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## The Rolling Stones' ageless rock

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**The band celebrates 50 years together next year. Next week, the group rereleases 'Some Girls' with found material included. Could a concert tour be next?**

These are days of unfinished business for the Rolling Stones as they continue to mine their vault for "lost" material — a fascinating cache of unreleased tracks from the 1977-1978 "Some Girls" sessions arrives in stores next week — and gather their dark powers for their 50th anniversary next year and perhaps another tour.

Lead singer Mick Jagger chuckled when asked about the advice he would give himself as the band sizes up the golden anniversary and its possibilities.

"You can't be too impressed, I think," Jagger said. "You could wallow in nostalgia if you wanted, couldn't you? I don't think that'd be the right attitude. There are a lot of ideas and

things to do, some of them sound interesting, some of them sound possible and some of them sound difficult and some sound outright schmaltzy, to be honest. I don't really know what's going to exactly happen — but I'm working on it."

The Stones, of course, have been working on something ever since the JFK administration. The band defies the laws of time, human endurance and pop-culture physics, but it remains a spiky alliance, especially after the publication of "Life," the Keith Richards memoir that got its harshest critique ("a bit bitchy," "tedious") from a frenemy named Jagger.

"It was the only bad review we got," the guitar hero rasped with delight last week, two days after he and coauthor James Fox won the Norman Mailer award for their bestselling memoir. "Ah, what can you do?"

Jagger and Richards sometimes seem a bit like an old married couple who stand together only for family photos and then do so only with thin, hard smiles. But, in separate phone interviews, both are clearly enthused about the release of a tricked-out archival edition of "Some Girls." Although the June 1978 album sparked some controversy over a lewd line about black women in the title track, "Some Girls" was praised by critics and is considered among the group's best albums from the 1970s. It includes the hits "Beast of Burden," "Shattered" and "Miss You."

A concert film, "Some Girls Live in Texas '78" will also be released next Tuesday on DVD and Blu-ray as a tie-in to the newly remastered album, which will be available in different editions (there's a \$20 two-disc deluxe edition and also a lavish \$143 boxed-set version that includes a hard-cover book, a DVD and vinyl single) and features a dozen previously unreleased songs.

Those tracks were in various stages of completion and polish, and Jagger, Richards and company said it's been a curious and inspiring exercise to fill in the blanks all these years later.

"It was an interesting autumn kind of project for me," Jagger said, adding that he was prepared for the labors by the 2010 release of "Exile on Main Street" with a similar bundle of salvaged tracks. "I learned quite a lot from doing the tracks on 'Exile' about how you do this without it being too much psychological damage.... The 'Exile' ones seemed really quite old and even though this is just seven years later it was just more immediate to me in some ways. This album was so much of a piece while 'Exile' was recorded over such a period of time, over maybe three years and different sessions."

"Some Girls" and these new unreleased additions reveal a band that sees the music landscape changing beneath the rhythm logic of disco and ethos assault of punk. On a more personal front, the "Some Girls" sessions marked the full arrival of Ronnie Wood as a band member and there was still anxiety in the air about the legal status and lifestyle of Richards, who was coming off a heroin arrest in Toronto.

"Going back to the music, it immediately transports me back in time; it's like, 'Beam me up, Scotty,'" Richards said. "When I'm listening to it I can see the room where we are, I can smell it. It was the last album I did on the stuff... The interesting thing about making that album was we felt an enormous kick ... from the punks. There suddenly was this other generation coming on and they couldn't play for [anything] but they were kicking [butt]. 'Some Girls' was the response because we had been cruising before that I think."

Some of the recovered and refurbished tracks were close to finished — like the Chuck Berry-informed "Claudine" and the leering "So Young" — but just didn't make the cut when the "Some Girls" deadline approached. Others, like "Do You Think I Really Care?" required a sort of throw-back mentality to finish.

"It was sort of half done and I had to sort of get back into the mood of the song," Jagger said. "It was a bit repetitive, I had done two verses but I needed five."

Richards said he enjoys hearing the varied genre paths the band was following in the 1970s and the echoes of Hank Williams and Gram Parsons tucked into the time capsule.

"Part of Mick and me is we always loved country music," Richards said, "And I mean, 'Dead Flowers'? Mick has written some of the best country songs of all time. It's part of what we grew up with and what we love. It just comes from the heart, not from the mind."

Don Was, the Grammy-winning record producer who has worked with Bob Dylan, Lucinda Williams and Elton John, has been a key figure in the Stones' archaeology missions. He was the point man on the exhaustive "Exile" project (there were hundreds of hours of material) and, for the "Some Girls" salvage efforts, came across "No Spare Parts," an artifact deemed so notable that it was released last month as a single.

Was said that in a way the Stones are somehow underrated still and he has no interest in listening to the criticism that any rebel outfit has overstayed its welcome when there are 50 candles on the cake.

"They are right up there with Duke Ellington's band and the Miles Davis quintet from the 1960s as one of the greatest aggregations of musicians ever put together," Was said. "And watching Mick and Keith through the years — when they get along and when they don't get along — is like a morality play. When you hear the music all the other stuff evaporates. When the tape is rolling or they are on stage, there's a closeness there that transcends everything else. And I think they should keep pushing toward that 75th anniversary."

But first, there's the 50th anniversary. Richards, Wood and drummer Charlie Watts are scheduled to gather later this month in London to rehearse for the first time in three years, a clear signal that the Stones are ramping up in some fashion.

"The Stones still work," said Richards. "I know [the prospect of a tour] it's an all important point but there's nothing more I'm going to say about that. But the Stones will pull it together. It always comes easy once you get the bunch of guys together. It's the getting the guys together that's the hard part."