

Like a Rolling Stone

John Davis highlights a Bridport man's unique diary of his time following The Rolling Stones

Photographs by Neil Ebdon and Bjornulf Vik-iorr



John Nicholls, a resident of Bridport, became a fan of The Rolling Stones purely by accident. When he was thirteen, a friend gave him a box of Beatles records. It also contained a few singles by a group called The Rolling Stones. Hearing songs like *Paint It Black*, *Satisfaction* and *Jumpin Jack Flash* for the first time meant there was no going back.

John finally got to see the Stones at Wembley Stadium in the summer of 1982. The impact was palpable. It was an adrenaline rush like no other, something he would experience countless times over the next five decades.

Obtaining show tickets proved problematic at first until a chance posting on a fans' forum in Germany proved momentous and opened up easier access. He was soon to follow the group all over Europe, to the United States and South America.

With the passing of Charlie Watts in 2021 and John's own personal battles, time may no longer be on his side. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards are in their eighties so where and when this rock and roll juggernaut will come to its final resting place is anyone's guess.

Dateline: September 29th, 2003: Keith's photograph

I hear that Keith Richards is staying at The Landmark Hotel in London.

The previous day, while in Bill Wyman's Sticky Fingers restaurant, I meet a German fan selling photographs he has taken of The Stones. I like the one of Keith and promptly make a purchase.

Down at The Landmark Hotel, I join some friends but they leave to make the journey to Wembley Arena. I recognise Keith's minder exiting the front of the hotel. Just behind him is Keith himself. I'm stood next to an SUV with darkened windows and they're walking in my direction. Next thing I know, Keith is stood right in front of me. Armed with a pen, I ask if he will sign my photo which he does "With love Keith Richards 03". I shake his hand and wish him all the best for the show. I can't believe my luck. I'd bought the photograph and got to meet Keith Richards the very next day. Definitely one to tick off the bucket list.

Dateline: South America 2016: The Holy Grail

The Rolling Stones tour dates in South America are to be in February and March. Good friend Martin Elliott comes up with the idea of taking in shows in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay.

At one point I have five different currencies stuffed in my pockets. In Buenos Aires we stay in a hotel opposite the cemetery in which Eva Peron is buried. It really is the Holy Grail to see a live band in Argentina and the reaction of the crowd when The Stones appear on stage is a memory that will stay with me forever.

Then it's on to Montevideo and the Estadio Centenario. It was built for the World Cup in 1930 and to be honest doesn't look like it's been touched since. It's vast and people at the back are a long way from the stage.

A hotel on Copacabana Beach awaits in Rio de Janeiro and we take in the sights, Sugar Loaf Mountain and the statue of Christ the Redeemer. Truly breathtaking but in stark contrast to the shanty towns (favelas). The Maracana is an iconic venue packed with almost eighty thousand people.

Dateline: United States 2005: Radio jingle

After a show in Columbus, Ohio, we meet Lyn Davis who invites us to a radio station where she works as

a disc jockey. Next thing we know Lyn puts the mics in front of us and soon we are going out over the airwaves.

After crossing the USA/Canada border to take a show in Toronto we face a long drive back.

The following day Lyn Davis is on the phone. She wants me to recite several lines to be used as a radio jingle. "Hi, I'm John from England and you're listening to Lyn Davis on K103 in the Mahoning Valley. She rocks". I think they liked my English accent. When we're back in England, we hear there is no escaping my voice as the jingle is being played constantly.

Dateline: Isle of Wight 2007: Hello Jade

The Stones are the headline act. At the site I go to the ticket office and hear a voice from behind the counter say, "We've got you a hospitality pass with Virgin Radio from mid-day. I hope that's OK?" Yes, it b***** well is OK, I think.

In hospitality, I briefly chat to Jade Jagger and inform her that her dad has cost me a fortune over the years. She laughs.

Later I stand on the balcony outside where a few of us are subjected to verbal abuse and hand gestures from some of the crowd below. Hell, I'm thinking, I've been a fan since I was thirteen and they presume I'm only here for the free champagne on offer.

Dateline: New York 2006: Removal men

My friend, Martin, has nowhere to stay so we decide to put him up in our hotel although there is nowhere in the room to sleep. As we walk through the hotel lobby, Martin grabs one end of a chaise lounge and me the other. Casually we walk down the corridor to our room. I can only assume the onlookers thought we worked for the hotel and were just moving furniture around. Martin slept very well and the following morning we return the chaise lounge to its rightful place.

After the gig we head for a bar called Walters. We see two guys on the floor punching each other. A woman then screams out, "He's got a gun." In the distance I can see a police car. I manage to grab his attention and tell them what is happening. He speeds over and arrests the guy. A very eventful night in New York City. A real roller-coaster of a ride and one I'm not entirely sure I wish to repeat.