

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SAN FRANCISCO ROCK: THE SUMMER OF LOVE

Week Two: The San Francisco Psychedelic Rock Explosion; The Music Matures, Haight-Ashbury Endures

Recommended Listening:

The Beau Brummels, *Triangle* (Collectors' Choice Music, 1967). With the departure of some of the original members, most of the Beau Brummels' creative direction was down to guitarist/chief songwriter Ron Elliott and singer Sal Valentino by the time they recorded *Triangle*. The overt British Invasion and folk-rock influences of their earlier work gave way to more serious, introspective, and at times country-influenced songs. Their growth into mature album-oriented artists still didn't help them gain much hipness within the San Francisco scene, but *Triangle* had worthwhile music that garnered critical acclaim beyond the Bay Area, though it wasn't a big seller.

Country Joe & the Fish, *Electric Music for the Mind and Body* (Vanguard, 1967). From their jug band roots, Country Joe quickly added frenetic loud distorted electric guitar and organ, along with influences from blues and raga, on this eclectic mix of songs about politics, free love, and drugs. "Flying High," "Not So Sweet Martha Lorraine," "Love," and "Grace" (about guess who) all remain among their best known songs, though the instrumental "Section 43" was done better on their pre-album 1966 EP.

The Grateful Dead, *The Grateful Dead* (Rhino, 1967). Heard today, the Grateful Dead's debut album seems more straightforward blues-rock than experimental psychedelia. Amphetamine use and lack of comfort in the recording studio have been credited/blamed for this, but the truth was they had yet to hit their full stride as instrumentalists and, more especially, songwriters. This still has strong intimations of their psychedelic/eclectic identity in songs like "Cold Rain and Snow"; their folk roots in "Morning Dew"; their blues improvisation in the ten-minute "Viola Lee Blues"; and near-garage-rock on "Cream Puff War." Like other early Dead albums, this has

been issued on Rhino with some bonus tracks, which is the edition worth tracking down.

Jefferson Airplane, *Surrealistic Pillow* (RCA, 1967). The single album that did the most to popularize the San Francisco Sound on an international level, and thus arguably the single most important album discussed in this course. While the band's folk-rock roots are still in evidence, they were rushing onward toward psychedelia both lyrically, with overt references to drugs and the hassles of late-'60s society, and sonically, with increasing use of distorted guitar and odd/unpredictable song structures. For all that, the tunes remained supremely melodic, often projecting a utopian hope for a better future in Marty Balin's compositions and vocals in particular. "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit" were the big hits, but Balin's ballad "Today" was just as much a classic, and "She Has Funny Cars," "D.C.B.A.-25," and indeed most of the other songs were close to the same level. The edition with bonus tracks is recommended, adding two fine folk-rockish tunes that would have fit in well with the album ("Go to Her" and "J.P.P. McStep B. Blues"), though the blues songs that didn't make the cut aren't so good.

Moby Grape, *Moby Grape* (1967, Sundazed). Moby Grape's debut album was their best by a considerable margin, blending rock, blues, country, and harmony folk-rock in roughly equal measures. That didn't help them get a hit single, despite five 45s being released from the album at once, a move which backfired on the ill-starred band. Unfortunately the 2007 CD reissue on Sundazed, which added some generally weaker but nonetheless interesting bonus tracks, was withdrawn shortly after release and isn't as easy to find as it should be.

The Mojo Men, *Sit Down...It's the Mojo Men* (Sundazed, 1995). The more commercial phase of one of the more commercial San Francisco groups to achieve some success, as they did with their cover of Buffalo Springfield's "Sit Down I Think I Love You." This has singles they recorded for Reprise in 1966-67, as well as some previously unissued material, on which some glimmers of the San Francisco harmony folk-rock sound shine through.

The Serpent Power, *The Serpent Power* (Vanguard, 1967). One of the first full-length albums to be issued on a prominent national label by a second-tier Bay Area band has the early San Francisco Sound's characteristic mix of male-female-sung harmonized folk-rock with Indian/middle eastern/psychedelic elements, though it's more pleasant than outstanding. Songwriter David Meltzer established himself as a noted poet before the group began its recording career.

Various Artists, *Monterey International Pop Festival 30th Anniversary Box Set* (Rhino, 1997). Bay Area bands form only a part of this four-CD compilation of recordings made at the Monterey Pop Festival from June 16-18, 1967. And while the sound's only fair and it's much more exciting to see the film clips from the performances, this still has historically important material from Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother & the Holding Company that's good on its own terms. The less extensive selection of tracks by the Electric Flag, Steve Miller, and Country Joe & the Fish are much less exciting, though the rest of the set has interesting if erratic stuff by leading international acts from outside the Bay Area like Jimi Hendrix, the Who, Otis Redding, the Byrds, and Eric Burdon & the Animals.

Recommended Books:

Bill Graham Presents, by Bill Graham and Robert Greenfield (Doubleday, 1992). Published not long after his death, this autobiographical oral history has extended quotes from both Graham and numerous musicians and associates who had memorable interactions with him. As you might expect, it can be self-aggrandizing, but has plenty of interesting stories that testify to his central importance in both the San Francisco scene and the global development of rock promotion into a huge industry.

The Jefferson Airplane and the San Francisco Sound, by Ralph J. Gleason (Ballantine, 1969). Gleason could go overboard in his enthusiasm for the San Francisco Sound, as evidenced by the 80-page overview that serves as this book's initial chapter. What it's really most valuable for are the extended interviews that fill up the next 250 pages, including Q&As with all six of the members of

Jefferson Airplane's most famous lineup (and two separate ones with Marty Balin!), Bill Graham, and Jerry Garcia. Long out of print, but not as hard to find used as you might guess.

Monterey Pop, by Joel Selvin (Chronicle Books, 1992). Not nearly as comprehensive an overview of the Monterey Pop Festival as *A Perfect Haze* (see below), but still a reasonable look at the event. Out of print for quite a while, but obtainable used.

A Perfect Haze: The Illustrated History of the Monterey International Pop Festival, by Harvey Kubernik and Kenneth Kubernik (Santa Monica Press, 2011). Fine coffee-table book about the June 1967 rock festival that was crucial to both the onset of psychedelic rock's heyday and the birth of the concept of the rock festival itself, with numerous first-hand memories from Monterey's musicians and organizers.

Rage & Roll: Bill Graham and the Selling of Rock, by John Glatt (Carol Publishing Group, 1993). Though not nearly as well known as Graham's posthumous memoir *Bill Graham Presents* (see above), as an unauthorized bio this is more critical, more explicitly descriptive of the volatile aspects of the promoter's personality, and, in the view of some readers, more objective in some respects.

The San Francisco Oracle (CreateSpace, 2011). At nearly \$100 it isn't cheap, but this reprints all twelve issues of the legendary Haight-Ashbury underground paper published between 1966 and 1968.

What's Big and Purple and Lives in the Ocean? The Moby Grape Story, by Cam Cobb (Jawbone, 2018). The only biography likely to be published on Moby Grape is a disappointment, and it's poorly constructed and organized; does not draw upon interviews with key member Peter Lewis and producer David Rubinson; and has too many digressions from the story of the band. It nonetheless has some interesting information, some taken from first-hand interviews with other surviving band members.

Recommended Books Specifically About San Francisco Rock Posters:

All of Us or None: Social Justice Posters of the San Francisco Bay Area, by Lincoln Cushing (Heyday, 2012). Though Summer of Love-era music posters comprise a small part of this book, they comprise much of one of the chapters, including some that are rare and seldom reproduced.

The Art of Rock, by Paul Grushkin (Abbeville Press, 1987). The subtitle "posters from Presley to punk" might lead you to believe that this is a general rock poster history rather than one dominated by Bay Area '60s posters. But a full third or so of this 500-page, huge'n'heavy coffee table book is devoted to San Francisco psychedelic rock posters from 1965-1971. While there's more attention paid to the most prominent posters and venues than anything else, it doesn't neglect other aspects of the field, with plenty of more obscure posters, some from events outside of the city in Marin County, the East Bay, and other surrounding areas. Attention's given elsewhere in the book to the influence of San Francisco rock posters throughout North America and Europe, and there are extended quotes/memories from several of the principal artists. Although the focus of this book is not solely on San Francisco rock posters, it has more (and richer) content related to the subject than any of the other poster books listed here, with several hundred color reproductions. As many outraged Amazon reviewers make clear, if you want this, make sure to get the full-sized 13 X 10 version, not the relatively tiny 4 X 5 one.

The Art of the Fillmore: The Poster Series 1966-1971, by Gayle Lemke (Acid Test Productions, 1997). Coffee table book with hundreds of high quality reproductions of posters affiliated with events in which Bill Graham was involved, mostly at the Fillmore West, though there are some from the Fillmore East, Winterland, and other venues. These include work by the "Big Five" of San Francisco rock poster design (Rick Griffin, Alton Kelley, Victor Moscoso, Stanley Mouse, and Wes Wilson), as well as a few others. There are also small articles on nearly a dozen of the artists, including all of the aforementioned ones.

High Art: A History of the Psychedelic Poster, by Ted Owen & Denise Dickson (Sanctuary, 1999). Another book that mixes San

Francisco Summer of Love-era rock posters with psychedelic posters from elsewhere around the world. The reproductions aren't nearly as numerous as those in *The Art of Rock*. But this is distinguished from other books listed here for its critical essays by Walter Medeiros on most of the most noted San Francisco poster artists (Wes Wilson, Alton Kelley, Stanley Mouse, Victor Moscoso, Rick Griffin, Randy Tuten, David Singer, Bonnie MacLean, and Lee Conklin), originally done for a San Francisco Rock Poster Art exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1976.

High Societies: Psychedelic Rock Posters of Haight-Ashbury, by Paul Grushkin (San Diego Museum of Art, 2001). Essentially a catalog for an exhibit at the San Diego Museum of Art, this slim volume might be the least extensive of the poster books mentioned in this section. It isn't easy to find either, but for those deeply curious about the field, it has about two dozen half-page or full-page reprints of posters, and more than 100 small reprints with commentary. Many of these are by the "Big Five" San Francisco poster designers or otherwise well known, which isn't a bad thing, but does mean it overlaps with other books listed here.

Off the Wall: Psychedelic Rock Posters from San Francisco, by Amélie Gastaut and Jean-Pierre Criqui (Thames & Hudson, 2005). It's much smaller than *The Art of the Fillmore*; has only some brief introductory text; and concentrates mostly on work by well-known poster artists, which leads to some inevitable overlap with other books on the subject. That noted, it has 130 color illustrations of posters, some rare, and is worth finding for those with a serious interest in the subject.

Recommended DVDs:

Big Brother & the Holding Company, *Ball & Chain* (Charly, 2009). Half-hour audience-less television concert, preserved in good black-and-white quality, filmed live at KQED in San Francisco on April 25, 1967. This captures the group just two months before their

Monterey appearance would launch them and Janis Joplin to stardom. The setlist includes some of their best songs, among them "Ball and Chain," "Down on Me," "Coo Coo," and a wild psychedelic instrumental version of "Hall of the Mountain King."

The Complete Monterey Pop Festival (The Criterion Collection, 2002). The Monterey Pop Festival was the first major rock festival, and arguably the best one, with breakthrough performances by Jimi Hendrix, the Who, Janis Joplin (with Big Brother & the Holding Company), and Otis Redding, as well as less iconic sets by numerous leading early San Francisco bands (Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe & the Fish, Steve Miller Band, Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Grateful Dead). The film of the event, *Monterey Pop*, was one of the great rockumentaries, capturing footage of the most notable spots. This three-DVD expanded edition has the original 70-minute film; a second disc with the complete sets of Hendrix and Redding; and a third disc of performances that didn't make the original movie by more than a dozen acts, including some (the Byrds, the Electric Flag, Quicksilver), Laura Nyro) who didn't make the original film at all. Also includes a 64-page booklet of liner notes, photos, and memorabilia. The DVD with the original *Monterey Pop* movie is also available on its own, as is the disc featuring Hendrix and Redding.

Notable Figures (Excluding Star Musicians):

Lou Adler: Co-founder with John Phillips of the Monterey Pop Festival, the June 1967 event that provided major San Francisco groups with their biggest exposure to that point.

Samuel Charters: Originally a blues and jazz scholar and producer, moved into rock in the mid-1960s by producing Country Joe & the Fish's 1960s albums (as well as ones by the much less famous Berkeley bands the Serpent Power and Notes from the Underground, who were also on Vanguard Records).

Clive Davis: President of Columbia Records, who was influential in getting the label to sign more psychedelic and creative acts after attending Monterey Pop, including San Francisco's Big Brother & the Holding Company and (toward the end of the 1960s) Santana.

The Diggers: Radical activists/actors who staged multimedia happenings in Haight-Ashbury, also helping to feed and provide other services to the many young people who moved to the neighborhood during the Summer of Love.

Bob Durand: Though not a member of the Beau Brummels, Durand co-wrote a number of their songs with the group's guitarist and principal songwriter, Ron Elliott, including their 1965 hit "Just a Little" and several tracks on their 1967 album *Triangle*.

Herb Greene: Photographer of numerous San Francisco rock groups as the scene was getting off the ground, most famous for the cover of Jefferson Airplane's *Surrealistic Pillow* and numerous Airplane/Great Society pictures.

Rick Griffin: Major San Francisco rock poster artist, and designer of poster for the Human Be-In event in January 1967. Along with Alton Kelley, Victor Moscoso, Stanley Mouse, and Wes Wilson (see below), part of what have been referred to as "the Big Five" of San Francisco rock poster design.

Albert Grossman: One of the most powerful managers in 1960s popular music, handling Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul & Mary, the Band, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Ian & Sylvia, and numerous others. In attendance at the Monterey Pop Festival, he was instrumental in arranging for Big Brother & the Holding Company to be filmed for *Monterey Pop*. Later signed Big Brother and helped get their deal with Columbia Records; managed Janis Joplin as a solo artist, and has been blamed for helping instigate her break from Big Brother.

Dave Hassinger: Producer of the Grateful Dead's first album, and engineer for the first two Jefferson Airplane albums. Also worked as an engineer with the Rolling Stones when they recorded in Hollywood in the mid-1960s, and produced Los Angeles psychedelic band the Electric Prunes. Stopped working with the Grateful Dead partly through the recording of their second album, frustrated by their request to simulate "the sound of thick air."

Rick Jarrard: RCA staff producer who produced Jefferson Airplane's most popular album, *Surrealistic Pillow*, and whose

commercial touch was crucial to the record's popularity. It wasn't entirely to the liking of the band, who didn't use him again, though he also worked with Jose Feliciano and noted singer-songwriter Nilsson.

Julius Karpen: Manager of Big Brother & the Holding Company prior to Albert Grossman, sometimes criticized for keeping them from being filmed for *Monterey Pop* before other opinions prevailed.

Alton Kelley: One of the most renowned San Francisco rock poster artists, as well as (with Stanley Mouse) doing album covers for the Grateful Dead, and that group's skeleton and roses logo.

Victor Moscoso: One of the top San Francisco rock poster and underground comics artists. Also did album covers, most notably Steve Miller's *Children of the Future*.

Stanely Mouse: Born Stanley Miller, one of the most renowned San Francisco rock poster artists, as well as (with Alton Kelley) doing album covers for the Grateful Dead, and that group's skeleton and roses logo.

John Phillips: Main songwriter of the Mamas & the Papas who co-founded the Monterey Pop Festival with Lou Adler, and was both hailed and derided for writing the Summer of Love anthem "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)," a hit for Scott McKenzie.

David Rubinson: Columbia Records producer who worked on Moby Grape's 1960s albums, also producing the cult album *Oar* by Skip Spence after Spence left the band. Later produced Santana's first album, Elvin Bishop, Malo, and records by lesser known Bay Area acts like Lamb and Cold Blood. Also produced albums by the United States of America, Herbie Hancock, Taj Mahal, the Chambers Brothers, and the Pointer Sisters.

Rock Scully: Along with Danny Rifkin, early manager of the Grateful Dead.

Joe Smith: A&R man who signed the Grateful Dead to Warner Brothers.

Owsley Stanley: Also known as the Bear, famous as both a manufacturer of LSD and the Grateful Dead's soundman in their early days.

Wes Wilson: Along with Rick Griffin, Alton Kelley, Victor Moscoso, and Stanley Mouse (see above), part of what have been referred to as "the Big Five" of San Francisco rock poster design. Wilson was most known for his posters for the Fillmore.

Notable Places:

Donahue Street, Marin City: On a fire trail off the end of this street, three members of Moby Grape were busted for drugs and consorting with underage women in May 1967 the night of their record release party, starting a run of ill fortune that permanently damaged their career.

Hippie Hill: Area of Golden Gate Park in which George Harrison and his wife were spotted visiting Haight-Ashbury on August 7, 1967, with George being given a guitar and asked to play for a bit before crowds followed them onto Haight Street.

KQED: Still-active San Francisco public television station that filmed and broadcast several programs (fortunately preserved) featuring most of the major regional bands in 1967-70, including Big Brother & the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, the Steve Miller Band, and Quicksilver Messenger Service. They also did a Pink Floyd special in 1970 that has yet to be officially released.

The Panhandle: Adjunct to Golden Gate Park in Haight-Ashbury where many free rock concerts were played, including ones by the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and Big Brother & the Holding Company.

The Polo Fields: Site of "A Gathering of the Tribes – Human Be-In" event on January 14, 1967, in Golden Gate Park, with tens of thousands listening to both leading local rock bands and poets/countercultural figures Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and Gary Snyder.

710 Ashbury Street: The Haight-Ashbury house where much of the Grateful Dead, and their managers/associates, lived from 1966-68. Some of them were busted for marijuana possession there in October 1967.

Sidney B. Cushing Memorial Amphitheatre: Site of the Fantasy Fair and Magic Mountain Music Festival on Mount Tamalpais on June 10 and 11 of 1967, the weekend before the Monterey Pop Festival. Though not nearly as many people attended this event as the one at Monterey, about 35,000 came over the weekend to hear a lineup nearly as impressive. With the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, the Byrds, Country Joe & the Fish, Tim Hardin, and Captain Beefheart among the performers, it was an important if overlooked immediate predecessor to the Monterey festival.

Sierra Sound: Berkeley studio where material was recorded by Country Joe & the Fish, the Serpent Power, and Serpent Power spinoff duo Tina & David Meltzer.

Straight Theater: Dance hall on 1702 Haight Street that operated for a while starting in 1967, with shows by host of the leading local bands, as well as Santana before they had a record deal. Mickey Hart first played with the Grateful Dead at this venue.

Notable Labels:

Columbia: Only slightly after RCA and Warner Brothers had become the first major labels to land a couple of major San Francisco bands (Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead respectively), Columbia got in on the action, first with Moby Grape, and then with Big Brother & the Holding Company and Sly & the Family Stone. Also issued records by Dino Valenti, Moby Grape guitarist Skip Spence, and Janis Joplin after she left Big Brother.

Vanguard: Most known for their classical and folk catalog (especially via their biggest star, Joan Baez), Vanguard was the largest independent label to make a substantial investment in the San Francisco Sound, signing Country Joe & the Fish, the Serpent Power, and Notes from the Underground.

Warner Brothers: One of the first big labels to take a chance on a band that established themselves as a leading act on the San Francisco scene through their live reputation and word-of-mouth alone, when it signed the Grateful Dead and put out their debut album in 1967. Before that, they had acquired the roster of Autumn Records when that label went bust, and put out post-Autumn San Francisco rock by the Beau Brummels and the Mojo Men.

Notable Publications:

The San Francisco Oracle: One of the first underground papers with a large local readership, and one of the first to also reach readers across the US and abroad. This Haight-Ashbury publication was as noted for its flamboyant and colorful graphics as its cultural coverage.