

Let's Get Back to the Stones!

It was quiet when they met in the small café at the corner of the old terraced street in Newcastle. The old clock on the wall had only just announced that it was midday and the rush of people wanting their lunch was still a few minutes away.

Brian had got to the café first and was just looking through the menu when his friend, Alan arrived. Sitting down quickly, it was Alan who spoke first:

"Sorry I'm late".

"No problem. I've only just got here myself".

Without any more speaking the two friends proceeded to order some food. Only with that out of the way did they begin to chat properly. After the usual 'how's the family' stuff, the conversation turned to the subject of the Olympics Opening Ceremony, which had been live on television the previous Friday evening.



"Well, I enjoyed it", said Alan. "I thought it showed the real Britain."

"Well I didn't", muttered Brian darkly.

"What didn't you like about it?", asked Alan.

"Well, it wasn't really about Britain at all. I agree with that M.P. who said it was all multicultural, er...nonsense".

"Oh, you mean the man who wrote 'Bring back the Stones!'" on twitter?"

"Yeah. Well he was right. I mean the Stones, they really are British aren't they?", said Brian.

Oh yes, the Stones thought Alan. The Rolling Stones. Suddenly Alan found his mind drifting off into a vision of Mick, Keith and the rest when they were young. There were on stage, singing old Kentish folk songs, surrounded by lively Morris Dancers, while the audience went mad.



"Are you listening to me at all?", asked Brian, snapping Alan out of his daydream.

"Oh, sorry, I was just thinking", Alan replied.

Just then the food arrived.

Alan and Brian ate in silence for a while, before Alan felt bold enough to say something.

"You always have liked the Stones, haven't you?"

"Yeah. Well you know, they were my favourite band when I was growing up."

"They certainly were huge when we were young. Part of what made Britain seem cool, I suppose", Alan replied.

"That's what I was saying. I agree with that M.P. The Stones are a proper part of our culture..... not like some of the other stuff at the Olympics Opening Ceremony."

"But the Stones' music isn't British really", protested Alan.

"Of course it is", retorted Brian. "They're British, so obviously it's British music isn't it?"

"Well, in the early days, when we were really young, they played rhythm and blues. That's Afro-American music. It's really from the Deep South of America. They reckon that it can be traced all the way back to West Africa, places like Mali. The first forms of it came over with the slaves. The only British influence there was that many of the slaves had been taken against their will from Africa to America on British slave ships."



"Yeah, well, I suppose some of the Stones' music has been from African-American roots, but they made it their own", Brian replied somewhat sheepishly.

"Well, that's right", agreed Alan. "But that's just it isn't?"

"What is?", asked Brian somewhat confused.

"Well, it was the mixing of cultures, which made the Stones so great. Just like a lot of other British things. They come from a lot of different cultures. When we are open-minded and curious about other cultures, we do best. That's what the music of the Stones shows..."

"Well, you might be right I suppose...I hadn't really thought about it that way before..."

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