

The Letters

LETTER 01

HE IS CALLED MICK JAGGER

Keith Richards to Aunt Patty

April 1962

Since 1962 Keith Richards has been lead guitarist and songwriter in one of the most successful and influential bands of all time, a true living legend responsible for some of the most recognisable riffs in the history of rock 'n' roll. Such is the level of his fame, it is almost impossible to imagine Keith Richards prior to stardom, before he began strolling onto vast stages to thrill adoring crowds with songs that will no doubt endure for centuries to come. But thanks to a letter he once wrote to his beloved aunt, Patty, we are given such a glimpse. It was April 1962, and Keith was eighteen years old. His words brim with excitement as he describes, among other things, an encounter while awaiting the train to the London School of Economics four months earlier that would ultimately change his life. Three months after he wrote to Aunt Patty, 'The Rollin' Stones' played their first gig at the Marquee Club in London. The rest is history.

THE LETTER

6 Spielman Rd
Dartford
Kent

Dear Pat,

So sorry not to have written before (I plead insane) in bluebottle voice. Exit right amid deafening applause.

I do hope you're very well.

We have survived yet another glorious English Winter. I wonder which day Summer falls on this year?

Oh but my dear I have been soooo busy since Christmas beside working at school. You know I was keen on Chuck Berry and I thought I was the only fan for miles but one mornin' on Dartford Stn. (that's so I don't have to write a long word like station) I was holding one of Chuck's records when a guy I knew at primary school 7-11 yrs y'know came up to me. He's got every record Chuck Berry ever made and all his mates have too, they are all rhythm and blues fans, real R&B I mean (not this Dinah Shore, Brook Benton crap) Jimmy Reed, Muddy Waters, Chuck, Howlin' Wolf, John Lee Hooker all the Chicago bluesmen real

lowdown stuff, marvelous. Bo Diddley he's another great.

Anyways the guy on the station, he is called Mick Jagger and all the chicks and the boys meet every Saturday morning in the 'Carousel' some juke-joint well one morning in Jan I was walking past and decided to look him up. Everybody's all over me I get invited to about 10 parties. Beside that Mick is the greatest R&B singer this side of the Atlantic and I don't mean maybe. I play guitar (electric) Chuck style we got us a bass player and drummer and rhythm-guitar and we practice 2 or 3 nights a week. SWINGIN'.

Of course they're all rolling in money and in massive detached houses, crazy, one's even got a butler. I went round there with Mick (in the car of course Mick's not mine of course) OH BOY ENGLISH IS IMPOSSIBLE.

"Can I get you anything, sir?"

"Vodka and lime, please"

"Certainly, sir"

I really felt like a lord, nearly asked for my coronet when I left.

Everything here is just fine.

I just can't lay off Chuck Berry though, I

recently got an LP of his straight from Chess Records Chicago cost me less than an English record.

Of course we've still got the old Lags here y'know Cliff Richard, Adam Faith and 2 new shockers Shane Fenton and John Leyton SUCH CRAP YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD. Except for that greaseball Sinatra ha ha ha ha ha ha.

Still I don't get bored anymore. This Saturday I am going to an all night party.

“I looked at my watch
It was four-o-five
Man I didn't know
If I was dead or alive”
Quote Chuck Berry
Reeling and a Rocking

12 galls of Beer Barrel of Cyder, 3 bottle Whiskey Wine. Her ma and pa gone away for the weekend I'll twist myself till I drop (I'm glad to say).

The Saturday after Mick and I are taking 2 girls over to our favourite Rhythm & Blues club over in Ealing, Middlesex.

They got a guy on electric harmonica Cyril

Davies fabulous always half drunk unshaven plays
like a mad man, marvelous.

Well then I can't think of anything else to bore
you with, so I'll sign off goodnight viewers

BIG GRIN

Luff

Keith xxxxx

Who else would write such bloody crap

‘MICK IS THE GREATEST
R&B SINGER THIS SIDE
OF THE ATLANTIC AND
I DON’T MEAN MAYBE.’

— Keith Richards

LETTER 02

MY HEART ALMOST STOOD STILL

Helen Keller to the New York Symphony Orchestra

2 February 1924

*Born in Alabama in 1880, Helen Keller was yet to reach two years of age when she lost her eyesight and hearing due to an illness. Despite such a challenging start to life, she went on to do incredible things. By the age of twenty-three, having already achieved so much, her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, had been published, and over the years she travelled the world as a highly sought-after public speaker, giving eloquent lectures on all manner of topics, including her inspiring life story. As an activist, she campaigned tirelessly on behalf of the marginalised; all told, she authored a dozen books and many articles. On 2 February 1924, the morning after Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was performed at New York's Carnegie Hall, Keller wrote a letter of appreciation to the New York Symphony Orchestra and announced a personal breakthrough: a new-found ability to 'hear' music through touch alone, with her fingertips acting as a bridge between melodic vibrations and her mind's ear.*

THE LETTER

93 Seminole Avenue,
Forest Hills, L. I.,
February 2, 1924.

The New York Symphony Orchestra,
New York City.

Dear Friends:

I have the joy of being able to tell you that, though deaf and blind, I spent a glorious hour last night listening over the radio to Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony." I do not mean to say that I "heard" the music in the sense that other people heard it; and I do not know whether I can make you understand how it was possible for me to derive pleasure from the symphony. It was a great surprise to myself. I had been reading in my magazine for the blind of the happiness that the radio was bringing to the sightless everywhere. I was delighted to know that the blind had gained a new source of enjoyment; but I did not dream that I could have any part in their joy. Last night, when the family was listening to your wonderful rendering of the immortal symphony someone suggested that I put my hand on the receiver and see if I could get any of the

vibrations. He unscrewed the cap, and I lightly touched the sensitive diaphragm. What was my amazement to discover that I could feel, not only the vibrations, but also the impassioned rhythm, the throb and the urge of the music! The intertwined and intermingling vibrations from different instruments enchanted me. I could actually distinguish the cornets, the roll of the drums, deep-toned violas and violins singing in exquisite unison. How the lovely speech of the violins flowed and plowed over the deepest tones of the other instruments! When the human voice leaped up trilling from the surge of harmony, I recognized them instantly as voices. I felt the chorus grow more exultant, more ecstatic, upcurving swift and flame-like, until my heart almost stood still. The women's voices seemed an embodiment of all the angelic voices rushing in a harmonious flood of beautiful and inspiring sound. The great chorus throbbed against my fingers with poignant pause and flow. Then all the instruments and voices together burst forth—an ocean of heavenly vibration—and died away like winds when the atom is spent, ending in a delicate shower of sweet notes.

Of course, this was not “hearing” but I do know that the tones and harmonies conveyed to me moods of great beauty and majesty. I also sensed,

or thought I did, the tender sounds of nature that sing into my hand—swaying reeds and winds and the murmur of streams. I have never been so enraptured before by a multitude of tone-vibrations.

As I listened, with darkness and melody, shadow and sound filling all the room, I could not help remembering that the great composer who poured forth such a flood of sweetness into the world was deaf like myself. I marvelled at the power of his quenchless spirit by which out of his pain he wrought such joy for others—and there I sat, feeling with my hand the magnificent symphony which broke like a sea upon the silent shores of his soul and mine.

Let me thank you warmly for all the delight which your beautiful music has brought to my household and to me. I want also to thank Station WEAF for the joy they are broadcasting in the world.

With kindest regards and best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours,

[Signed]

HELEN KELLER