

## Flashpoint IORR

### The Release

The Steel Wheels/Urban Jungle Tours produced *Flashpoint*, the Stones fifth live album, which was released April 2, 1991. Sixteen songs (and intro makes 17) recorded over 419 days from 25



November, 1989 through January 18, 1991 on three continents and in five countries, was the Stones first album of the 1990s and their first live album since *Still Life* in 1982. It was also the last album Bill Wyman played on as a Rolling Stone. There were two new studio releases among the 16 songs, “Highwire” and “Sex Drive”. It was 1991, a new year

begun, and it was time to plan the cover art and, oh yeah, they still needed a title for the album.

### Getting A Contract With The Stones

How does one go about getting a contract to work for the Rolling Stones? Let David Crow, Art Director, start that story. “I was working, I was sharing a studio actually with Garry Mouat and we were working together in London and we shared the same agent. She introduced us to Tony King who was the Stones manager at the time. I think the introduction came via, as they always do, that friend of a friend stuff. It was somebody who was a t-shirt printer who had printed the t-shirts for the tour. So, it was a big merchandiser and I think they had been asked to



recommend some people and we got recommended through them. So, we had an interview with Tony at an office somewhere in Chelsea in London to get kind of vetted and then that was it, actually really. It was contracts and meetings after that.” Sometimes you find the golden goose and sometimes it finds you.

### What Shall We Call It?

Imagine the Stones have just produced a new live album and they have asked you to name it. What would you suggest? Adrenaline sounds good, what fan hasn't felt it when the concert's

opening notes attack the sky. Who hasn't felt that rush, when the masters of opening riffs strike up the one you've been waiting for? Put Adrenaline on the keeper pile.

How about something more interactive like Cause and Effect? The Stones are the cause we are the effect? Or how about Ignition? ...five, four, three, two, one, ignition, lift off. That could work, the Stones have been igniting throngs of people for decades. The readers of iorr.org or forums.stevehoffman would have a field day with this task. They were never asked, perhaps because they did not know any t-shirt merchandisers, but David Crow and Garry Mouat, the two men responsible for art design and direction were and although they did not come up with the final answer they created the space within which the answer was found. The jump from Ignition to *Flashpoint* is a small one.

### The Brief

The Stones had a treasure trove of concert photographs taken by the likes of Eugene Adebari, Mark Fisher, Claude Gassian, Paul Natkin, Dimo Safari, and Kevin Mazur but they did not want a concert photo cover, they wanted something more.



Crow takes up the story again, "Well, obviously it was a live album, so there was a discussion about, well that photographs from the tour, obviously they did not want to use one of those for the cover. That was the first part of the brief. They were going to use the photographs but not for the cover shot. The other thing they said is they did not have the title at that point for the cover so they were kind of asking us if we would develop some ideas for the cover, (early cover



concept from Crow's sketchbook left) if we wanted to throw in suggestions for the title of the album in time to help them with their thinking, then that would be okay too. So, we did that, *Flashpoint*, in the end came from them. But we had about 2 or 3 titles before that that we used to just generate the work."

### The Title

Asked if he recalled any of the title suggestions, Crow said, "Yea, I do actually. The first one was Adrenalin, our first title and that kind of got developed a bit because we talked about the adrenalin of a live performance, about watching a live performance. Then we got to the idea of

Cause and Effect, because there is a band on stage and there's an audience and its about that



relationship between the two. We kinda liked this idea of the energy, what happens when you're in that space. Then it got to *Flashpoint*, which is, you know, it came from that same sort of, we were giving them lists at some point, there were about 10 to 15 titles. I don't think *Flashpoint* was on there but

it came from that same sorta space. Ignition was another one and it kinda got from Ignitions to *Flashpoint*. They liked the idea of something sparking and energy." The seeds of the *Flashpoint* cover were clearly present in the Ignition concept (above, courtesy of D. Crow). Even though the Stones, essentially meaning Mick Jagger in this instance, came up with the name, it clearly deserves an 'inspired by Crow and Mouat' notation.

### The Chicken Or The Egg?

Right up there with that famous 'which came first' conundrum is, the title or the cover? With the Stones, it has usually been the title that leads the way, although there are some exceptions, see *GRRR!* for example. That was not necessarily so with *Flashpoint* because Crow and Mouat began the album art before the title was settled. The title was settled before the final cover art was designed but the design team was busy pitching concepts from the outset.

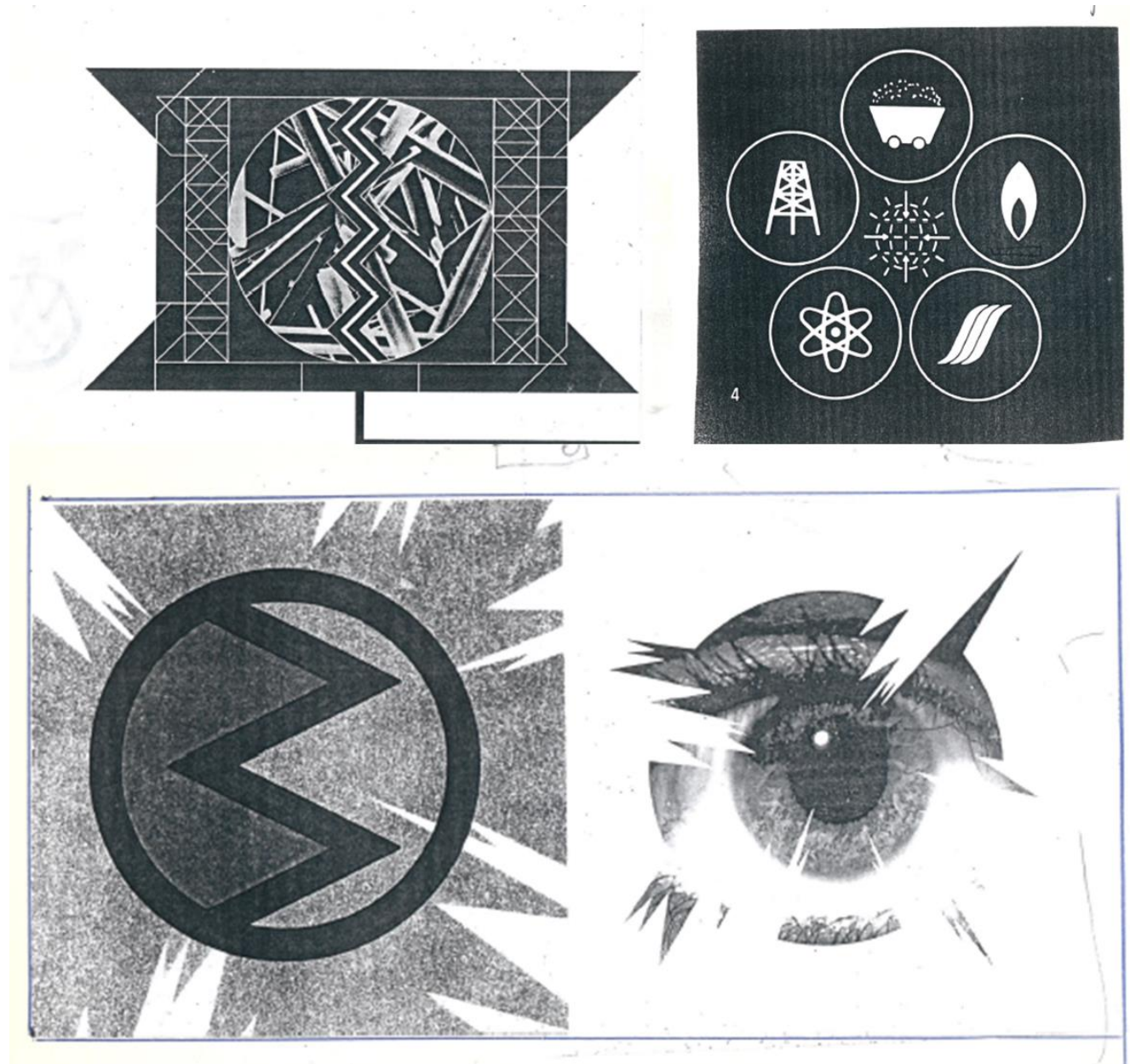


Some designers have expressed a tad of regret to have been working on a live album instead of a studio album. They felt the brief was a bit confining. Crow and Mouat saw this quite differently. Crow said, "It wasn't limiting at all. No, quite the opposite really, in fact although it was a live album, the reason they were in London was they were adding some tracks to it. They were adding a single which was called "Highwire" and they were recording that [at the Hit Factory] in London. That's why we met in London. So, there was new material as well. But you're dealing with such classic tracks. Once we got the album established and they agreed to the artwork on that, they were much less, I

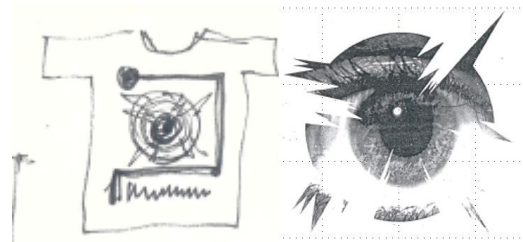


guess it was about trust, the trust was established and they let us run through the singles with hardly any interference at all.”

He goes on, describing the process, “We started the covers before we knew the title...There were some early roughs (below) that looked quite different. Much more almost kind of space age than it ended up as. We worked for them for a long time, if you count every iteration we did, all up we did 80 covers. They weren’t all wildly different, we got to the point where we kinda knew the territory. And I remember that point where it changed, I think I’ve got drawings in my sketch book from that meeting.”

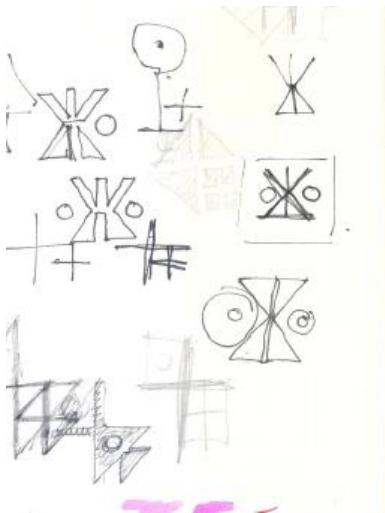


This cover, like many others, began as a series of concepts, with the artists circling in on the final design. Crow has graciously shared some of the early sketchbook concepts they tested out along the way. Any one of these might have ended up as cover art.



The 'eye' cover concept, seen above, would have looked good on a t-shirt. In fact, the eyeball concept reappeared in 1994 When "Love Is Strong" from *Voodoo Lounge* was released in the sleeve seen at left. The similarity is striking. Good ideas have ways of resurfacing.

### That Aha Moment



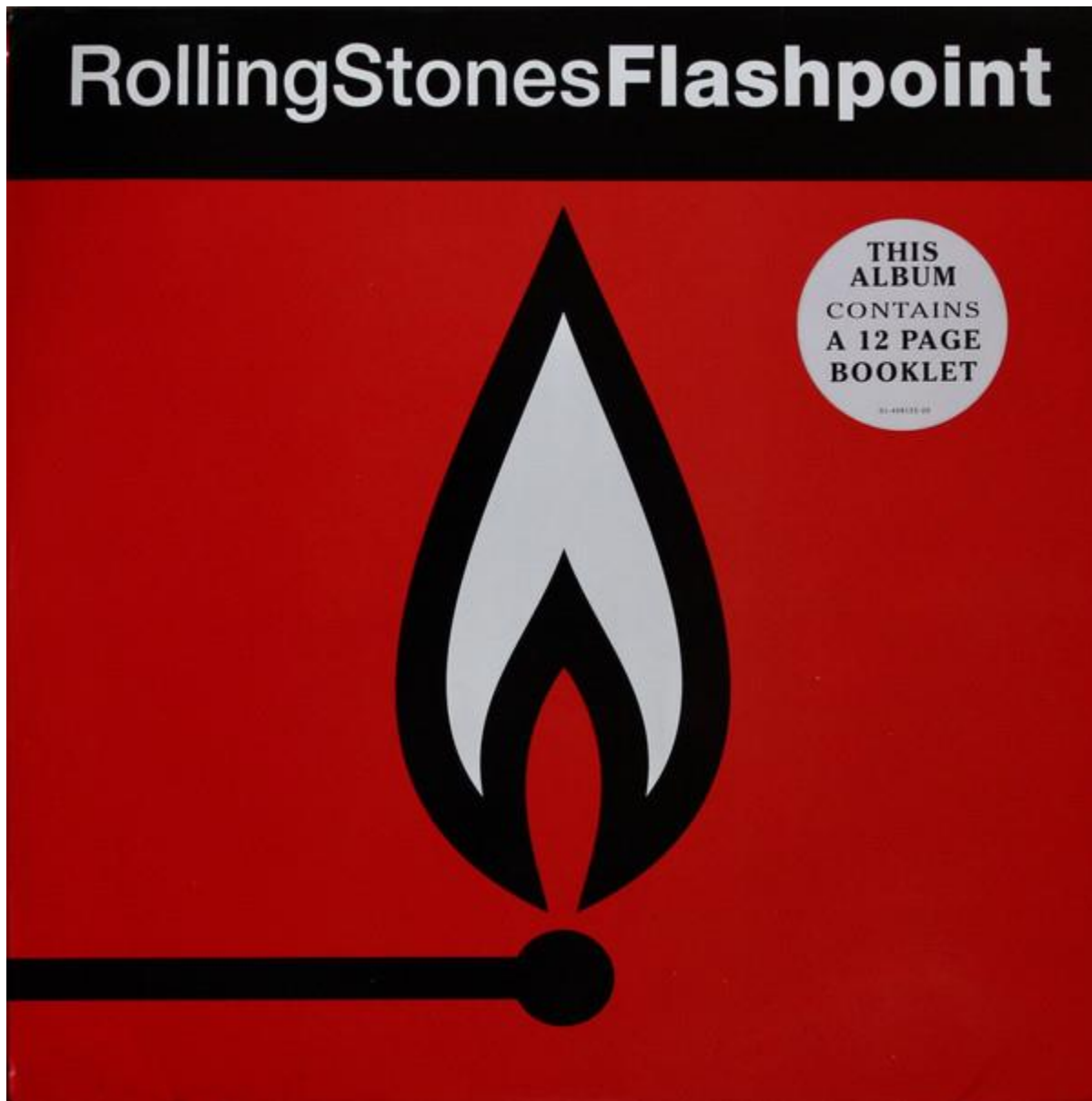
The album cover design really came into focus when Mick had his aha moment and said he wanted it to be simple, basic symbols. Crow describes it like this, "In terms of the art itself, I do remember being in a meeting with Mick, sorta drawing stuff. He enjoyed being very close to the creation of that. So, he would happily take a pen and mark stuff. So, I remember that moment when the pen, he dropped it, and what he really wanted to do was to do something that was about basic symbols. So, that was like a lovely moment. It was like right, finally we know where we're going." (Some of Crow's sketchbook symbols, left)

### The Cover

Below is the struck match cover. What can we think about this? What can we light with a struck match? There is no mistaking it, that is a match. Except it isn't.

The flame is an appealingly symmetrical Matryoshka doll-like sets of flames. Red at its inner core, surrounded by a black teardrop flame inside a white flame embedded in another black

flame. Want the four flames to represent the four remaining Stones—Mick, Keith, Charlie, Ron—go ahead, fans have done far nuttier things, but don't overthink it. Sometimes a flame is just a flame.

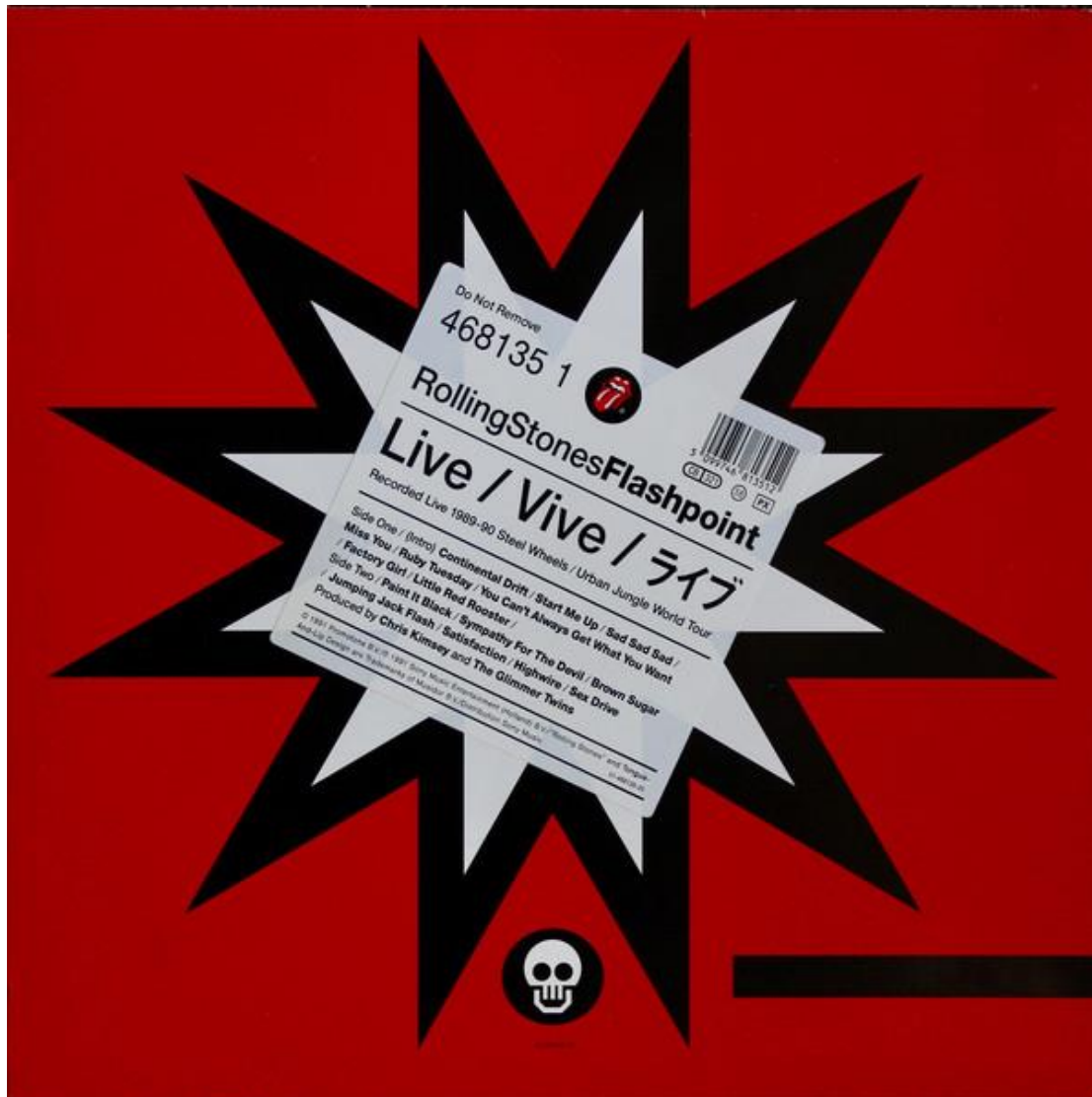


Stones fans can be quite critical of album art, but this design met with more favorable reaction than most. A sampling of some fan site comments include:

- I really like the cover art- both the art style and the color choices. It's really eye-catching.
- It's one of the rare album covers I would almost like to frame and display just because of how cool the artwork is.
- Agreed that's a great cover, kind of looks like a still from the 1960s "Mission Impossible" TV show opener.

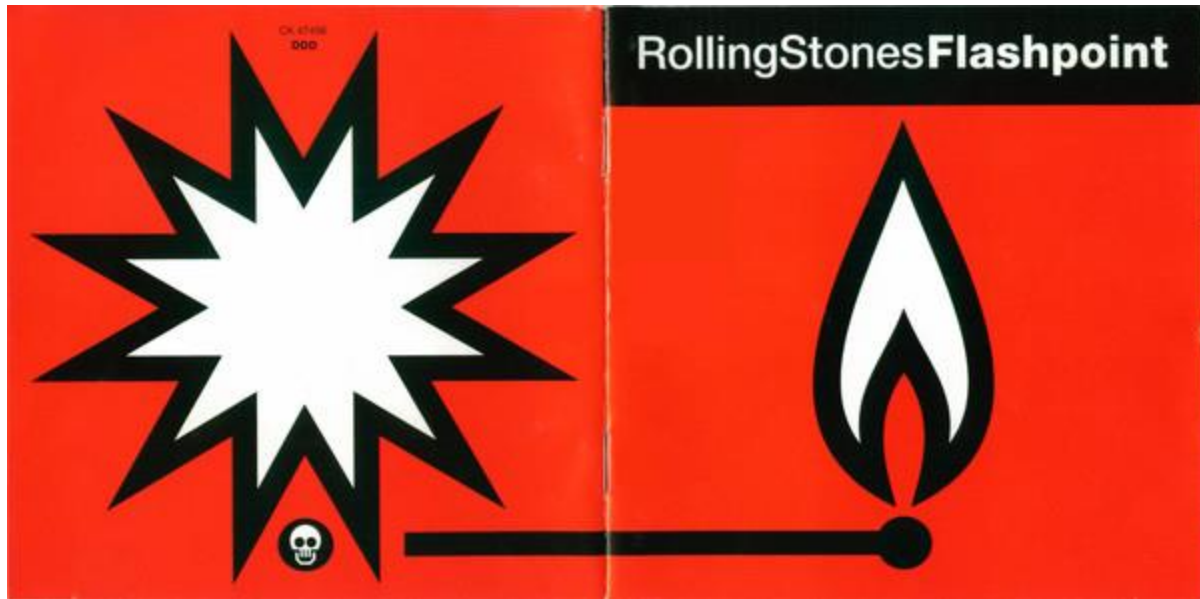
- I too have always liked the cover! Glad to hear I'm not alone. It always reminded me a bit of Massive Attack's Blue Lines design.
- I love the cover art and the album!
- The artwork is great, isn't there also a drawing of an explosion on the inner sleeve?

The answer to that last question is, no, that was on the rear cover.

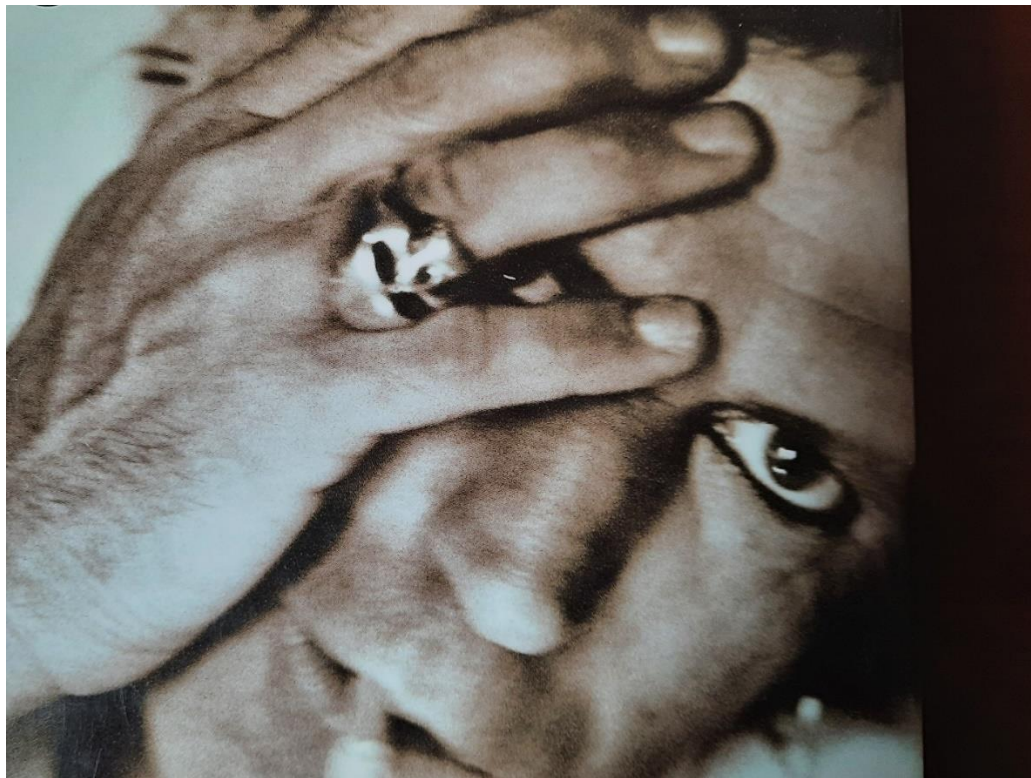


The view of the entire outer sleeve would look as seen below. Quite a cleverly nuanced idea.





It is not a match at all, it is a lighted fuse, that will produce quite an explosion, releasing tremendous energy. And death? Is that what the skull means? Crow has a less nefarious explanation, "We did sneak Keith Richards' ring on I think. You would probably know that if you're a fan that Keith has a ring with a skull on it. That's Keith's ring, it was directly from his ring." That ring may not have been as well-known three decades or so ago, but it is widely recognized now as seen in the cover photo for Keith's book, "Life".



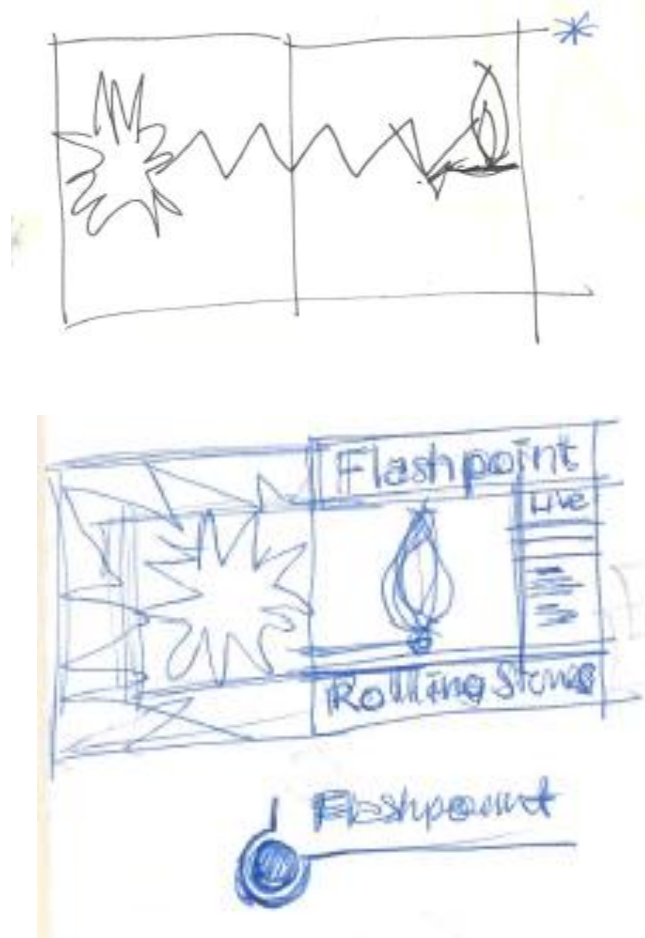


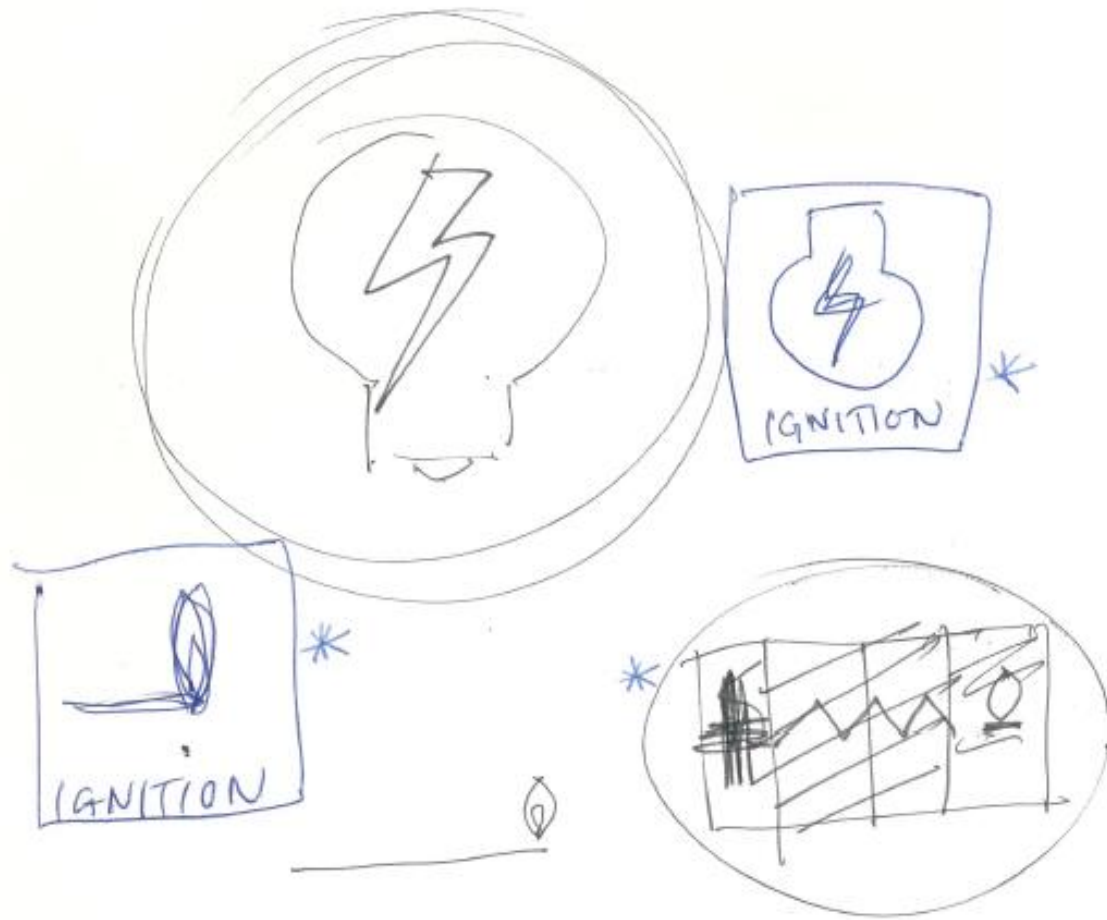
Notice, there is no Stones logo to be seen, if not for the sticker. Asked about whether there was any pressure to include the logo Crow said, “No real pressure, we did some covers that had the logo that has kind of abstractions of it. In the end, we felt it was not really needed. Isn’t it on the inside? That was kinda the right place for it.”

### The Evolution of a Cover

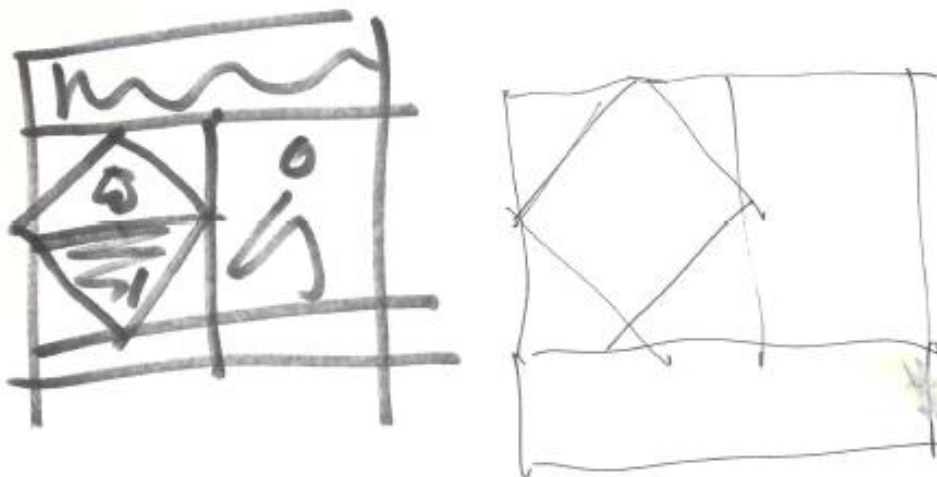
This fan favorite cover did not spring from the womb in this finished state. There was a

substantial gestation period crammed into a compressed time frame. Crow’s sketchbook, which he graciously has shared, enables us to see some of that evolution. Here is a page (below) from the sketchbook that tells some of the story. Ignition was a Crow and Mouat title concept early in the process. The top sketches quickly transition from a lightbulb looking device to a bomb to an ignition source to a miniature of the concept sketched for Mick Jagger probably in January of 1991. The front cover ‘match’ was born in Ignition. The asterisks likely indicate ideas the artists wanted to explore further. The seeds of the eventual cover are all planted in this early ignition/*Flashpoint* sketch (left).

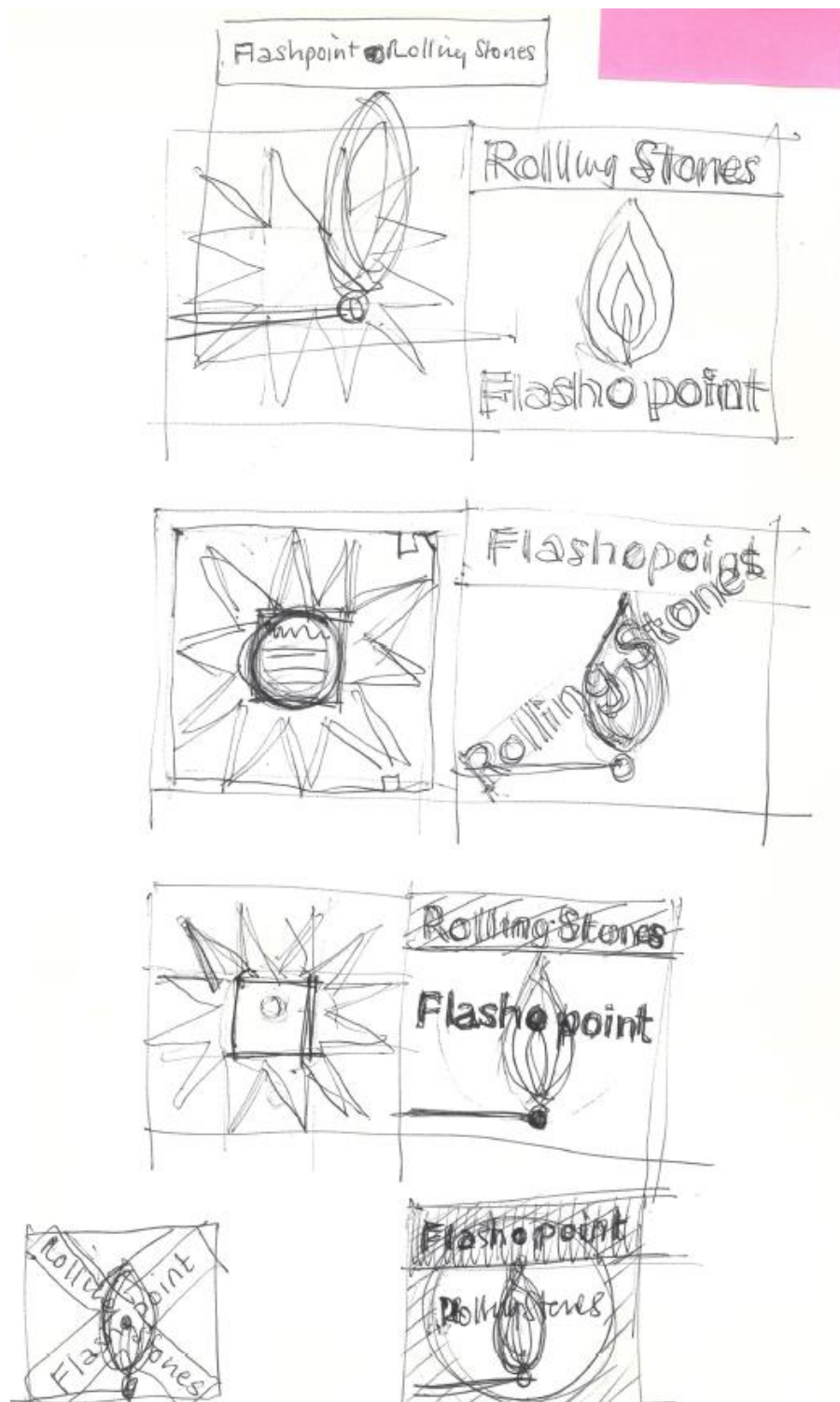




Flashpoint



In the bottom half of the page we see the appearance of the title concept *Flashpoint* and some



ideas hastily put to paper. Is that a person in the right panel? Are they setting something off? *Flashpoint* was born. It developed quickly.

Notice the experiments (left) with the placement of the band name and title.

Gradually, the flame became the focal point of the design.

The explosion was quickly destined for the rear cover. The top row shows a 12-point explosion,

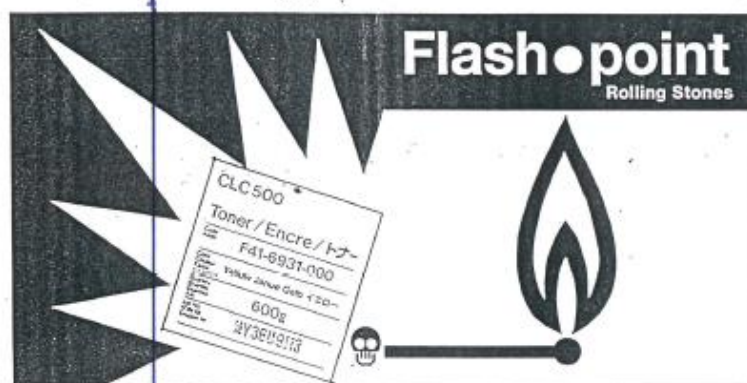
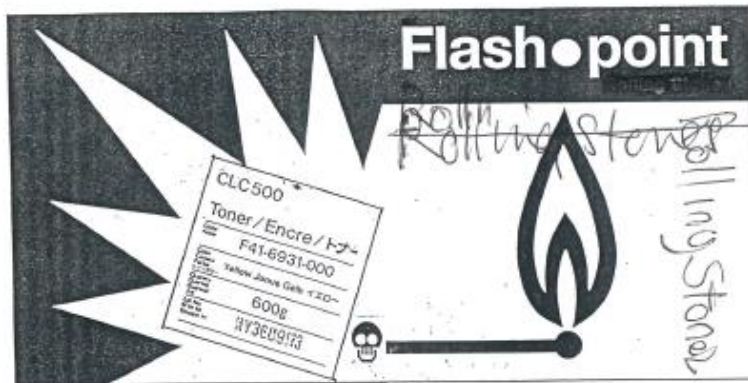
the middle is a 10-point explosion, the bottom is a twelve again. The double lines of the middle sketch show the germ of the white explosion outlined in black concept that survived to the rear cover.



The title has two alternate spellings: *Flash Point* and *Flashpoint*. Early sentiment was with *Flash Point* it seems.

At left, find the maturing concept. Crow's note says, "get the type the same size."

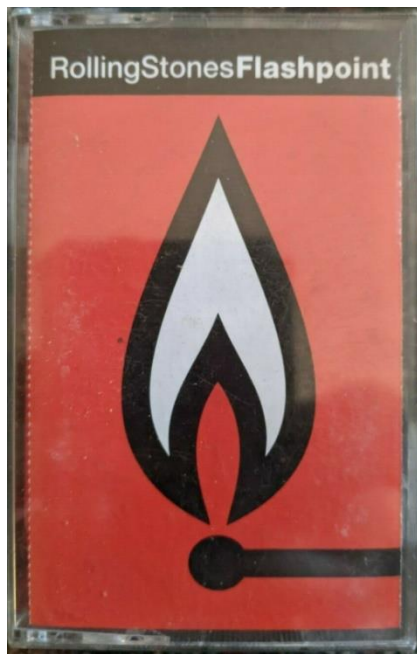
LP reductions - 25/1/91 WITH G. MAX AT.  
Flashpoint - match



reaction & get type same size

Richards skull ring has found its rear cover home in the design along with the twelve-point outlined explosion (below). Notice the faint pencil markings. They suggest extending the match fuse onto the rear cover.

The circle beneath the explosion? Could that have been the beginning of the decision to move Richards' the ring there? Below you see the final cassette cover contrasted with an earlier concept in a different color scheme.



type same size

Granted, I am a fan boy, but I always thought the Stones got the song right when compared to the studio outtakes. I am thinking the same thing of Crow and Mouat, yeah, they got the cover right.

### **The Booklet**

A vinyl version of *Flashpoint* was never released in the US, so full size copies of the enclosed 12-page booklet are rather rare. A version of the booklet, however, was included with the CD package. The photos that follow, show the vinyl version of the booklet. Slightly different arrangements can be found in different releases. The photographs were taken by Claude Gassian, Dima Safari, Eugene Adebare, Kevin Mazur, Mark Fisher, and Paul Natkin. The booklet was arranged by Crow and Mouat.

# Rolling Stones Flashpoint

## Live / Vive / ライブ

Recorded Live 1989-90 Steel Wheels / Urban Jungle World Tour

Side One / 1 (Intro) Continental Drift / 2 Start Me Up / 3 Bad Bad Bad / 4 Miss You /  
5 Ruby Tuesday / 6 You Can't Always Get What You Want / 7 Factory Girl /  
8 Little Red Rooster # / Side Two / 9 Paint It Black / 10 Sympathy For The Devil /  
11 Brown Sugar / 12 Jumpin' Jack Flash / 13 Satisfaction / 14 Highwire\* / 15 Sex Drive\*\*

Mick Jagger lead vocals, guitars and harmonica

Keith Richards vocals and guitars

Ron Wood guitars

Bill Wyman bass guitar

Charlie Watts drums

Matt Clifford keyboards and french horn

Chuck Leavell keyboards

Bobby Keys saxophone

Horns by The Uptown Horns—Arno Hecht, Paul Littoral, Bob Funk and Crispian Cioe

Bernard Fowler background vocals

Lisa Fisher background vocals (courtesy of Elektra Entertainment, a division of Warner Communications, Inc.)

Cindy Mizelle background vocals (courtesy of Atlantic Recording Corp.)

Eric Clapton guitar on # (courtesy of Reprise Records, Inc.)

Bernard Fowler background vocals on \*

Tessa Niles and Katie Kleasen background vocals on \*

Produced by Chris Kimsey and The Glimmer Twins

Mixed by Christopher Marc Potter

Assistant engineers Richard Sullivan and Spencer May

\*Mixed by Chris Kimsey and Mark Stent

\*\*Engineered by Mark Stent

\*Assistant engineer Charlie Smith

Mastered at Masterdisk by Bob Ludwig

Read crew Pierre de Beauport, David Conyers, Chuck Magee, Jeff McGinnis,

Tony Russell, Stephen Shephard, Angus Sutherland and Andy Topeka

Front of house sound by Benjie Lefevre

Monitor sound by Christopher Wade-Evans

Logistics by Alan Dunn and Arnold Dunn

Live recordings by Bob Clearmountain, David Hewitt and Remote Recording Services,  
Cedric Beatty, Harry Braun and Dierk's Recording Mobile

Art direction and design by Garry Moust and David Crow

Photographs by Eugene Adebari, Mark Fisher (courtesy Fisher Park Ltd.), Claude Gassian,

Kevin Mazur, Paul Nadkin and Dima Safari

Artwork co-ordination by Tony King

Recording co-ordination by Janice Crotch and Sherry Daly

Album co-ordination by Jeff Schock

Thanks to Prince Rupert Lowenstein, Sonja Luinge, Tony McCusg, Clare Turner,

Fay van Engelen, Andrew Wilkinson, John Wohlgenuth, Michael Ahern, Michael Cohl,

Mark Fisher, Paddy Grafton-Green, Karen Kearns, Richard Lahar, David Nutter,

Miranda Payne, Joe Rascoff, Jane Rose, Linda Smith, Patrick Woodroffe, Ian Sylvester,

Kris Kotloff, John Jones and Scott Brislin

All tracks written by M. Jagger / K. Richards except track 8 by W. Dixon. All tracks published  
by ABKCO Music Inc. USA except tracks 1, 3, 14, 15 by Promopub B.V.; tracks 2, 4 by EMI  
Music and track 8 by Hoodie Coochie Music; administered by Bug Music.

Special thanks to Roland Sound Space 

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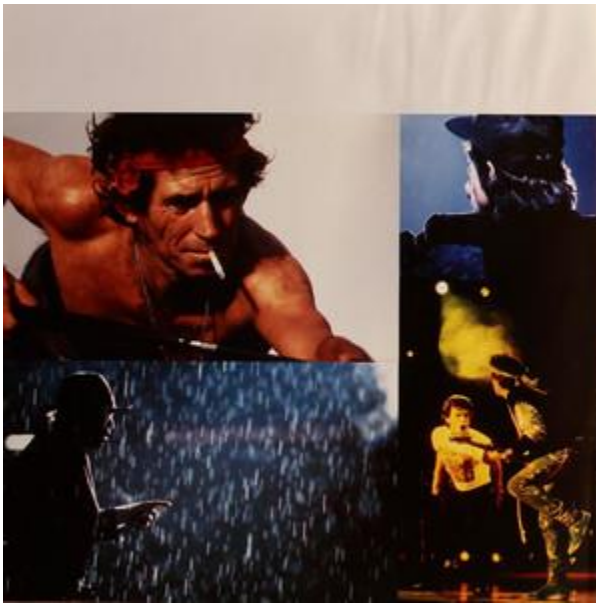




Notice this photo was taken at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum shown below, in October 1989.











*Flashpoint* was The Rolling Stones' final release under their Sony Music contract. The Stones, with the exception of Wyman, signed a new long-term worldwide deal with Virgin Records in 1991. Thirty years after joining the band, the 55-year-old Wyman decided that he had other interests he wanted to pursue. He decided to bow out after the recently completed *Steel Wheels* tour, although he did not officially announce his departure until January 1993. During that time the rest of the band had repeatedly asked him to reconsider. After his departure, Ronnie Wood, ended his 18-year apprenticeship when he was taken off salary and finally made a full member of the Rolling Stones. Richards, speaking on the subject of Wyman's departure said, "At the end of the Urban Jungle tour Bill said he was leaving the band. I got really pissed with him. I threatened to do everything in the world to him, including death at dawn - as I

always say, nobody leaves this band except in a coffin. But he made up his mind: he'd really started to hate flying, he developed a real fear of flying. Now, this was pretty strange after 25 years, but it happens to people. He was having to drive to every gig, which was knacker him, and sometimes people get to the end of their tether." Maybe Wyman's departure was the bombshell seen on the rear cover.

## Packaging

I bought *Flashpoint* in the compact disc format. My turntable, first confined to storage then disposed of (since gloriously replaced!) meant I was full in on this new (since 1984) CD format and busily duplicating my Stones vinyl collection. I have never owned *Flashpoint* in vinyl, but it was never released in vinyl in the US. As a result, I spent more than two decades thinking the cover art was a struck match. If you flip over the CD jewel box there is a track list, rather than a flashpoint explosion above a replica of Keith Richards' ring. It took me decades to see the art as it was intended. I suspect I may not have been the only one living in that ignorance.



Crow was asked about the challenges of designing art for vinyl, cassettes, and CDs. He had this to say, "You need to be conscious, at that time it was vinyl, cassette, and CD, so yea, you gotta be conscious that it's gotta translate across all three. But the sorta boldness of all of it came from them [The Stones] talking about their audience but partly the way they wanted the record to be seen. So, all of the early stuff had quite a bit of energy in it. It was fairly complex and they were saying, look, our audience are kinda bikers, they're American bikers, they like things to be



straightforward. I'd like it to be simpler. I'd like it to be something they'd be pleased to have on a t-shirt. They were very much aware of their audience but also the way this piece of work would be used beyond the piece of vinyl. And then the other thing that was really kind of key actually, was the Gulf War at the time. So, when

they recorded “Highwire” they were really quite affected by that. I remember that from meetings. They were nervous about flying because of that. They were nervous about going back to the States. I think Mick was going back to Mustique. So, the whole thing around the war made them want to do something that was a lot more direct and almost kind of political, in a way.



### Working With The Stones

The Stones of the 21<sup>st</sup> century aren't Andrew Loog Oldham's Stones. In fact, they are not like any other band on the planet. So, it comes as no surprise to learn they operate a bit differently than most bands when it comes to album art as well. The Stones contracted directly with the artists—all the better to control the art with, my dear.

Crow describes it like this, “It was just a fascination of working for, you know I’ve worked for a lot of bands and was used to meeting musicians, but they are of a different level, as a company, if you like. At times it felt as if you were working for Coca Cola. Another thing that just sort of underlines that, it’s quite unusual, is that they commission the sleeve out themselves, not the record company. So, normally the record company will commission you to do it and then introduce you to the artist as part of the relationship. In this case, the band commissioned the work, commissioned all the sleeve art, the full contract was with the Rolling Stones and then



they sold it to Sony. It's good business. They own the art. They sell it to Sony, they sell it to whoever, so they are selling that sleeve art all over the world for wherever that record was released and that was their business model. They were in control. That was a very unusual model for us. The contract was directly with the band."

Crow shared a few more anecdotes about working for the Stones. "There were quite a few moments. Tony King, I don't know if you know about Tony, he was quite a character. There



The Brit Awards

**1991** 10 / 02 / 1991 - Dominion Theatre, London  
Hosted By Simon Bates (voice over)

**George Michael**  
Best British Album

**Lisa Stansfield**  
Best British Female

**The Cure**  
Best British Group

**Elton John**  
Best British Male

**Betty Boo**  
Best British Newcomer

**Chris Thomas**  
Best British Producer

**MC Hammer**  
Best International Newcomer

**Twin Peaks**  
Best Soundtrack/Cast Recording

**Status Quo**  
Outstanding Contribution

**Depeche Mode**  
Best British Single

**The Beautiful South**  
Best British Video

**Sir George Solti**  
Best Classical Recording

**Sinead O'Connor**  
Best International Female

**INXS**  
Best International Group

**Michael Hutchence**  
Best International Male

were a lot of stories. ...Mick asked us, I remember once, I think it was the Brit Awards, a tv thing here, because they were in London they had been invited to go to the Brit Awards. And they were kind of not sure if they should do it or not.

If it was a cool thing to do a daft thing to do. So, they would ask us questions like that. Should we go to the Brit Awards? No, don't do that.

They were all in hotels they were in different hotels in London and they never used their real names. It was like dealing with spies or something. Before the meeting we would get a phone call from Tony to say this is the name we are using today. So, you would go up to this smart little Hotel in Holland Park in London and say "I've come to see Mr. Archer." That was the code name for the day and everybody in reception knew that was Mick Jagger. Everything was very codey, which I found quite amusing. You were not allowed to use a real name and you also got a briefing from the manager after the meeting. So, you get back to the studio and you usually get a phonecall within an hour after the meeting and they say when you were in that meeting you heard Mick talking to Keith on the phone about this, you're not to talk about that. So, we had signed an NDA and we were briefed after every meeting if there was anything that was particularly sensitive. At that time, it was him talking to Keith about going to Charlie's house for Xmas or not, why he didn't want to go and stuff like that, it was the kind of personal information and the manager was aware that is the sort of tittle tattle that ends up in the tabloid. So, I found all of that really interesting. They were just clients so to say, but you kinda got a glimpse of what their life was like and how careful they need to be.

He also had a personal trainer, he took calls when we were there sometimes. He would take a call from a personal trainer who was looking at London on a map and looking at where his hotel

was and giving him a running route for the day, a set of exercises to do based on where he was. They had quite a lot of infrastructure around them, a lot of attention. Which, again was a bit of a surprise. He would not just go for a run, someone would have to mark out how far it should be, and make sure it's in a quiet route. He's very, very health conscious. Garry could not come to 2 or 3 of the meetings because he had a cold. We were warned about that. That was in the contract. If you were ill we were not to go to the meetings."

### **Mick's Attention To Detail**

Crow recollected he had five or so meetings with the Stones as they worked on the album art. Speaking about his meetings, Crow said it was, "...mostly Mick, always met them with a manager we never met them on their own. That was heavily chaperoned. So, we met Mick about five times, maybe, we met Keith once and we met Charlie with Mick and Keith at the recording studio once. So, I only met Charlie once, unfortunately. But most of it was Mick's baby. He was the one who was really interested in the sleeve art. Actually, the other thing he did which amazed me really, attention to detail, he did things like promotional videos for people who would be selling them at the shop. Speaking directly to them, "Hi, it's Mick here. I'm going to tell you about our new album." That kind of level of marketing attention is really quite impressive."

### **The Artists**

David Crow (left) studied Communication Design at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has worked as a designer in London for Assorted iMaGes and as Art Director for Island Records before running his own consultancy. As a freelance designer he worked for such clients as the



Rolling Stones, Virgin Records, Phonogram and the Royal Shakespeare Company. He subsequently transitioned into academia as Head of the Department of Graphic Arts at Liverpool John Moores University. He is currently Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Arts London, one of the UK's oldest providers of creative education.

Garry Mouat is a designer, artist and teacher and an original member of the Touch audio-visual publishing project as well as a one-time employee of Malcolm Garrett's Assorted iMaGes design company. He was also associate creative director at 53K. He has



created iconic designs for clients such as the Rolling Stones, Peter Gabriel's Realworld records and Yes.

He is a freelance art designer.

### Wyman's Swan Song

The Rolling Stones made two videos with Julien Temple to promote their two new recordings, "Highwire" and "Sex Drive." "Highwire" was released in March 1991 and Bill Wyman is conspicuously absent from the video despite having played bass on the track. This was the first Rolling Stones production without the bass guitarist. Whose decision was that? [\(23\) The Rolling Stones - Highwire - OFFICIAL PROMO - YouTube](#)

"Sex Drive" released in July 1991 does feature Wyman on bass. There was also an MTV video on the making of "Sex Drive." Wyman's last appearance as a Rolling Stone is captured on one of these two videos, depending on whether the MTV documentary was completed after the video was filmed or not.



The top two screen captures are from the MTV documentary. The left capture shows the first time Wyman appears on the video. The right capture shows his last appearance. The bottom screen capture shows Wyman's last appearance with his bass as a Rolling Stone at 4:06 into the "Sex Drive" video. One of these two captures represents Bill's last official appearance as a Rolling Stone.

[\(23\) The Rolling Stones - Sex Drive - OFFICIAL PROMO \(EXPLICIT\) - YouTube](#)

[\(23\) The Rolling Stones - Sex Drive documentary \(MTV 1991\) - YouTube](#)

Bill, you had me at "Not Fade Away."

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