

# TOWER TRIBUNE

Stone/Wino guitar god Keith Richards can still rip it up

Too old to be a brat, too bratty to be a snob and too rich to face mundane obstacles, Keith Richards can, and does make his own rules. A subscriber to Bob Dylan's dictum that "To live outside the law you must be honest," he's as up front and unabashed as they come. Asked about his forthrightness with the press, he replies, "How could I possibly remember the lie I told somebody a month ago?" The impression Richards gives is of someone perfectly content to be who he is and do what he does with no evident regard for external judgements or objections.

"One of the most encouraging things about working in music is that you don't think about (people's) differences. What you play and the way you're playing it is the only thing that counts. It's very hard to comprehend that people have so much difficulty getting along out there, because with music it's always so easy." Referring to his triumvirate with guitarist Waddy Wachtel and drummer Steve Jordan, who form Richards' band the X-pensive Winos, he says, "This is a funny line-up: the Jew, the black guy and the Anglo. We're a cross-section; it's a great three-way street."

Richards' new album, *Main Offender*, (Virgin) main achievement is to shake off the



Samie D'Orazio

stylistic disorder, uncertain songwriting and calamity of studio guests that made his first album, *Talk Is Cheap*, diffuse and patchy. "The first album was kind of a fishing expedition; we were just seeing what we could do. That's always been difficult, because you can't create a style until you've got one," Richards said.

What happened this time, in five studios on two coasts, was a focused, cohesive band album on which Richards' unceremonious growl is transmuted into a controllable musical instrument—not a smooth croon mind you, but enough to satisfy the critics.

From pulsing evocations of *Exile On Main Street* (the amazing "Eileen," "Will But You Won't") to mellow Al Green romanticism ("Hate It When You Leave," a beautiful gift for the Richards' missus) to sexy dance grooves ("Bodytalks," a duet with Sarah Dash), the album plays to the band's strengths, shifting arrangements, the instrumental line-up and the drum sound to gear each song differently. On "Words of Wonder," Richards plays bass, Charlie Drayton handles drums and Steve Jordan grabs a guitar. The well-realized goal was to get the feel down and let details like lyrics—which tend intentionally toward the vague and evocative rather than anything explicitly rational—fend for themselves. Sometimes the simplest, most obvious ingredients cook up so sweet.

Keith Richards

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