



Top seller: Exile on Main St cover of the about to be re-released Rolling Stones album.

Stones remastered

EKILE on Main St is widely regarded as the Rolling Stones' masterpiece. It's also an album surrounded by so much dark myth and debauched legend that if the working conditions were really that out of control, it's a wonder it was even made.

The latest re-release of this iconic album will be available next week, and it's the most ambitious repackaging yet. It includes a deluxe edition with bonus tracks, a documentary DVD and a hard-cover book, but it doesn't focus on the grungier aspects of the album.

Instead, it preserves the mystery by presenting the original album intact with liner notes and documentary footage that skims the surface of just what went on in Keith Richards' villa-turned-recording-studio in the summer of 1971.

The 10 previously unreleased tracks shed little new light on the past; instead most of them feature freshly overdubbed vocals by Mick Jagger, a misguided attempt to update an album that needs no updating. The good news is that the original album has never sounded better. Remastered in a way that amps up its clarity and power without sacrificing its

hard-swinging griminess, *Exile on Main St* remains a towering achievement, the capstone to one of the great four-album runs in rock history (preceded by *Beggars Banquet* in 1968, *Let it Bleed* in 1969 and *Sticky Fingers* in 1971). The Stones were turning into a band divided, jaded rock stars who would never be as good again, but they had one final burst of brilliance in them.

The album arrived at a time when the group was the biggest rock band in the world, transformed from the Bad Boys of Swingin' '60s London ("Would you let your sister go with a Rolling Stone?") to jet-

setting celebrities awash in drugs, sex and whatever else they craved. The decadence had set in when the Stones headed to the south of France in summer 1971 in part to flee England and a mountain of unpaid taxes due to unscrupulous management. There they all rented villas and hunted for a studio.

Nothing suited their fancy as much as Keith Richards' 16-room mansion, Nellycote, on the outskirts of the Mediterranean seaport of Nice. It had a huge basement that could be converted into a performance space and the advantage of having the band's least-controllable mem-

ber on premises at all times. The Stones pulled their mobile recording studio onto the property and went to work at the start of a long, hot summer. Richards' mansion housed not just the musicians and their family members, but all manner of Stones hangers-on, from Richards' guitar-playing buddy Gram Parsons to drug dealers and groupies.

By Richards' admission, there was a party going on all the time upstairs; any Stone awake or sober enough slipped down into the basement to play music. Recording sessions began late and often didn't finish for days.

At present, netball's trans-Tasman competition is one of the main televised women's sports and I would hazard a guess would increase its male viewing audience 10-fold with the introduction of changing room cam.

It seems sexist that male sports stars are subjected to the prying eyes of the female sports fans in what was once a sacred place shrouded in some form mystical aura and yet male eyes anywhere near the female changing room would result in handcuffs.

Gender equality in changing room cam is a must.



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