

## ***Through the Past Darkly (Big Hits Vol. 2)***

*Beggars Banquet* came out in December 1968. *Through the Past Darkly* resulted from the confluence of several events. It had been a rough year for the Rolling Stones and ten months had passed since they had released *Beggars Banquet*. They needed to acknowledge the death of band founder Brian Jones, get their megahit 'Honky Tonk Women' onto an album, and put some music into stores to build interest for their first American tour in three years. It did not hurt that the Stones had many hits since their 1966 greatest-hits compilation, *Big Hits: High Tide and Green Grass*. Enter *Through the Past Darkly*.

### Your Choice

Brian Jones: 1 Corinthians 12-14 may be familiar to some. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. **12** For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. **13** And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity."

Ingmar Bergman: *Through a Glass Darkly* may be less well known. It is a 1961 Swedish family drama film written and directed by Ingmar Bergman. The film tells the story of a young woman with schizophrenia spending time with her family on a remote island, and having delusions about meeting God, who appears to her in the form of a monstrous spider.

The title of this homage to Brian Jones has two origin stories. One is the title is a play on a line from the King James Version of the Bible 1 Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." The other is that the Stones intended an homage to Ingmar Bergman and his 1961 film *Through a Glass Darkly*.

### **Letters? We've Got Letters!**

On January 1, 1969, Mick Jagger wrote artist M.C. Escher a letter asking Escher to provide an image for the Stones' second volume of greatest hits. Jagger, a big Escher fan, addresses the letter informally to Maurits. Jagger graciously offers Mr. Escher (no fool I) the opportunity to reverse the charges on a phone call (youngsters ask a senior citizen what that means). The letter's content follows.

Dear Maurits,

For quite some time now I have had in my possession your book (*Graphic Works Of...*) and it never ceases to amaze me each time I study it! In fact I think your work is quite incredible and it would make me very happy for a lot more people to see and know and understand exactly what you are doing.

In March or April this year, we have scheduled our next LP record for release, and I am most eager to reproduce one of your works on the cover-sleeve. Would you please consider either designing a "picture" for it, or have you any unpublished works which you might think suitable -the "optical illusion" idea very much appeals to me, although one like "Evolution" would of course be equally as suitable. -and would say the same thing. You might even like to do a long one like "Metamorphosis" which we could then reproduce as a folding-out sleeve. It could be either in one colour or full colour, that would be up to you entirely.

Naturally, both you and your publishers would get full credits on the sleeve, and we could negotiate a fee on hearing of your decision to do it. I would be most grateful if you could contact Peter Swales or Miss Jo Bergman at the above address or telephone (reverse charge), and either will give you every

necessary assistance. However, I am not so fortunate as to possess a Dutch interpreter, and so if you do not speak English or French, I would again be grateful if you could fix up somebody in Baarn to oblige.

Yours very sincerely,  
MICK JAGGER  
for ROLLING STONES LTD.

Apparently, Mr. Escher was not as big a fan of the Stones as they were of him. His reply follows.

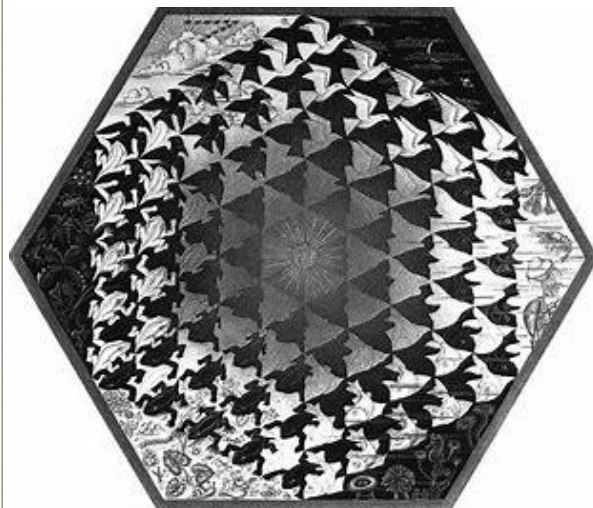
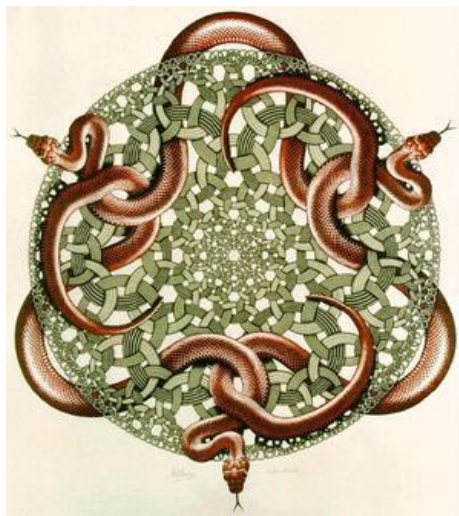
Dear Sir [addressed to Mr. Peter Swales],

Some days ago I received a letter from Mr. Jagger asking me to design a picture or to place at his disposal unpublished work to reproduce on the cover-sleeve for an LP record.

My answer to both questions must be no, as I want to devote all my time and attention to the many commitments I made; I cannot possibly accept any further assignments or spend any time on publicity.

By the way, please tell Mr. Jagger I am not Maurits to him, but  
Very sincerely,  
M. C. Escher.

Escher was 70 at the time and was busy working on an elaborate wood-cut called Snakes. An iorr.org forum post that brought this all to light added: "In an ensuing letter, Mick Jagger asked for permission to use the Escher image "Verbum" a hexagonal image for which a hexagonal album cover would be designed, a request that was again denied. Escher claimed that he was not offended by the "over-familiarity" of Mick's letter, it was more that he received so many requests, and in all fairness to all the other refusals, he could not make an exception to that rule."



M.C. Escher's 'Snakes' and 'Verbum'

Undeterred, Jagger approached Andy Warhol to design a cover for the upcoming album. On April 21, 1969 he sent the letter below to Warhol.

Dear Andy,

I am really pleased you can do the art-work for our new hits album. Here are 2 boxes of material which you can use, and the record.

In my short sweet experience, the more complicated the format of the album, e.g., more complex than just pages or fold-out, the more fucked-up the reproduction and agonizing the delays. But, having said that, I leave it in your capable hands to do whatever you want.....and please write back saying how much money you would like.

Doubtless a Mr. Al Steckler will contact you in New York, with any further information. He will probably look nervous and say "Hurry up" but take little notice.

Love,

Mick Jagger



Mick Jagger's 1969 letter to Andy Warhol

Popular mythology says Warhol sent a suggested album cover to the Stones' Office but it was misplaced. In any event Warhol did not work on *Through the Past Darkly*. Alas, the top tier of artists did not bite on the album cover, thus, opening the door for Ethan Russell. Russell was a San Francisco native who had barely begun a photographic career when he fell in with the Stones through the embryonic Rolling Stone magazine's London stringer, Jonathan Cott. Peter Swales, of the Escher embroglio above, claims credit for the basic photo ideas. In an interview Swales said, "I have to guess it must have been circa spring 1969 that all five Rolling Stones were ever together in one and the same place--the occasions, (1) a photo of them lying flat on the ground at St. Katharine's Dock in East London, and (2) the photo you see on the front jacket of *Through The Past Darkly*. These were two ideas I had had and had put to Ethan Russell, who completely miscarried the first idea in terms of what I had had in mind, a white backdrop so as to give the illusion of guys floating." In a personal communication, Russell said of Swales contention, "Totally NOT his ideas. Honestly, some people. For better or worse the front was absolutely mine. The inside I think was Mick's." And so the idea began to take flight.

## The Photoshoots

The *Sunday Times* described Russell's meeting the Stones. "Russell, a scruffy 23-year-old Californian, hit it off with the singer, and from 1968 to '72 was the Rolling Stones' main photographer. One of his early sessions featured Brian Jones at his home, Cotchford Farm in East Sussex, previously owned by A. A. Milne. Russell's pictures of Jones, draped around a statue of Christopher Robin and provocatively waving a gun, encapsulate the troubled nature of the doomed guitarist, who was found dead at the bottom of his swimming pool six months later. But it's Russell's photographs of the band on their 1969 US tour – most unseen until now – that provide the most compelling insight."

<https://www.vintag.es/2018/09/brian-jones-by-ethan-russell.html>

Bill Wyman wrote, "Luckily, in our desire to be seen and heard as breaking new ground artistically. We attracted people with original ideas, such as photographer Ethan Russell." Russell says the outer and inner sleeves were shot on different days. Russell says the studio shoot was first, so it was likely a few days before the outdoor shoot. Mick got word to Brian Jones that if he did not turn up for the photo session for the cover of the Stones new oldies album, he was out of the band for sure. Brian duly arrived at Ethan Russell's studio, which was located near South Kensington Station.

The Stones wore what they wanted. If you missed the Swinging London age, these clothes say it all. The idea for the cover was Russell's. He suggested it to Al Steckler in Allen Klein's office. The idea was passed on to Mick and he liked it. Wyman said, "For the cover of *Through the Past Darkly* back in Ethan's studio, he had set up a huge sheet of glass and took pictures of us with our faces pressed up against it." The glass was held in place by a wooden frame

seen at the bottom of the photo below.

Russell wanted a shattered glass effect for the rear cover. To get the desired effect he had the Stones throw bricks and occasionally a chair at the glass panes but the glass would break uncontrollably, stubbornly refusing to yield the desired effect. Russell said, "The front was shot through one pane of glass but I think we had 10 or fifteen to get the broken glass for the back but they just shattered uncontrollably and it didn't work. Finally used safety glass." Asked who threw what at the glass, Russell said, "All the Stones threw bricks to my knowledge. Can't remember who threw chair." Wyman verifies the story, saying, "He later had us throw chairs and a brick at it until it cracked to enable another imaginative shot..."

"What a canvas it was to work with, one of those strange serendipities: 144 square inches on the front, again on the back, and-if a gatefold—an additional 288 for a total of 576 square inches." Ethan Russell

It seems the chair was more a stool than a chair. On the right, the glass shatters as the stool is thrown through it. Brian and Bill are visible in the back row to the right. Mick is protecting himself with his arm and jacket. Charlie is not clearly visible but he habituates the back row on other photos. It is unlikely anyone in the back row of Stones heaved the chair and Keith's hands are in the air as if he

may have just launched the chair. It is likely he threw the stool.

In an interview Peter Swales said there was a pause of some kind for a half hour or so during the front and rear cover shoots. I speculate whether that could have been to obtain a piece of safety glass, the need for which had not been originally anticipated. Swales says Charlie invited him to join him for a pint of beer at a local pub. When he realized the other four Stones were also enroute Swales says he felt like "a

'gooseberry' (as one says in UK) in that situation, yet I could hardly back out. So at risk of being mistaken by members of the drinking public as one of the band (yeah, I too had long hair), I promptly adopted the persona of man-servant and dealt with all matters at the bar, ordering the drinks and taking them over to



Outtake photos show the wooden frame used to hold the glass panes

the table where the five Stones sat. There shortly followed a bizarre episode -- after a few minutes of stunned silence (don't forget, the band were [over-]dressed for the occasion), a small group of customers started snickering, very audibly, and 'taking the piss'. Whereupon Keith smashed down his glass of beer loudly on the table, thereby commanded silence, and simply stared those guys down with an angry look on his face. “

A second account of this event confirms this saying the Stones stepped into a workingmen's pub for a drink. Their appearance was met with dead silence for awhile, then someone murmured, “Fucking Rolling Stones. Oo bloody cares?” This version has Keith sitting with his back to the crowd. He slammed his glass down on the table, hard. Dead silence returned after Keith's veiled threat.

It was the last time all five Stones were together. It would also be the last photoshoot to feature Brian Jones with the group.

Photos for the inner sleeve were taken on a different day at a different location. For the sleeve of *Through the Past Darkly* technicians had been at St. Katharine's Dock located in the Bermondsey District of London, next to Tower Bridge, from 8:30 a.m. on May 21, 1969 setting up a hydraulic platform. Wyman takes up the story, “On Wednesday, 21 May I met up with the boys for an afternoon photo session with Ethan Russell at St. Katharine's Dock, next to Tower Bridge. We needed a cover for our second greatest hits album.” Russell said, “I'm pretty sure it was Mick's idea to shoot from a crane. Mick tended to take control in these situations. Like the reason the album cover looks like it does is because I asked what color the background should be and he said, ‘Blue.’ “ Bill Wyman picks up the story again, “We lay on the ground in a star shape for the shots, which we used on the inside cover



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#### St. Katharine's Docks

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of St. Katharine by the Tower was established in London. St. Katharine Docks, which took their name from the former hospital, opened in October 1828. It was not a great commercial success because it was unsuitable for servicing the increasing size of cargo ships. In 1967 Peter Sedgely, a painter, had an idea to use the premises for studio space. By 1968 artists began moving in. Film companies regularly used the dock landscape for scenic backgrounds. It was here that the inner sleeve photos for *Through the Past Darkly* were shot.

#### The Front Cover

The photograph of the front cover appears to be a cropped version of this Ethan Russell photo. In the original uncropped picture from the top left clockwise we find Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts, Bill Wyman, and Brian Jones. The hands, also clockwise from the top left, are Mick's right, Keith's left, Charlie's left in the bottom right corner, his right near the center. Bill's left and his right, the fingers of Brian's left, Brian's right (right edge), Keith's right, and Mick's right. There are seven hands on the glass. Five people and nine hands all together, where is the other hand? We have a theory, it is here in this famous extra hand photo of the Stones.



Photo from which front cover was taken.



Extra hand photo of The Rolling Stones by Michael Cooper

Mick has his nose and hand on the single glass pane. Keith has fully engaged his nose and upper lip along with both hands. Charlie may have the most nose crush, if such a thing can be measured, along with a hand. Bill appears satisfied to press his hands only with perhaps a little nose contact. Brian offers the best pig nose and chin along with one hand. The lads are colorfully dressed in everything from a t-shirt (Bill) to a suit and tie (Brian).

On the front cover, the Stones are looking through the glass, as their play list takes the buyer through the Stones past, darkly or otherwise.





UK version of the front cover

### The Rear Cover

The rear cover is the shot that took safety glass to perfect. There are at least seven visible impact points on the rear cover. The rear cover shows Bill front left and Keith front right. Brian is behind Keith and Mick is behind Bill. Charlie has taken a more protected position in a third row behind Mick. Keith appears to be holding the wooden stool in this shot.





Rear cover uncropped photo and album cover.

### The Inner Sleeve

The pattern of the Stones has been described as a star and a pentagram. All the Stones except Brian seem to have their eyes closed. Everyone has a jacket. Mick, Keith and Charlie have their arms extended above their shoulders. Keith's hands are the most open, Charlie has begun to furl his, and Mick's hands are half-closed. Bill's hands are palms down by his side while Brian's are gathered on either side of his belt buckle. Bill and Keith have their feet crossed at the ankles while the other three Stones are all toes up. Brian has a wide tie-like scarf tied about his neck, Charlie is the only one with a buttoned jacket. The relaxed and closed-eyes poses of the Stones give a sense of floating to the picture, perhaps evoking Swales original idea.

A second shot of the area where the Stones formed the star was taken with no one present. Neither Ethan Russell nor the Stones could have imagined that day it would become the backdrop for a tribute to Brian Jones. The right side of the inner sleeve presents this blank view. Centered near the top one finds:

BRIAN JONES (1943 – 1969)

*When this you see remember me  
and bear me in your mind  
Let all the world say what they may  
speak of me as you find*

The words are described variously as a "tribute to Brian Jones" and "an anonymous poem chosen by Brian Jones." These words have also been described as a variant on a rhyme traditionally written in schoolbooks which usually goes something like:

Brian Jones it is my name  
 And England is my nation  
 Cheltenham is my dwelling place  
 And Christ is my salvation  
 When I am dead and in my grave  
 And all my bones are rotten  
 If this you see, remember me  
 When I am quite forgotten.



Inner sleeve of *Through the Past Darkly*

Below the words dedicated to Brian is the set list, which varies from the US to the UK version. An \* indicates the song appears on both versions. No two songs occupy the same position on either album.

UK Version Side One	US Version Side One
Jumpin' Jack Flash*	Paint It Black
Mother's Little Helper*	Ruby Tuesday*
2000 Light Years from Home*	She's a Rainbow*
Let's Spend the Night Together*	Jumpin' Jack Flash*
You Better Move On	Mother's Little Helper*
We Love You	Let's Spend The Night Together*
UK Version Side Two	US Version Side Two
Street Fighting Man*	Honky Tonk Women*
She's a Rainbow*	Dandelion*
Ruby Tuesday*	2000 Light Years From Home*
Dandelion*	Have You Seen Your Mother Baby Standing in the Shadow?
Sittin' on a Fence	Street Fighting Man*
Honky Tonk Women*	

Playlists for UK and US versions of *Through the Past Darkly*





Brian Jones' grave

Following the playlists are credits and production information. This is a modest tribute to Brian Jones. Unless one considers the music. Writer Mitchell Cohen says Brian's sitar drives 'Paint It, Black,' his recorder makes 'Ruby Tuesday' unusually haunting. Jones is all over 'Mother's Little Helper' with his 12-string guitar, he's on organ on 'Let's Spend the Night Together,' on saxophone and mellotron on 'Dandelion,' and back on mellotron on '2000 Light Years from Home' and 'She's a Rainbow.'

### Cover Shape

Jagger experienced frustration putting together the sleeve for the album that eventually appeared in the hexagonal shape. Finally, he erupted in a cable to Ronnie Schneider, manager Allan Klein's nephew, at the Klein Office on May 13: "Your inefficiency is a drag. What the fuck did you do with all the photographs, not the press cuttings, the photographs? They were supposed to be

delivered to Andy Warhol. We await your reply."

The octagonal shape seems to have been Jagger's idea, although it began as a hexagon in the letter exchange with Escher. Victor Kahn a 26 year-old New York graphic artist designed album packaging for Alan Steckler for ABKCO. Kahn said, "My first Stones involvement was the strange octagon-shaped album. Sure, cutting off the corners of the album was a great idea, but it was really more about updating album sounds reproduction and content on a compilation which contained the first stereo releases of songs like 'Honky Tonk Women,' 'Ruby Tuesday,' and 'Jumpin' Jack Flash.'"

On June 8, 1969 Brian Jones quit the Rolling Stones. By July 3 he was dead. Thus, ended the past darkly. In September 12, 1969, the album was released dedicated to Brian's memory. It was issued in a six-sided die-cut sleeve. The album carried an epitaph as if it were on Brian's tombstone. The events also add a poignancy to the album cover. On the front, the Stones appear as captives in a glass menagerie. On the rear, we see them breaking out of their confines. In between, we find Brian's death, as if it was necessary for the escape of who or what we cannot say, but perhaps Brian smiles.

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