below. It is mostly oscuro:)

therollingstonesabiggerbang



The inside of this double album is in elegant matte black. The left side simply says “therollingstonesabiggerbang” in white font horizontally centered. The right side is a stylized rendering of the Stones logo in red, black, and white with green accents developed by Nick Knight.

If the blackness is the void that preceded the big bang, the gatefold’s logo makes clear that the Rolling Stones are the bigger bang. Knight’s metaphysical tongue logo comprises a sequence of amoeba-like shapes of varying hues and gradations. The ethereal cosmic quality of the shapes enhances the imagery of a void.



Record Sleeves

The sleeves continue the void theme. Song lyrics are provided in an atypical horizontal orientation. Song titles are printed all lower case without spaces between letters. This device works well for record titles but would quickly grow tedious for narrative text. The size of the print is a decided challenge for fans who signed on in the 1960s.

An Alternate Theory of The Rolling Stones' Big Bang

The Big Bang theory is the prevailing cosmological model explaining the existence of the observable universe from the earliest known periods through its subsequent large-scale

Charlie Watts on his cancer.

"I had two operations and radio therapy, which is the way to do it. I had a lump on my throat, which I'd had for a couple of years. I went to see, actually, Mick's throat guy. I went to see the best man in the world: Peter Rhys Evans, who's a surgeon and throat man. They looked, and it was benign, and 'we should take it out.' He took it out, looked on the slide, it had tiny cancer cells on it. He said, 'You have cancer of the whatever ...' And that night I thought I was going to die. I thought that's what you did. If you get cancer, you waste away and die. I had another operation to take the lymph nodes out. And then I went on radio therapy, which was six weeks long, every week, every month, every year. Now it's five years clear."

"I've been very lucky. They caught the cancer early. It was just a lot of work getting the muscles in order again. Mick's physio [personal trainer] looks after me." Q: "What exercises are you doing to get back in shape?" A: "I do stretching and sit-ups. They removed all the lymph nodes [points to throat]. When they do that, the muscles go. Then you sit around for eight weeks in treatment. You can't lift your arm. It's like being minorly paralyzed. It was a worry, because of what I do for a living. We've got a tour, and I didn't know if I could get through a song. You can't stop once you get going, if you're a drummer. A guitar player can lay back in the middle. A drummer has to be there all the time. I didn't know if I could make it. I was fifty percent fit when I arrived in Toronto. But it's amazing how quickly your body heals."

evolution. According to the Big Bang theory, at the beginning the universe was very hot and very compact just like the Stones and since then it has been expanding and cooling down, unlike the Stones, who are contracting in numbers. Wikipedia cannot identify the month, day and year of the big bang, but it is believed to have occurred at 9:05. Scientists are still trying to establish whether this was PM or AM as well as the time zone.

Watts was diagnosed with throat cancer in June 2004, on Aug 14, 2004 his cancer was announced. He rejoined the band September 20. While Watts was fighting cancer, Jagger and Richards were getting along, collaborating more than they had done for decades. They wrote and recorded many of the songs at Jagger's house. There are more than a few who think Watts was the Bigger Bang and his recovery gave rebirth to the band.

Richards, in July 2005, said, "I don't think that, between us, there was any doubt that Charlie would beat (cancer). I wondered how long and debilitating it might be, which Charlie answered in spades when he came back. He looked exactly the same, like he hadn't done anything more than comb his hair and put a suit on... When he came in, we were still running down songs, rehearsing. You don't usually go into fifth gear in rehearsal. You lay back a little. But Charlie came in as if to prove *I'm back*. He played every rehearsal like a show."

It has been speculated that the length of the album was, itself, the bigger bang. Its sixteen tracks come in at just under 61 minutes of playtime. We now know this would be Charlie Watts last studio album of original Stones music. Sixteen years after the release of this album, Charlie would die of undisclosed causes

speculated at the time to have been related to his earlier bout with throat cancer. Now, that, was a big bang!

The Cast and Crew

Michael Anthony and Stephanie Nash have somehow managed to do the impossible and remain relatively anonymous in the Internet Age. They have a very basic website. Both at some point signed up with LinkedIn but they have refrained from photos or other professional or personal information. Michael Anthony was extremely cooperative and helpful in discussing his work on this album.



Nick Knight is an influential and visionary photographer. He has worked as a fashion photographer, has produced advertising campaigns for prestigious clients, he has directed award winning music videos, and has produced several books. His work has been exhibited at many international art institutions. A recent project has been launching his fashion website SHOWstudio in 2000, with an aim, in Knight's own words, of 'showing the entire creative process from conception to completion. Knight was awarded the OBE in 2010 for his services to the arts. He lives with his wife in London and is an honorary professor of the University of

the Arts London.



William Gilchrist is a London based fashion stylist and design consultant he is branching out into the world of commercial photography. Gilchrist is known for his rock 'n' roll blend of sartorial glamour, attention to craftsmanship and love of quality, practicality and great design. His resume includes every Rolling Stones world Tour since A Bigger Bang. He describes ideal dinner table would include the sailor

Moitessier, Keith Richards, Claudia Cardinale, Gabriel García Márquez, Patti Smith, Arundati Roy, Gio Ponti, Yves Saint Laurent, Massimo Bottura and always a place laid for the unexpected guest. I am going out on a limb to say that does not likely include anyone reading this.

The Tour

Neither the tour stage nor tour merchandise made much direct use of the album images, save for a poster that subjected the tongue logo to its own bigger bang explosion. It was used in a variety of concert adverts. To see part of the Stones' backstage rider for the tour check [Rolling Stones '05 | The Smoking Gun](#) and click the links.



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