



In this July 4, 2015 file photo, Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones performs at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis, Ind. — AP

Rolling Stones to release new album in December

The Rolling Stones are heading back to their roots. The band announced yesterday it will release its first studio album in over a decade in December—covers of the American blues greats who got them into music in the first place. Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Ronnie Wood and Charlie Watts recorded “Blue & Lonesome” last December in three days at London’s British Grove Studios. That’s close to where the band, which formed in 1962, began performing at local venues with American blues as a major inspiration.

“The passion for blues music ... has always been at the heart and soul of The Rolling Stones”, a statement said. “Their approach to the album was that it should be spontaneous and played live in the studio without overdubs.” The album features songs by artists whose music the Stones played in their early days, such as Howlin’ Wolf, Willie Dixon, Jimmy Reed, Eddie Taylor and Little Walter. During some of their stadium concerts in the past, the Stones have put on specific blues sets, and their repertoire includes the likes of Dixon’s “Little Red Rooster” and Robert Johnson’s “Love in Vain”.

American blues was a major influence on the British rock scene of the late 1960s and early 1970s, with musicians in bands like Cream, Led Zeppelin and Fleetwood Mac all cutting their teeth on the genre. The Stones’ last studio album was 2005’s “A Bigger Bang”. They have since gone on tours around the world, putting on a large, free, outdoor concert in Cuba in March. — Reuters

Lady Gaga premieres new songs at Nashville club



Lady Gaga showed that she could rock a club just as hard as arenas as she showcased songs from her new album. The Grammy winner played a short set at the 5 Spot bar in Nashville on Wednesday night to a small crowd of fans and guests and included three new songs from her forthcoming album, “Joanne.” She introduced herself as Lady Gaga from New York City, but asked

her fans “tonight if you could just call me Joanne,” which is the name of her aunt, who died at 19 and is also her middle name. The album is set for release Oct 21. The performance was streamed live on tour partner Bud Light’s Facebook page, as will upcoming bar shows on Oct 20 and Oct 27.

Lady Gaga greeted crowds lined up behind police barricades before walking into the club wearing an embroidered jacket and large brimmed hat that covered her eyes and carrying a guitar case. She started with “Sinner’s Prayer,” followed with “A-Yo,” and then brought in top country songwriter Hillary Lindsey as backup vocals on “Million Reasons,” which Lindsey co-wrote. Lindsey is one of a trio of songwriters in Nashville who wrote the country hit “Girl Crush,” performed by Little Big Town. Lady Gaga returned after a short break with her current single, “Perfect Illusion,” and jumped into the crowd to sing and dance along with her fans.

After signing autographs, she played a second set for fans who had waited hours outside and sang the album’s title song as well. She told the crowd of just over 100 people that she couldn’t “give away too much tonight,” and left them wanting more as they chanted “Joanne.” Gaga will perform at the Super Bowl halftime show in February in Houston. — AP

Ugandan family’s life in movie on a rare talent for chess



Robert Katende (left) and Brian Mugabi, coach and brother of Phiona Mutesi, play a game of chess at the SOM Chess Academy in Katwe, a Kampala suburb. — AFP photos

Standing on a drab side-street next to an open sewer in the Ugandan capital Kampala, Brian Mugabi points to the site of his former family home and reflects on how much the game of chess has changed their lives. Ten years ago Mugabi lived in abject poverty in Katwe, a slum in Kampala where it’s a constant struggle to get by. But at a makeshift chess club in the heart of the neighborhood, his sister Phiona Mutesi suddenly displayed an extraordinary, raw talent for the game.

The family’s story is now the basis for the feel-good Disney movie “Queen of Katwe” which premiered in Uganda last weekend with Oscar-winning Kenyan actress Lupita Nyong’o playing the role of Phiona’s mother. “There are a lot of things that I’ve never experienced, like the red carpet and the audience was so huge, and also it was too much the movie, the first time to watch it, it was so emotional, like I couldn’t believe it,” Mutesi said at the premiere. “Sometimes people think that it’s not real life but what they show in (Queen of) Katwe is true. The foods, the people, children working to sell corn on the street, it’s all true.”

Her brother was one of those corn sellers. “Starting at age six I walked through the slum selling maize. On a good day I would make 3,000 shillings (\$1) but there were many bad days,” said Mugabi, now 22, who led his younger sister to a church-run chess club for the first time a decade ago. Mugabi pointed over the rough, bustling alley in front of him towards a cluster of high rises on the horizon. “That is downtown Kampala. We used to stand here and look at the fireworks at New Year, but the first time I ever went there was to play in a chess tournament,” said Mugabi, who enjoyed the game but never matched his sister’s abilities. “Everything changed when we discovered chess,” he said.

Chess board’s ‘like slum life’

It was the free cup of porridge on offer that first attracted Mugabi to the chess club run by Robert Katende at

Agape Church, then a rickety structure made from weathered wooden planks and leaky corrugated tin. Mutesi followed him there, and ‘Coach Robert’, as everyone calls him, spotted her peering in through the cracks in the wall. “She was very shy and really very, very dirty—so much so that the boys teased her badly—but when she came inside she stood up to them and I saw that she was strong,” said Katende, who founded the chess club in 2004 as part of a sports outreach program run by local missionaries.

“Life on the chess board is like life in the slum,” said Katende. “There are challenges and surprises everywhere but if you look closely you can find opportunities, you can find your way through.” Mutesi quickly stood out among the slum kids and began winning. “Phiona couldn’t read or write but she has this remarkable talent to be able to see moves on the chess board,” said Katende. He encouraged Mutesi to persevere and persuaded her mother, Harriet, that chess offered not just life skills but a route out of poverty.

‘Captivating determination’

“What was so captivating for me was

her determination to survive, as a young girl. Because it’s rare to find in young girls in the slum. They are always timid, because of the environment, they are so marginalized, they don’t think they can do anything,” Katende said. After just two years of playing Mutesi won a tournament and was crowned Uganda’s junior champion.

Three years later she was national champion. In 2012, still just 16 years old, she was made a Woman Candidate Master while competing in her second international Chess Olympiad. Her dream now is to become a Grand Master. She has played in international tournaments from Sudan to Siberia and now her tale of triumph over adversity is on the big screen.

“Queen of Katwe” was shown at the Toronto Film Festival in September and has been released in the United States with Britain and Ireland to follow this month. Away from the bright lights of Hollywood, chess has truly turned the family’s fortunes around. Mutesi, 20, and Mugabi are able to pay university fees, while their mother has swapped the family shack in Katwe for a proper home. — AFP



Robert Katende, coach of Phiona Mutesi, speaks during a coaching session at the SOM Chess Academy at Katwe.