



# Andrew Loog Oldham

BY ROB BOWMAN

As the Rolling Stones' manager and producer, he played a seminal role in the creation of modern rock & roll.

IN 1965, TOM WOLFE FAMOUSLY DUBBED PHIL SPECTOR America's first tycoon of teen. Great Britain in the 1960s had its own version with Andrew Loog Oldham. Similarly eccentric, Oldham sported a one-of-a-kind mix of flamboyance, fashion, attitude, chutzpah, vision, and business smarts. As comanager of the Rolling Stones from May 1963 to September 1967, and founder and co-owner of Immediate Records from 1965 to 1970, he helped shape the future of rock, and certainly turned the music industry in the United Kingdom on its head. Along the way, between the ages of 19 and 23, he produced some of the greatest records in rock & roll history, leading *Billboard* to describe him as one of the top five producers in the world, and *Cashbox* to declare him a musical giant. ✨ He was born in London on January 29, 1944, during the Germans' nightly bombardment of England. His father, whom he never met, was Texas airman Andrew Loog, killed in June 1943 when his B-17 bomber was shot down over France. Raised by his mother, Celia Oldham, the precocious teenager began working for Mary Quant during the day, at Ronnie Scott's jazz club in the evening, and at the fabled Flamingo club after midnight. He also found time to form a (short-lived) public relations firm with Pete Meaden, the future manager of the Who. While still in his teens, Oldham was featured in the fashion pages of both *The London Evening Standard* and *The Daily Mail*. ✨ In the fall of 1962, after brief stints as a PR flack for Peter Hope Lumley

and the Leslie Frewin Organization, Oldham struck out on his own. Over the next year, he repped a host of British acts; visiting American artists, such as Chris Montez, Phil Spector, and Bob Dylan; and a British tour featuring Little Richard and Sam Cooke. In January 1963, at 19, he started doing PR for the Beatles, and within a few weeks had scored the coup of getting the Fab Four into *Vogue*. Every lesson Oldham learned along the way, he took to heart: Chris Montez' manager, Jim Lee, hipped him to the value of controlling publishing and production. Phil Spector similarly schooled him in the efficacy of controlling the recording process by paying for recording sessions upfront, and then leasing or selling the tapes to the record company. The tips would come in handy when it came time to manage the Rolling Stones.

*Record Mirror's* Peter Jones first told Oldham about an extraordinary six-piece group called the Rollin' Stones, who were causing weekly pandemonium at the Crawdaddy Club in the Richmond Station Hotel. On Sunday, April 21, 1963, Oldham took the forty-five-minute tube ride to see what all the fuss was about. "I'd never seen anything like it," he would later write. "All my preparations, ambitions, and desires had just met their purpose. . . . Everything I'd done up until now was preparation for this moment. I saw and heard what my life, thus far, had been for."

Needing a booking agent and financing for recording, Oldham took on Eric Easton as a partner, and a week later approached the Stones about managing them. Shortly thereafter, he persuaded the group to add a "g" to the end of "Rollin'" and to drop its piano player, Ian Stewart, from full membership since he didn't fit Oldham's youthful image of the group. The dirty deed accomplished, Oldham approached Decca's Dick Rowe – still smarting from having turned down the Beatles – and landed the Stones a recording contract at a higher royalty rate than the four Liverpudlians had received from EMI.

In June 1963, with Oldham handling production, the Stones' first U.K. single, a cover of Chuck Berry's rather obscure "Come On," stumbled its way to Number 21. The group's next single, the Lennon-McCartney-penned



**FROM TOP**

Rolling with the Stones, 1963; with Mick Jagger, 1964.





"I Wanna Be Your Man" (secured via Oldham's relationship with the two Beatles) reached the Number Twelve spot in the U.K. In early 1964, Oldham suggested the group cover Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away." The result: a Number Three hit. On the Stones' first U.S. tour in the spring of 1964, New York DJ Murray the K had turned Oldham on to the Valentinos' "It's All Over Now." Upon Oldham's suggestion, the Stones covered it during sessions at Chess Records in Chicago, and topped the British charts that summer. For the group's first U.K. album, much to Decca's chagrin, Oldham insisted that neither the Stones' name nor an album title appear on the cover. During a standoff between the two parties, advance orders doubled – and Decca caved. Oldham also penned the liner notes for the back cover, famously concluding with the line, "The Rolling Stones are more than just a group – they are a way of life."

**W**HILE OLDHAM HAD BECOME ASTUTE at picking cover material for the Stones, he also realized that for the group to achieve longevity they needed to write original material. To that end, he did everything in his power to encourage Mick and Keith to start composing songs. Although the Glimmer Twins' earliest efforts were largely forgettable, within a year they were penning classics such as "The Last Time," "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," and "Get Off My Cloud." In 1965, all three songs topped the British charts, and the Rolling Stones became a household name in much of the world.

As Mick and Keith honed their songwriting chops, Oldham learned the art of production. He recorded British artists such as the Nashville Teens, as well as American Gene Pitney. The latter's 1964 record-

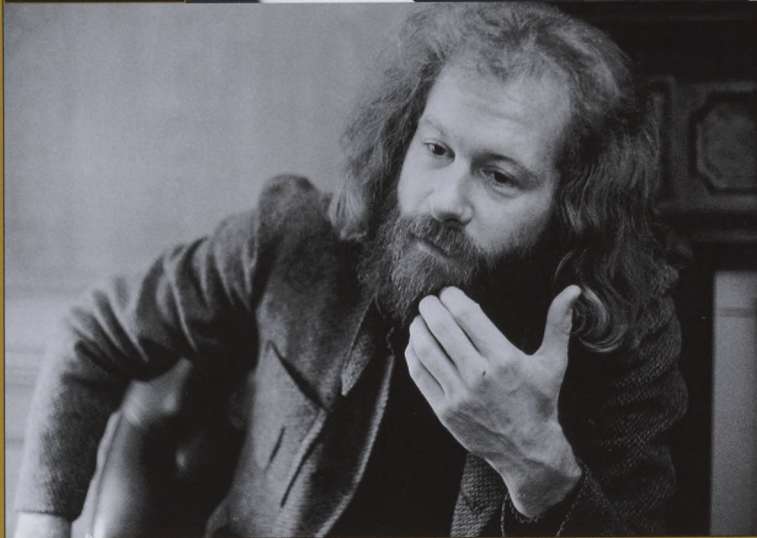


**THIS PAGE,  
CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP**

In the studio  
with Keith  
Richards, 1964;  
in London,  
1964; in 1972;  
with the Stones  
and business  
partner Tony  
Calder.

**OPPOSITE**

In Los Angeles,  
2013.



ing of an Oldham-produced, Jagger-Richards original, "That Girl Belongs to Yesterday," was a Top Ten single in the United Kingdom. That summer, Oldham also produced the first of four Andrew Oldham Orchestra albums, featuring the talents of session musicians Jimmy Page, Big Jim Sullivan, and John Baldwin (whom Oldham renamed John Paul Jones), as well as Marianne Faithfull's cover of the Jagger-Richards-Oldham-penned "As Tears Go By" (which hit Number Nine).

Astutely, Oldham cultivated an image of the Stones as music's bad boys, feeding *Melody Maker* a line that would morph into the famous headline, WOULD YOU LET YOUR DAUGHTER MARRY A ROLLING STONE? "I was promoting the idea that the Rolling Stones were 'the group parents loved to hate,'" recalled Oldham, "based on my belief that pop idols fall into one of two categories – ones you wished to share with your parents and ones you did not. The Beatles were accepted and acceptable; they were the benchmark and had set the level of competition. The Stones came to be portrayed as dangerous, dirty, and degenerate, and I encouraged my charges to be as nasty as they could wish to be."

With "Satisfaction" dominating the airwaves in the summer of 1965, Oldham, now all of 21, expanded his empire by founding Britain's first real independent label, Immediate Records, with Tony Calder. The label's slogan, "A new record company of tomorrow today," was changed in 1967 to "Happy to be a part of the industry of human happiness." With Jagger, Richards, Oldham, and Jimmy Page handling much of the production, Immediate scored hits in the U.K. by Chris Farlowe, P.J. Proby, and the U.S. group the McCoys. Further hits followed, with the Small Faces, the Nice, and Humble Pie. During its turbulent five years, the label also released seminal recordings by Goldie (Genya Ravan), Nico, Rod Stewart, John Mayall with Eric Clapton, and Fleetwood Mac.

While piloting the good ship Immediate and producing Stones hits such as "19th Nervous Breakdown," "Paint It Black," "Mother's Little Helper," "Lady Jane," and "Ruby Tuesday," the ever idiosyncratic Oldham messed with people's minds by taking out ads for records that he had nothing to do with. These were records he simply liked, including the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" and the Mamas and the Papas' "California Dreaming." Oldham's guerrilla ads for Immediate Records verged on the surreal. For the Small Faces' single "Itchycoo Park," he took out a front-page ad in *New Musical Express* featuring four children holding an upside down Itchycoo Park street sign with no mention of the group – or the record – in sight. For the Small Faces' "Lazy Sunday" release, an *NME* ad contained nothing more than an image of a violent confrontation between students and police taken during the recent Left Bank Riots in Paris. Perhaps the best was Fleetwood Mac's

"Man of the World" ad in 1969, portraying a British policeman smoking dope, Warhol's famous flower painting, and four yellow labrador retrievers.

Oldham's empire collapsed nearly as quickly as it developed. In early 1967, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and Brian Jones were all busted on drug charges. Afraid of being arrested himself, Oldham decamped to California, where he helped Lou Adler and John Phillips with Monterey Pop, suggesting they book Otis Redding, Jimi Hendrix, and the Who. Meanwhile, the Stones felt abandoned by Oldham, while Allen Klein found them lawyers and stood by their side in court. By September 1967, Oldham was no longer managing the group. Immediate Records continued for another couple of years, but the company was unable to transfer the label's U.K. success to North America and was bankrupt by 1970.

Dogged by bouts of depression throughout his life, Oldham spent much of the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s engaging in various types of substance abuse,

surviving on production and songwriting royalties. He did manage to produce albums – by Donovan in 1973, Jimmy Cliff in 1975, and the Argentinian artists Los Ratones Paranoicos and Charly Garcia in the 1990s. He married Esther Farfan, a Colombian model, in 1977, and moved to Bogotá in the late 1980s. By 1995, he had finally gotten sober.

Oldham is still called on for occasional production work. Most recently, he has found success as a writer, penning *Abba: The Name of the Game* (1996), *Stoned* (2000), *2Stoned* (2002), *Rolling Stoned* (2011), and *Stone Free* (2013). He has also become a much beloved DJ on Steve Van Zandt's Underground Garage channel on SiriusXM radio. And in 1998, the Verve released "Bitter Sweet Symphony," featuring a swirling, ethereal string sample taken from the Andrew Oldham Orchestra's version

of "The Last Time," originally released in 1965. The Verve's hit (and the lawsuit awarding songwriting credits to Jagger and Richards) inspired Oldham to reissue 1966's *The Rolling Stones Songbook* on CD in 2008, and he began recording under his own name for the first time in some thirty years: *The Andrew Oldham Orchestra and Friends Play the Rolling Stones Songbook, Vol. 2* was released in 2013. Consisting of covers of Stones songs such as "Play With Fire," as well as "Bitter Sweet Symphony," the "friends" on the album included the Smiths' Johnny Marr, Elliot Easton, and Captain Beefheart and Jeff Buckley guitarist Gary Lucas. In 2012, Oldham helped oversee the long-overdue release of the Stones documentary *Charlie Is My Darling*, which he had produced.

It couldn't be more fitting that Andrew Loog Oldham is inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in the same year as Brian Epstein. The first two managers ever to be so honored, in shepherding the early careers of the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, they played a seminal role in the creation of the modern world of rock & roll. ←

**"Happy to be a part of the industry of human happiness."**

