

REDEMPTION ON MAIN STREET

by Karla Tipton

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"Exile on Main St." wasn't considered a masterpiece by rock critics until many months after its release in May of 1972. It was avant garde, in every sense of the word, and wasn't "understood" at the time of its release. The critics slagged it unmercifully at first. But, as they listened to it a few more times in an attempt ~~to~~ break through its dense, thick walls, its genius was finally seen.

The album is a combination of many things. It tells many tales. It tells the story of a ~~ten-year-old~~ English rock band—survivors of the sixties—and their experiences on the road in America. The album was very experimental, even for the Stones. It was recorded in the South of France in a basement studio—but the album is about America.

"Exile" is the story of America through the eyes of road-weary Rolling Stones. They are a rock band, so rock and roll music is the medium. The Stones, being a very spontaneous group, probably didn't intentionally mean the album to be "about" them, or America, or even to be "artistic." They strived to make a good rock and roll record. They WERE concerned with sound; they mixed and remixed the tapes looking for the best sound. By listening to the album, it's easy to tell the lyrics are secondary, because they are

often all but drowned ^{out} in the music. "Exile" is more than a story of America; it is a feeling.

Rock and roll, in traditional terms, is about desperation and redemption with a good beat. This traditional way of regarding rock is what the Stones have always tried to do. It is American born and is truly an American creation. The Stones have only occasionally gotten away from these rock and roll roots.

Rock was on the edge of becoming an accepted art form, in 1972. "Exile" was one of the albums that took it over into the realm of art. Recorded in a transitional period for rock and roll, the album spans the gap between the powerful pop tunes of the sixties, and the indulgent, showy rock of the seventies.

The Stones bring together the auidial and the visual with this album. The album cover is laid out film style. The music is an auidial movie. Through the songs, the Stones show picture images of America—fragmented movies that are a combination of our past and present desires.

The album cover itself, and the inserted postcards, contribute to the whole of "Exile." The cover is very visual and as detailed as the lyrics, when you can decipher them.

America in 1972 was still feeling the shock waves of the sixties—fragmented, confused, and photogenic. The new era of news, television, movies and newspapers is evident on "Exile on Main St." Robert Frank, who experimented in film-making and photography, designed the album sleeve. He took the pictures

of the circus freaks on the front of the cover and arranged them. The title of the album, "Exile on Main St." explains much. Who are more obvious exiles on Main Street than freaks in a circus? Open the album and look at the front and back at the same time. Added to the circus freaks are pictures of the members of the Stones displayed in a similar fashion. The ~~Stones~~, too, are exiles on Main Street in a way. They survived the sixties, with one casualty (Brian Jones), and seeing the seventies looming ahead they are uncertain how to proceed. Having acquired the status of rock and roll royalty after the Beatles broke up, the Stones ~~are~~ the sole heirs of a sixties heritage. They ~~were~~ ^{are} watched and stared at and revelled at, but they ~~were~~ ^{are} exiles in 1972 because they were one of a kind. "Exile," by being about America, is also about alienation; and the exiled Stones ~~were~~ ^{are} as alienated as anyone.

The cover, as it is laid before you, is ~~the~~ fragmented. My eyes want to jump all over the cover, never resting on one thing, never being drawn one direction, but all directions at once. There ~~was~~ ^{is} a kind of feeling, at the time, of not knowing where to turn, of only seeing glimpses of people, only their outer selves—impersonal newspaper pictures of America 1972.

Turning the cover over and looking at the inside spread, my eyes are drawn two ways—to Joan Crawford, on the left, and to the four pictures of Mick Jagger running down the middle on the right. Movie impressions and reflections (check out the bottom left along the center crease) glare at you. A glimpse of the fantasy life the Stones lead is compared to the celluloid

heroes of Hollywood. In fact, Mick kind of resembles Joan Crawford as she is in the large picture on the left.

This side of the sleeve is full of puns, which, I think, shows that the Stones, in their alienation, make the best of the situation and even laugh at it. This will be illustrated further when I discuss the postcards. On the left side of the inner side of the sleeve, the names of the movies on the ticket booth are humorous when related to the Stones. "A Woman's Face," for one. Mick has always been considered androgynous. And, "The Atomic Kid," Mick has always been known as, at the least, energetic on stage. A little poke of fun at the image is evident here. But within the ticket booth, selling the tickets—another freak? As if there is a harsh reality always behind the fun, zaniness of their world.

Another very obvious eye catcher is the lips and tongue with "sweet taste of joy" written below it, and "she never knew who was COMING to dinner but she always KEPT IT WARM" written above it. It seems to be an advertisement for a pornographic movie. The tongues are numerous on the sleeve, and certainly suggest a kind of perverse, loveless kind of sex. The shapes of the lips and tongue themselves suggest this specifically. It could be a variation of the Rolling Stones logo of the tongue, but it seems to me to signify more.

Sex is a large part of this album, as it usually is a primary part of the Stones music and appeal. Sex here illustrates the unfulfilled American fantasy so evident to the Stones when they're on the road. As rock and roll royalty, it is a reality to the group that people try to live out their fantasies through them. There is a mystique surrounding rock and roll, and

perhaps the Stones more than anybody, that suggests allowable, glamorous immorality and the fulfillment of fantasy. The Stones have always understood this as part of their image.

Scraps of lyrics dot the inner sleeve. "Got to scrape the shit right off your shoes," from "Sweet Virginia," and "I gave you the diamonds, you gave me disease," from "Rip this Joint,"—just scraps, just fragments. Nothing seems complete on "Exile," which is one barrier to the new listener.

The album, as a whole, is experienced in parts, in fragments. There is so much to it, so much sleeve, so many postcards, so much music, that it is truly hard to experience it as a gestalt. The first reaction is confusion, fear of its immenseness. That is why it took so long for critics to praise it. The album is too dense the first time around. Like Ezra Pound's Cantos, or perhaps ^{Picasso's} "Guernica" in its immenseness, it is a work that has to be lived with for awhile. An immenseness compared to, perhaps, the immenseness of America the European visitor experiences the first time he comes to America.

Pull out the inner sleeves and look at the "picture" sides of them.

More pieces of film, more fragments of lyrics, and again, like the Joan Crawford movies, more glimpses of America past. Pictures of a younger, American idealism, the belief in their army and their country, and patriotism. And pictures of 1972 America. Doubts: "I don't want to/talk about Jesus/ I just want/to see his face." Violence: "Rescuer Stabbed." Here even the heroes are overcome. Post-sixties shock and disillusionment.

Turn the inner pockets over. The song titles and credits are like graffiti on the wall. Mick Jagger printed the credits himself, perhaps in an effort to get closer to the people—to show them that he is human and not just an object of their fantasies. How else but with graffiti? A distinct plea to the common man.

Pictures, like unrolled movies, dot the sleeves. The lonesome highway which goes off endlessly—the road the Stones traveled so often. It is probably going west where everyone's soul is drawn. The endless road is America's own symbol.

The titles of the songs themselves tell a story. Reading through them, one can already get a feel from the album. American subjects are plentiful: casinos, dice, and even Virginia, though here it is a woman's name.

The postcards are more difficult to comprehend. I experience them several ways. First of all, as an extra "goodie" included with the album. When I discovered^{ed} how many there ~~are~~, and how difficult they ~~are~~ to read and look at at the same time, I always ~~felt~~ consternation. I found out the best way ~~is~~ to spread them full-length on the floor and get right down there with them.

Besides^s the difficulty in physically experiencing them, the story they ~~tell~~ in sequence always seems ~~is~~ inane. Again, the immenseness of the project of actually seeing what these postcards ~~have~~ to say is a deterrent to most people. When I finally ~~take~~ the time, I ~~find~~ several things. The postcards, still attached to one another (and I feel that is how they were meant to be experienced) resemble a strip of film, like most of the pictures on the sleeve. This strip is from a part of the movie "Exile on Main Street" concerning a "fall." Again, just a glimpse, just a fragment of the movie. And taken out of the context of the movie, it does seem inane and incomprehensible.

Perhaps the inane is the whole^{le} point. The Stones, the actors in the movie, are acting out some craziness. Maybe it is their effort to tell

their fans, the people out here, that it is all an act on their part. That the fantasies connected with them is other than their music and are just fantasies.

In Scene Six it reads, "Mick tries to make the best of it. 'Let's strum up a sing song and all have some fun.'" Then the "fall" takes place, and throws things off. In Scene Ten it reads, "Taylor (Mick Taylor) mumbles despondently, 'Well, I was going to strum up a bit of sing song.'"

Mick Taylor had only been in the group three years at this time and it appears here that he is rather confused at all the things involved with the Stones besides music.

Scene Eleven reads, "Mick Jagger is down but not out, he tries to dance saying, 'Come on give us a tune.'" A persistent effort to carry on with the music. Finally, in the last scene, a resignation. "Taylor realizes the fall is complete, 'they'll be forever Exiles on Main Street.'" He suggests early retirement. "No better not, it's getting quite late and we'll be fogged in forever quite soon.'" Taylor, the only non-original member, says, "they'll be forever Exiles on Main Street." He excludes himself from the group entirely by saying, "they." He knows he's different. The mystique doesn't surround him. Also, he isn't a sixties veteran in the same way the other Stones are, and he's much younger. The last line I assume to be Mick's. It is a decision to make music until they are no longer able to to play until circumstances make it impossible because this is all they CAN do.

Maybe I'm taking the whole thing far too seriously. Maybe it was all just for fun. The postcards may have just been a spur of the moment thing, just an extra, not to mean anything. Perhaps they were just there to mail

out to people. But imagine the reciever of the postcard. How confusing it would be for the addressee to receive just one of these postcards, more fragmented than in the original form because there is just one.

The primary concern is the music, as decided by the Stones themselves. Yet, the music displays its own pictures. The album is full of variety. Many kinds of popular American music is here. "Exile" has often seemed to me as a trip across the country in audial pictures--only glimpses and fragments. Often the words are undecipherable, but this seems unimportant, after awhile, because the FEELING is there. The feeling of the vast, fragmented country full of desires and redemptions there for the taking. "Exile" is the American Dream Movie in audio.

I mentioned earlier that the Stones, on this album, were very concerned with the SOUND. With rock and roll becoming an important art form, they concerned themselves with sound more on "Exile" than they had on any previous album.

Stereo equipment had become fairly advanced in 1972, and it was in the best interests of the Stones to mix the sound to its best quality. However, the album is not less effective on an inexpensive stereo. I think this determines the album's success in terms of sound quality. The fact that it is just as effective on my inexpensive stereo as on an expensive stereo(though it is experienced differently) shows that their concern with sound was not in vain.

Also, the lyrics are purposely hidden in the music, for after all, the music is always their primary concern. Phrases can only be caught sporadically

on some songs. Perhaps the Stones, like Jackson Pollock and others, were trying to escape analysis. A kind of imagist feeling comes from this. The songs are experienced more as songs than as the stories they tell. Their meanings are felt more pre-reflectively. The songs separately are experienced more totally, than if specific lyrics in the songs could be thought about.

The album, then, is also experienced as a gestalt, after one becomes familiar with its ways, than as separate songs. This contributes to the immenseness of the album, together with its visual components, and this is why the album is so hard to grasp all at once on the first listen.

I listen to the album as loudly as I can, taking into consideration parents, neighbors, etc. On my stereo this proves not to be exceedingly loud. Being a cheaper make, my stereo distorts at very loud volumes. One component of rock and roll, I believe, is the loudness. It has always been played loud and, in fact, loses some of its energy otherwise. This is especially true of the Stones, since they work with the very basic styles of rock and roll.

"Exile" is a late night album. Rock flourishes at night, and this album, so fundamental, flourishes like blues flourished in the juke joints down South late at night. "Exile", like ninety percent of the Stones music, is very black blues oriented. The album is best if it is treated as something forbidden. It is best with dim light and solitude.

The first song on side one, "Rocks Off," I liked immediately the first time I heard it. Its rather forbidden subject matter, wet dreams and sexual frustration, didn't occur to me until a long time later, mainly because I couldn't understand most of the words. The music is experienced first.

The tune is catchy and inspiring. There is an intense desire to sing along with it, after getting familiar enough with the song, that proves to be frustrating when you don't know all the words.

The first few notes of the introduction and the gutsy first two words, "Oh, yeah," is very primal and sexually appealing. Years of mystique of Mick Jagger precede this album. Mick's erotic stage performance, his fast life, his glamorous women—all this makes that "Oh, yeah," all the more meaningful and appealing.

The Stones employ the use of saxophones throughout "Exile" starting with this first song. Saxophones and the roots of ^{New Orleans} ~~American~~ jazz—and all jazz for that matter—is felt in this album. He sings, "Kick me like it kicked before," and that is how the song hits us.

The gratification comes from the third verse. After the slow, dreamy bridge, the song suddenly becomes very important. "The sunshine bores the daylight outta me/Chasin' shadows, moonlight mystery," Mick sings. In one of the few lines that can be heard clearly ^{it} is also when the music is most powerful. There is an excitement in that line that transcends the mechanics of the song. Perhaps the fact that being one of the few decipherable lines, ^{whole} the perception of the song is built around that line. To me it seems to be more. It seems that a basic element of the entire album is in that line. The reason the album should be listened to at night is there—the mystery is in the night and anything can happen. The song fades out in a frenzy with the saxophones coming to the fore.

A slight pause, and "Rip this Joint" bursts out. The song is short and loud. Only ^{a few} words are heard at random. Some American cities can be heard mentioned: Sante Fe, Memphis, Dallas. An energy of the music of rock is captured here. "Dig that song on the radio," Mick literally screams. The ever present saxophones rule the song, suggesting jazz. Though Mick Jagger is rock royalty, he has feelings very much in common with the typical, American youth. Felt is an insistent need to what? ~~turn it up?~~

After the first two songs knock us out, side one mellows into a smokier, jazzier mood. "Hip Shake" is hypnotic, sweaty, almost tropical. The harmonica adds to the very black moroccan feeling of the song. The song meanders on, and I find my mind wanders. "Hip Shake" melts into "Casino Boogie." Both these songs glide by at first listen. I had to decide to finally take notice.

"Casino Boogie," just from the title, suggests Las Vegas, U.S.A. This is the first song on the album that any real back-up vocals of Keith Richards can be heard. His very high singing voice contrasts with Mick's and gives this song, as well as others on the album, a distinct flavor. The addition of Keith's ^{sings} adds a desperation to the song. Again, indistinct lyrics are a component of "Casino Boogie." The words that can be heard affect the perception one has of the song. Distinct are, "judge and jury walk out hand in hand," "A factual observation of a new disillusioning knowledge of America's lawmakers as corrupt. And fragments of lyrics, such as, "million dollar Sally" and "Got no time in hand."

Musically, the earthy sax is present. The lead guitar winds through a leisurely and bluesy solo. The song has a walking-down-the-street beat.

When "Tumbling Dice" first starts, my attention always ~~re~~ rivets back from my wandering thoughts.

In 1972, this was the hit single from the album that went to number one. "Tumbling Dice" is one of the Stones best songs in their now eighteen years existence as a group. It certainly captures something of the time it was written. Not necessarily what it is about, but how it feels. It reeks of early seventies, post-sixties.

"Tumbling Dice" is a feeling—especially the first time you hear it; because, unless it is listened to ~~it~~ over and over again, only a few phrases can be understood. Again, the experience of the song revolves around, primarily the music, and secondarily, the few phrases that can be heard. Phrases such as, "low-down women, cheating like I don't know how", "the deuces are wild", "don't you see time flashing by", "you can be my partner in crime", and the chorus, "you got to roll me, call me the tumbling dice."

The song can't MEAN anything with so little to go on. But the winding music, and the powerful guitar solo bridge before the third verse, makes the song mean something. In 1972 I don't know how many people knew all the words to "Tumbling Dice," but I know that is not what made it number one.

The repetition of the guitar riff at the end—da da-da daaa daaa da-da—and the line "you got to roll me" makes you want to sing along, much in the way "Rocks Off" does.

At the conclusion of side one, the story has just begun. So much variety of emotion is at first exhausting, a little mystifying—but side one ~~is~~ jells. I always felt that side one had an urban street life feeling of America to it. Side two totally changes moods—It focuses on the rural contribution to rock and roll. It consists of more acoustic guitar, less of an emphasis on saxophone, though, especially on "Sweet Virginia", it is still evident.

Side two is the "lay back and mellow out" side.

"Sweet Virginia" is a surprise after listening to side one. It has good time music; it is a sing along. A country guitar and harmonica are present and—you can hear the words and understand them. Another pivotal point in "Exile" is the line, "Got to scrape the shit right off your shoes." A plea for freedom is made here. Shake off the inhibitions, he pleads, and LIVE—it is all out there waiting.

Despite the country music style, and her name, Virginia, the song describes the illusions of California. The alienation of twentieth century life should be abandoned. Quit crying, he says, "Got to stop the waves behind your eyeballs." He thanks California for her "sweet and bitter fruit," —her good times, but oh so many bad times, too.

The rolling sax solo brings the whole feel of the song home. There is something in that sax that every American can relate to. "Sweet Virginia" makes me want to cry and laugh at the same time. But I always sing along.

"Torn and Frayed" has a razor sharp edge of desperation underlying it. Like the last scene of the postcards, the song is about the Stones. He sings, "My coat is torn and frayed/It's seen much better days." There is a long road behind them. They are exiles on Main Street now, but what they have to endure is endurable "as long as the guitar plays/it will steal your heart away." Keith again sings backing vocals, adding that touch of desperation that makes me want to cry. Through the song I can feel my own desperation sharply—and all my possibilities for redemption.

The lead guitar solo brings the song straight to the heart. Anyone who grew up in America with a country music radio anywhere within listening distance will be able to feel what this guitar is saying. Soulful, country sounds aimed on stealing your heart away, bringing tears to your eyes because you will swear you have felt just how that guitar sounds.

Surrounded in this country music context, "Sweet Black Angel" fits in as more country than urban. The song is a plea for Angela Davis' freedom. The song is an awed respectful tribute. The Stones are awed at what she is doing, and they praise her courage and strength. He sings, "She keeps on pushing/would you take her place/She's counting up the minutes/She's counting up the days/She's a sweet black angel/not a sweet black slave." Again, Keith's additional vocals add to the passionate plea. She is fighting against what the Stones had always fought against—the same chains against change—A sense of "the cause" is present, and the Stones wish her luck.

The moroccan beat and the underlying harmonica suggest, again, the black roots of rock. But the point at which I feel gratification is the second time the chorus is sung. The interplay of the two vocalists take the song beyond itself. They sing, "Oh they got her in chain-ai-ai-ains, oh-oh got-her in chains." It is such a controlled excitement—it is so PLANNED.

With "Loving Cup," the country style returns to end up side two. The song, certainly suggests sex in its lyrics. But, though he suggests it rather crudely, "I'd love to spill the beans with you till dawn," there is more to it than that. The song is for the hard-working common man—the plowman.

He plays bad guitar; his car doesn't start. He worships his girl in a simple, down-home way. He can only tell her this in a crude, lower class manner, but his love for her isn't any less divine. It is sincere, obvious, and so simple. And the girl, probably from the same class of people, isn't offended. He offers to "bring her roses when you ain't got none."

Something so simple, but so real. They are good people who just enjoy living. He sings, "Feel your lips kissing me again/What a beautiful buzz/What a beautiful buzz." They are so happy just digging each other.

The song is cheerful, pleasant. The first real "redemption" I have felt. The music is powerful and the backing vocals add to the sense of fulfillment. It is a satisfying end to side two.

The optimism continues on to side three, but the music style switches back to rock. Keith takes lead vocals. The dominant lead guitar is refreshing. The song makes me smile, and it is easy to sing to. The guitar takes over during the solo and leads into the third verse. There is such excitement in the singer's voice; he means every word.

"Never gotta flash on a cocktail/When I get some flesh off the bone/Never got a lift on a leer jet/ When I can fly way back home." There are so many highs other than artificial or material ones, he cries; I know, I've done it all! At the frenzied end of the song, Mick's vocals take over, and there is a powerful interplay between the sliding guitar and the intensity of the horn section. By the end of the song I am breathless.

"Turd on the Run," with its absurd sounding title, begins suddenly after "Happy." The song turns to the acoustic, country sound again. The words are definitely secondary, and the music is a kind of hoedown-rock

combination. It has a joyful sound, a strong harmonica sound—and I swear, at times, I think I hear a washboard. !

After the second chorus of "I've lost a lot of love over you," Mick lets out a goodtime "Owww!" The song is a toe-tapping song. After this song and the two previous ones, I feel elated. But as side three progresses into the deeper South sound, the songs regain their edge of desperation.

"Ventilator Blues" is heavy rock blues. The repetitive riff in the intro persists throughout the song. The horns crescendo during the chorus, and overall the song is heavy, depressing—almost morbid. The singer "needs some kind of ventilator." He seems to be living just on the edge of violence. "Code of living is my gun in hand," he sings. The end of the song seems to turn into a rape. "Whatcha gonna do about it?" he threatens. "Don't fight it." The slide guitar persistently winds at the end, forcing its way into the song.

The song rhythmically fades into "Just Wanna See His Face." A hopeless, lost feeling permeates the song. It seems to have no direction. The predominant drums make it tropical, African. It is almost swampy in sound. The song is disillusionment at its strongest. Things have gotten as bad as they can. The voices are indecipherable, chant-like. "I want somebody to love," can be heard. "I don't want to walk and talk about Jesus/I just want to see his face," shows the disillusionment even with Jesus. Where is he? the song asks. The song leaves me empty, lost. But it sets the stage for the next song.

"Let it Loose" is filled with pain. But in its pain is salvation. The song brings me back to life after the vast wasteland of the previous song.

The song is a pivotal one. It is the soul exposed. The song is "soul" with rock conventions. Mick's voice is as sensitive here as it ever has been in his whole career. Again, the words are hard to understand, but the intonation of his voice tells more than the words ever could. The music is the most important. The sound is the most important. Knowing the words would hinder this song, and I think the Stones knew that, too.

The backing vocals make the song religious, gospel-like in quality. "Let it Loose" can save the soul, if you just let it. From

From the words that can be understood, the song seems to be a love song. The singer is separated from his lover. "What about the bedroom blues?" he asks. He praises her, "She's a lover right on time." But sex here is more than that.

The bridge is powerful. The piano is cutting, the horns crescendo. "Ain't it love, ain't it love?" the singer cries in the third verse. And I KNOW it is.

At this point, the song takes over. I ride with it as it becomes important to me. The redemption is there. I want to laugh and cry, and nothing seems impossible.

At the frenzied end, he repeats, "Let it loose, let it all come down." By this time, that is my exact relationship with the song. "Let it Loose" ends in a gigantic musical sigh.

Side three ends. This side leaves me emotionally exhausted. So far the album has taken us through so much feeling so quickly. It is like experiencing all of America in one trip—all the different landscapes, musics, people—and a whole spectrum of emotions.

Side four puts less demands on the emotions. I enjoy this side without feeling such an intense flux of feelings. Side four is a side to relax to a little more. It eases the mind with a steady, loud beat, and good rock and roll songs.

"All Down the Line" is a trip west by train. Its heavy rhythm and backing vocals make the song exciting. The slide guitar is like the "whistle blowin'". The peak of excitement is at the end. "Wontcha be my little baby for awhile?" he sings. He doesn't have much time before moving on.

"Stop Breaking Down" is the only song not actually written by the Stones songwriters, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. It is a traditional blues arranged by the entire group. The Stones electrify it, but it is American blues at its best. The guitar is heavily rhythmic. The song is more of a general description of the sights of America than the bringing forth of feelings. Like the rest of the songs on side four, the song lifts me with the rhythm, cleanses my mind of all it has been put through by the rest of the album. Whereas the other songs brought so many deep-seated feelings to the surface, "Stop Breaking Down," and the rest of side four, is an escape.

An enlightening Southern approach makes "Shine a Light" a happy song. The song is very gospel, like a Negro spiritual. It encourages you to look to the good times and to make the most of our time here. "Make

every song you sing your favorite tune," he sings soulfully. Some of the lyrics get silly: "The angels are beating their wings in time." But, the words are secondary and not ^{to be} taken more seriously than the feeling the song gives. Don't dwell on the bad things, the song encourages both musically and lyrically, for heaven awaits just around the corner.

"Soul Survivor" aptly finishes up the album. The words are garbled, but it leaves me with the impression of a broken love affair. "I could drown in your love," he says, which can be taken as either good or bad. Then he says, "I got the bell bottom blues." At the end of each verse he sings, "It's gonna be the death of me." He survives the ordeal, however, and is, in fact, the "soul survivor" after everyone else is gone. Perhaps the use of "soul" in the title instead of "sole" shows that he has discovered that, when it comes right down to it, his soul is the most important thing. He has gotten through the bad times, even though he didn't think he could, and survives—probably a stronger person.

The music is heavy. It ends with the fury of life, and perhaps the song is a statement about the Stones themselves. They have felt all the feelings of desperation evident in the album, and despite it all, they are surviving still.

"Exile on Main St.," in its immenseness, contains a spectrum of human experience. It is no wonder the critics finally had to praise it. This specific aesthetic experience of "Exile" I had after listening to the album over a period of five years. I don't think I could have experienced it nearly as fully if I had heard it for the first time and then wrote about it. As I said before, "Exile", like America, is something so large that it has to be lived with before grasping it.

For the Stones, "Exile" was their second "American" album. Before this and "Sticky Fingers", they had dealt mainly with English experience. It took them several times in America to finally be able to really feel for it. Their music since "Exile" has been more American in nature than British.

All of "Exile", both audial and visual, is amazing to me. I have never heard rock music before or since that so realistically and drastically deals with what we so often feel here in America. The album deals with so many human experiences and emotions universally felt, too; because we all feel desperation; we can all be redeemed, and we are all exiles on Main Street.

Incredibly thorough descriptive analysis, sensitive, descriptive, reflective, articulate, imaginative — excellent work!

The totality of the album — music, lyrics, jacket, sleeves, postcards, etc. — is rendered coherent by you.

A