

ARTS & BOOKS

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ON VIEW



The Norton Simon Art Foundation

"HAPPY LOVERS" by Jean-Honoré Fragonard is included in the exhibition "A Revolution of the Palette" at Norton Simon Museum.

POP & HISS
Richards' third solo album has heart

By Randy Lewis

What do you do when your bandmate and songwriting partner happens to be one of the most celebrated lead singers in all of rock 'n' roll?

If you're Keith Richards, you largely keep your mouth shut and be content to be one of the most celebrated lead guitarists in all of rock 'n' roll.

Still, from time to time you might have something to say, and so Richards has stepped to the mike, notably with "Happy" back when the Rolling Stones recorded "Exile on Main Street" in 1972, and on two solo albums, "Talk Is Cheap" in 1988 and "Main Offender" four years later.

Given the Stones' pace in the studio of late, which at best might be described as "deliberate" (their most recent album, "A Bigger Bang," is now 10 years old), Richards is now set to release "Crosseyed Heart," just the third solo studio album of his half-century-plus recording career.

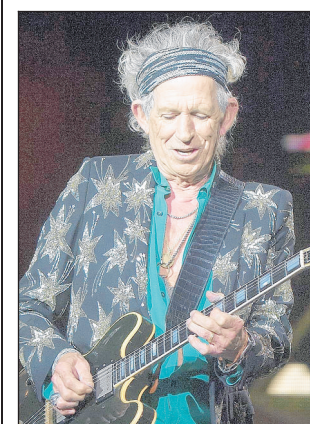
The Times will have a formal review closer to the album's release date in September, but on Tuesday night in Hollywood, about 50 people got an early listen to an album that features a core band of drummer and singer Steve Jordan, guitarist Waddy Wachtel and multi-instrumentalist Larry Campbell.

Among the guests: the late Bobby Keys, the Texas saxophonist whom Richards called his musical soul mate after they met in the '60s. Also onboard is singer Norah Jones, and Muscle Shoals organist Spooner Oldham, New Orleans singer Aaron Neville and son Ivan Neville.

As always, Richards' ragged voice is an instrument that's more serviceable than distinguished — it's the equivalent of a crude raft that can take the user from one bank of a river to the other, not traverse long distances with tremendous style or panache.

Yet Richards gets emotions across in the album's 15 songs. The album opens with the title track, just Richards playing guitar and croaking a vocal that connects him with the Delta blues. Several songs offer up big Stones-like rockers with beefy grooves and tasty guitar work. But it also contains tracks that are sweetly reflective, occasionally regretful and often vulnerable, qualities you might not expect from one of rock's most notorious antiheroes who, at 71, is not only a husband and father but a grandfather and, most recently, a first-time children's book author.

Follow @RandyLewis2 on Twitter.



DANIEL MEARS Detroit News

KEITH RICHARDS, shown this month in Detroit, is set to release "Crosseyed Heart."

A revolution in blues

The creation of three shades of blue hues — Prussian, cobalt and ultramarine — in 18th and 19th century European art, spanning from the Rococo period to Impressionism, is the subject of a colorful exhibition at the Norton Simon Museum, "A Revolution of the Palette: The First Synthetic Blues and Their Impact on French Artists."

"Previously, there were a limited number of options for oil painting," noted conservator and curator John Griswold. "Common indigo blue pigment did not stand up in oil, often turning to mushy gray."

The first breakthrough, dark blue Prussian, was the result of a laboratory accident around 1704. It was immediately popular with French artists because of its tinting strength and whole new range of green. "Its discovery also coincided with Isaac Newton's color theory, which shifted discussion of color and light scientifically," said Griswold.

Inspired by the blue glazes used on 18th century Sèvres porcelain, initially reserved for the aristocracy, chemist Louis Jacques Thénard developed a synthetic, vivid cobalt blue pigment making it affordable for the masses.

Considered the Holy Grail of pigments, ultramarine, derived from the rare semiprecious gemstone lapis lazuli, was once more expensive than gold. In 1824, the French government held a contest to find a cheap, accessible synthetic ultramarine. Artists finally had an affordable palate of cool and warm colors to fully replicate nature's canvas. "The innovation of paint tubes around the same time made it possible to bring paint outdoors," added Griswold.

Twenty-five objects from the museums collection, plus a vase and four rare editions on Newton, Voltaire and Goethe's color theories borrowed from the Huntington Library, are on display through January.

— LIESL BRADNER



The Norton Simon Art Foundation

"THE SEINE at Charenton (formerly Daybreak)" by Jean-Baptiste Armand Guillaumin.



The Norton Simon Art Foundation from the estate of Jennifer Jones Simon

GUSTAVE CAILLEBOTTE painted "Canoe on the Yerres River" in 1878.