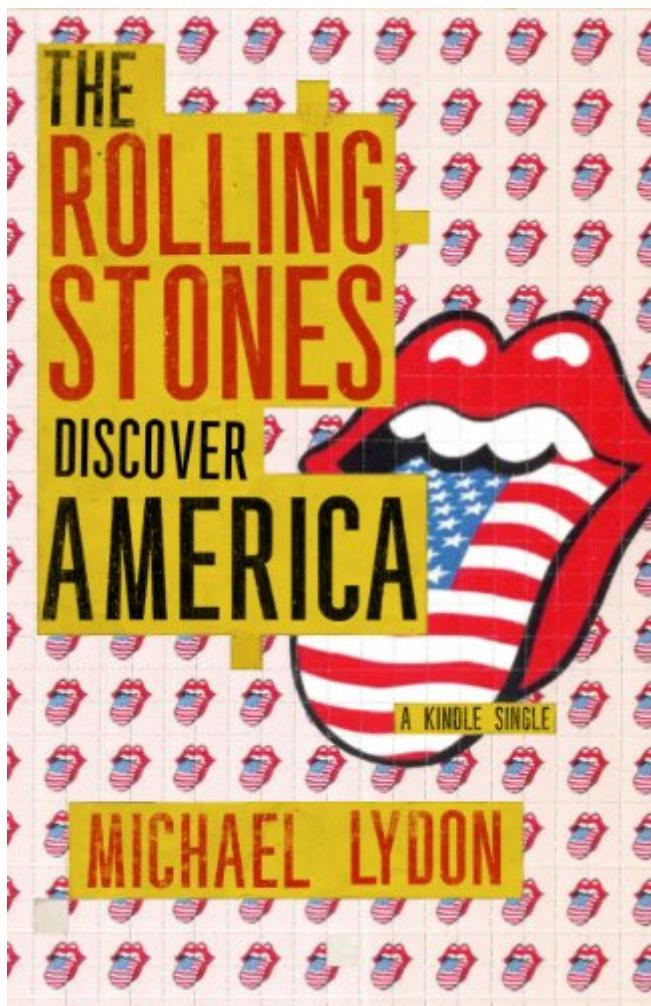


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# The Rolling Stones Discover America (Singles Classic)



## Synopsis

In 1969 Michael Lydon, a founding editor of Rolling Stone and a leading member of rock writing's first generation, got a dream assignment: to cover the Rolling Stones' hopscotch tour across America that ended at Altamont. His long, intimate piece on the tour, *The Rolling Stones Discover America*, captures the highs and lows of the grueling tour and has become a classic of rock journalism—one that the Maysles brothers studied to guide the editing of their film, *Gimme Shelter*. Nobody used the term "embedded reporter" in those days, but that's how Lydon lived on the tour, staying in the Stones' HQ house above LA's Sunset Strip and in suites at New York's Plaza Hotel, flying in private jets to Dallas, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Boston, gambling in Las Vegas, hanging out backstage at the LA Forum and Manhattan's Madison Square Garden, smoking pot with "The Boys" in late-night bull sessions, and night after night digging the overpowering, sensuous, and beautiful music. "This was the peak of my rock 'n' roll reporting career," Lydon has said. "I knew I was where every hippie in America wanted to be, and I jumped into the tour with my eyes and ears wide open, a big grin on my mug." The peaceful miracle of Woodstock's three day "Peace and Music" festival had just happened, and the 60s revolution in electric music, psychedelic drugs, long hair, and free love was spreading across the country. Millions of kids, scared of Vietnam and bored in school, were searching for new ideas and directions in the music of the Beatles, Dylan, and the Stones; the rock stars, kids themselves, were searching for ideas and directions from their peers. "Every Stones' concert on that tour became a mutual celebration of a new generation," Lydon remembers, "Mick and Keith feeding off the energy blossoming up from the darkness in the huge halls and arenas and hurling that energy back at the kids in savage, demonic music." The Stones' concert at the Altamont Raceway, planned as their free gift to San Francisco, turned to disaster, as a bad mix of youthful naivete, vicious Hell's Angels, drugs, and the mind-bending pressure to top Woodstock engendered first fear and confusion and finally murder in front of the stage as the Stones played "Sympathy for the Devil." In *The Rolling Stones Discover America*, Lydon also describes his own nervousness living so close to stardom. "The Stones were good guys and hard-working musicians," he says, "but they were the sun kings of the tour universe. The rest of us were minor planets spinning about them in fixed and distant orbits. It's a miracle I managed to keep my feet on the ground, keep taking notes, and get the story down on paper—but I'm glad I did." Praise for Michael

Lydon's writing: "It is with the greatest sensitivity and care that Lydon explores the connections between the scene, the men, and the music." Ben Gerson, *Fusion*. "Far and away [Rock Folk is] the best book on pop music I've ever read." George Frazier, *Boston Globe*. Rock Folk is one of the best books on American music I've ever run across. Dennis McNally, Grateful Dead historian.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As it turns out, the Rolling Stones Concert in Altamont was the cracking point. This single is the story of the tour of the United States that ended with the "free concert" at Altamont in which the Hell's Angels, newly counter culturally correct by Ken Kesey, killed a concert attendee yards from the stage. This piece is literate and sophisticated in describing a nearly incoherent stage in culture. The descriptions of the principal players, including the Stones and their entourage, are sharp and perceptive. Lydon, who had traveled with the band as a journalist (one of two), evokes the tense arch of the age of love as it broke under the violence of radical politics. The sight of Mick Jagger at an earlier concert retreating upstage under the pressure of waving fists is chilling. As he came

forward to wave his own fist under pressure of the crowd, he broke the spell with the raising of his second fist in an enclosure of the moment. A must read for those who remember, those who forgot, and those who never knew.Lydon

This is a fantastic account of life on the road with the Rolling Stones as they toured America after a three year hiatus in 1969. At the time, the Stones were the ultimate ticket and everybody wanted to see them. If you've ever seen the movie "Gimme Shelter," then you'll recognize this as the same tour which ended with the tragedy at Altamont.Lydon does an excellent job describing the pleasures and the agonies of being on the road with one of the biggest rock acts in the world. I particularly enjoyed Lydon's analysis of what the individual city's fans were like. From glam, pretentious LA to defiant Oakland to crazily energized Detroit.He also does an excellent job describing the constant human circus around the Stones. He explains very early on that access to "the boys" was extremely limited and very controlled by their handlers. One of the problems with access becomes clear around halfway through the book; although Lydon was invited to travel with the band, he is clearly an outsider and subsequently his contact with the actual band members was as limited as everyone else outside their inner ring. There is some cool info about the band, but most of it is observations from a distance as opposed to actual personal interviews or discussions. That's not so bad though because it sort of placed him between the Stones and their adoring audience which definitely gave him a unique perspective on what was going on.This is a fun read if you are a fan of good times rock and roll in an era just before the corporations took control and rock concerts became stadium spectacles. It is also a great document of one last wild fling of the 60's before the Hell's Angels brought down the curtain on the community born of the Summer of Love.

A great quick read on the Rolling Stones return to the US to tour at the end of 1969 through the infamous Altamont concert. While I certainly could have read another couple of hundred pages of this type of behind the scenes reportage, Lydon captures the nostalgia and essence of the quintessential bad boys of rock and roll with great morsels to whet the appetite of any Stones or rock and roll fan. Certainly well worth the \$1.99 and 30-45 minutes of reading time to journey back 40 years and life on the road with Mick and company.

A bird's eye view of the madness and chaos that culminated in the Stones' 69 tour of America, capturing them at the height of their touring and recording history. After Altamont, the great fault line in the Stones career, nothing would ever be the same for the band again. Never again would they

cede such control of their affairs to others, Jagger in particular, and, arguably, never again would they make or perform such truly great music. Lydon had an embedded access to the band in a way on the '69 tour that is hard to imagine in the tightly controlled image management modern media and writes with a candour and energy that both represents the innocence and idealism of its times. The unique characters of each band member emerge from his penetrating, perceptive prose. Jagger the arch ringmaster of the motley circus careening around him, endlessly non-expansive. Keith, the camp vamp, baby, the one most committed to the music and the fans. Charlie, doleful, dutiful, but never doltish, the true honest heartbeat of the band. Bill, quietly English and so detached from the melee as to be almost absent from proceedings. And Mick Taylor, the new boy, warily watchful in the way new boys have to be. Around and surrounding them at all times are the band personnel and assorted hangers-on that somehow seem necessary to the tour and give it its seedy, sinister glamour. Sam Cutler. John Jaymes. Ronnie Schneider. All emerge as memorable, if not always likeable, characters. It all ended in tears, violence and confusion amidst the mud and mayhem of Altamont, a tattered, bloodied finale to a tour that by every other measure was a triumph of music, showmanship and the Stones own unique brand of dirt glamour. For those who were there and bore living witness to their success, and for the impossible band that will not fade away, *The Rolling Stones Discover America* is both a tribute and a timepiece that is well worth the price and time to read.

Fascinating. A must read for any Stones or rock fan. I read Michael Lydon's excellent biography of Ray Charles and his collection of articles and interviews with some of the great rock and blues musicians in *Flashback* so I was excited to see his Kindle Single about being on tour with the Rolling Stones. The tour that ended with the tragic Altamont killing by the Hell's Angels. The descriptions and details of the times and the inside information on the Stones is captivating. It's the perfect length as well to enjoy on a winter's afternoon.

A great short snapshot of a magical period in Rock history. The 1969 Rolling Stones Tour was the beginning of the arena mega shows. It was still a time before the concert tours became commercial so every show had drama and unique energy. This book captures much of the magic.

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