

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

Week Three: The Late '60s: From Acid Rock to Hard Rock

Recommended Listening:

Big Brother & the Holding Company, *Cheap Thrills* (Columbia, 1968). Despite a troubled, protracted genesis and getting patched together from both studio and live recordings, this was the album that (briefly) made Big Brother & the Holding Company into superstars. Reaching #1 in the charts, it included the hit "Piece of My Heart," their signature tune "Ball and Chain," and other favorites in "Combination of the Two," "I Need a Man to Love," and their psychedelic reinvention of the pre-rock standard "Summertime." The superstardom was brief for all but one member, as Janis Joplin left shortly after its release to go solo.

Big Brother & the Holding Company, *Sex, Dope & Cheap Thrills* (Columbia/Legacy). This two-CD compilation is comprised almost entirely of outtakes from the *Cheap Thrills* sessions. Twenty-five of the thirty songs are previously unreleased; the previously available ones are on out-of-the-way or expensive compilations that even committed Joplin/Big Brother fans might have missed; and the one non-studio cut is a good hitherto unissued live version of "Ball and Chain" (Winterland, April 12, 1968). While none of these are drastically different from the versions on *Cheap Thrills* (or elsewhere, for the songs here that didn't make the cut for the LP), they're different enough to make for enjoyable, at times compelling listening — even the occasional take breakdowns. And while all seven of the songs from the LP are represented by different takes/performances, there are no less than nine others (again, sometimes in multiple versions), most of them group originals. While these are generally not up to the standard of the final selections ("Farewell Song" being a notable exception), they're decent enough, and their inclusion gives us a much more rounded view of the band's repertoire at their peak.

Big Brother & the Holding Company, *Live at the Carousel Ballroom 1968* (Columbia/Legacy, 2012). Recorded in concert on

June 23, 1968, this isn't all that different from *Cheap Thrills*. But it has exciting live versions of the most popular *Cheap Thrills* songs, plus some more of their strongest tunes ("Coo Coo," "Down on Me," "Light Is Faster Than Sound") and more obscure odds and ends ("Flower in the Sun," "Call on Me").

Big Brother & the Holding Company, *Live at Winterland '68* (Columbia/Legacy, 1998). Yet another live concert, this one from April 1968, with a similar selection of songs as *Live at the Carousel Ballroom 1968*, with a few differences.

Blue Cheer, *Vincebus Eruptum* (Philips, 1968). One of the most popular San Francisco rock albums of the late 1960s, due mostly to the inclusion of their psychedelic overhaul of the late-'50s Eddie Cochran rockabilly classic "Summertime Blues." Though the smoke-rising-out-of-the-amplifiers intensity of the humming hard rock guitar riffs anticipates heavy metal, in the opinion of the instructor, aside from "Summertime Blues" it isn't very good, given to monotony, ham-handed heaviness, and histrionic vocals. Blue Cheer kept going for quite a while with some personnel changes, the most succinct overview of their career being the 1986 Rhino compilation *Louder Than God: The Best of Blue Cheer*.

The Charlatans, *The Charlatans* (Philips, 1969). There's no getting around it: the Charlatans' sole full-length album, both when it was released in 1969 and heard today, was/is a disappointing letdown given their status among the legendary San Francisco psychedelic scene originators. Only two of the members from their earlier and best lineup (Mike Wilhelm and Richie Olsen) remained by the time they finally got to do a real album, almost four years after they first made their mark on the region's music. But although the production is muted and some of the horn arrangements arguably inappropriate, it's not without some charm in its easy-rolling mix of blues, country, and mild psychedelia, though there isn't much standout original material. The essence of the band is captured better on the 1965-68 recordings issued on the compilation *The Amazing Charlatans*, detailed in the handout for the first week of this class.

The Chocolate Watchband, *Melts in Your Brain...Not on Your Wrist!* (Big Beat, 2005). Two-CD compilation of the San Jose band that was the most effective – not just in Northern California, but almost anywhere – in blending garage rock with psychedelia. Controversially, some releases under the Chocolate Watchband name did not actually feature the band; this anthology helps keep the record straight by devoting the first disc to recordings by the actual group, and the second to ones (largely unimpressive, but with some scintillating highlights) on which they didn't perform. If a double CD is too much, look for the out-of-print 18-song Rhino compilation *The Best of the Chocolate Watchband*.

Country Joe & the Fish, *I-Feel-Like-I'm Fixin'-to-Die* (Vanguard, 1967). The Fish's second, and second-best, album found it impossible to keep up the momentum of their debut (or 1966 pre-debut EP). Similar but inferior to their first LP, it was still significant on the grounds of the classic title song and anti-war anthem alone, as well as for the song inspired by Country Joe's one-time girlfriend and fellow rock star, "Janis."

The Electric Flag, *Old Glory: The Best of Electric Flag* (Columbia/Legacy, 1995). Built around ex-Paul Butterfield Blues Band lead guitarist Mike Bloomfield, Electric Flag were perhaps the first nationally successful Bay Area group to feature a musician who was already established as a noted recording artist before moving to the region (in this case, from Chicago). Also in the group was drummer/singer Buddy Miles, who'd go on to play in Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys; keyboardist Barry Goldberg, who'd been in a band with Steve Miller in the Midwest; bassist/guitarist Harvey Brooks, who had played on Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited*; and fellow Chicagoan Nick Gravenites, who'd write material for Quicksilver and Janis Joplin. Though an ambitious endeavor that aimed to combine blues, psychedelia, and horn-driven soul, all the talent couldn't quite overcome the lack of excellent songs or clear vision, not to mention the departure of Bloomfield after their first album. This best-of is drawn mostly from that debut (1968's *A Long Time Comin'*), also featuring a few other odds and ends (including live Monterey Pop Festival tracks) from their short career.

Fifty Foot Hose, *Cauldron – Plus* (Big Beat, 1996). More something to admire for its audacity than to enjoy, Fifty Foot Hose's sole album (issued in 1968) was one of the most unusual albums to come out of the whole San Francisco scene, attempting to fuse the contemporary sounds of rock with electronic instruments and avant-garde compositional ideas. Though an erratic work, it was intriguing for its mix of jazzy psychedelic rock tunes with electronic sound effects that anticipated future models of synthesizers, but sounded fiercer and more primitive. This 1996 UK reissue adds seven tracks from demos and recordings by the Ethis, bassist Cork Marcheschi's previous band.

The Grateful Dead, *Anthem of the Sun* (Warner Brothers/Rhino, 1968). The second Grateful Dead album is even more polarizing than many of their studio efforts. Some see its free-floating, just short-of-jamming structures as an evocation of the psychedelic experience. Others are frustrated by the meandering and lack of songs, even as it shows Jerry Garcia's distinct eclectically roving guitar style continuing to develop.

The Grateful Dead, *Aoxomoxoa* (Warner Brothers/Rhino, 1969). The addition of poet Robert Hunter to the ranks as songwriting collaborator (usually with Jerry Garcia) does much to boost the quality of the material on the Dead's third album. While some of their tendencies toward loose jamming and inaccessible freaky experimentalism (especially on "What's Become of the Baby") are still evident, they're outweighed by more solid songs that blend whimsical hippie philosophizing with some country-blues-roots elements ("St. Stephen," "Mountains of the Moon," "China Cat Sunflower").

The Grateful Dead, *Live/Dead* (Warner Brothers/Rhino, 1969). But for those who prefer loose jams to songs, they filled up much of this 1969 live double LP, the 23-minute "Dark Star" occupying an entire album side. Though this did have a version of "St. Stephen," this emphasized the Dead's extended concert creations, including a 15-minute "Turn on Your Love Light" to showcase their blues repertoire and keyboardist Pigpen's vocals. And if you want more live Dead from this or any era, there are dozens of official releases (and hundreds if not thousands of unofficial releases) of live

concerts for their many fanatical followers, especially in the *Dick's Picks* series.

Dan Hicks, *Early Muses* (Big Beat, 1998). Previously unreleased demos from 1967 and 1968 that link the more psychedelic work of Hicks's first band, the Charlatans, with the droll faux Western swing of his solo recordings. These songs are as witty as any low-key psychedelic folk, with unusual, appealing minor-key melodies that spin off in unexpected tangents. Especially good is "The Innocent Bystander," which he'd later record as leader of the Hot Licks.

It's a Beautiful Day, *It's a Beautiful Day* (Columbia, 1969). It's a Beautiful Day's debut album, and indeed their entire career, would be overshadowed by its gorgeous opening cut "White Bird." With its lilting hypnotic folk-rock melody, male-female duet vocals, and plucked violin, it was by far their most popular recording, to the point that it's the only It's a Beautiful Day song many people remember. The rest of the LP couldn't measure up to it, but though erratic it has its moments, usually when David LaFlamme's unusual violin and the haunting tunes come to the forefront, as they do on "Hot Summer Day" and "Girl with No Eyes."

Jefferson Airplane, *After Bathing at Baxter's* (RCA, 1967). The Airplane's third album was a bit of a surprise, and not as commercially successful as its predecessor *Surrealistic Pillow*, going into harder acid rock and some less tuneful extended jams. In part that was due to the retreat of Marty Balin, who wrote barely any material after being as important as any member with his songwriting and singing on their first two LPs. Some of it's tedious, but it has some classics when they tap their more melodic strengths on "Won't You Try/Saturday Afternoon" and "Martha."

Jefferson Airplane, *Return to the Matrix 02/01/68* (Collectors' Choice Music Live, 2010). Surprisingly high-fidelity two-CD live set at the small club at which Jefferson Airplane first made their name, with performances of most of the best songs from their first three albums (and some unimpressive songs that didn't make it onto those).

Jefferson Airplane, *Live at the Fillmore East* (RCA, 1998). There's so much live '60s Airplane out there that it's understandable if it's too much for anyone but fanatics to sift through. The live releases are all good, though, and here's another one, from New York shows on May 3 and May 4 of 1968. The majority of the songs appear on several other live CDs, but there are a few less traveled items, like "Greasy Heart" and "Wild Tyme."

Jefferson Airplane, *Crown of Creation* (RCA, 1968). *Crown of Creation* continued the Airplane's flight toward harder-rocking and, and in some cases, stranger and less accessible material than the stuff that made them superstars on *Surrealistic Pillow*. Among the songs, however, were two of their most famous tunes, the title track and Grace Slick's haunting ballad of a man stuck in childhood (actually based on Airplane drummer Spencer Dryden), "Lather." Unable to get his former group the Byrds to record it due to its controversial depiction of promiscuity, David Crosby passed on one of his compositions to his Airplane friends for another of the album's highlights, "Triad."

Jefferson Airplane, *Bless Its Pointed Little Head* (RCA, 1969). The most well known Airplane live album, as it was actually released while they were at the peak of their fame, recorded in the Fillmore West and Fillmore East in October and November of 1968. Focusing on more elongated and psychedelic concert arrangements of their most popular early songs, it also adds a couple standout covers that they'd been doing for a long time onstage, Fred Neil's folk-rocker "The Other Side of This Life" and Donovan's "Fat Angel" (which actually mentions the Airplane).

Mad River, *Mad River* (Capitol, 1968). One of the oddest and least typical notable late-'60s Bay Area psychedelic albums, Mad River's debut stressed tense anxiety and dark intimations of madness and fear over utopian striving for a better world. Though at times excessive (as many San Francisco acid rock albums were), the frenetic guitar work, amphetamine-fueled air of paranoia, and Lawrence Hammond's distinctive quavering vocals are impressive, if not to everyone's taste. Mad River's second and final album, 1969's *Paradise Bar & Grill*, was far more sedate and country-rock-oriented, and not as interesting, though notable for a cameo poetry

reading by famed author Richard Brautigan. Also worth hearing is their pre-album EP, included on the compilation *The Berkeley EPs* (see below).

Harvey Mandel, *Cristo Redentor* (Philips, 1968). One of several major Chicago blues-rock musicians who moved to San Francisco (also including Mike Bloomfield, Elvin Bishop, and harmonica player Charlie Musselwhite), Mandel's debut album was an interesting instrumental mix of blues, rock, psychedelia, and even some jazz and classical music (especially on the title track, a cover of a jazz song by Duke Pearson). This was by far his best album, though some tracks from his second and third are on the two-CD compilation *The Mercury Years*, which includes *Cristo Redentor* in its entirety. Mandel is more known for playing with Canned Heat and John Mayall, as well as on the mid-'70s *Black and Blue* album by the Rolling Stones, who considered him as a replacement for Mick Taylor before choosing Ron Wood instead.

Tina & David Meltzer, *Poet Song* (Vanguard, 1969). After the sole album by the Serpent Power, the core husband-wife duo of the Serpent Power, Tina & David Meltzer, made this subsequent album on their own. Considerably folkier than the Serpent Power, it nevertheless retains the folk-rock base of poetic/romantic lyrics, and alternation of major and minor moods/melodies/chords, so characteristic of much of the mid-to-late-'60s San Francisco sound. With the insertion of occasional poems by still-active poet David Meltzer, this is a low-key but extremely pleasing album, and one of the best overlooked/underrated records listed on handouts to this course. The duo recorded a subsequent unissued album for Capitol that is more uneven but has its moments, particularly on the tracks featuring Tina's vocals, and can be heard on David Meltzer's website at http://meltzerville.com/green_morning/green_morning.htm.

Lee Michaels, *Carnival of Life* (A&M, 1967). An idiosyncratic solo artist, not always based in the Bay Area, who mixed soul and singer-songwriter elements into his keyboard-heavy psychedelic rock. While this debut album doesn't have a song as memorable as his one big hit single ("Do You Know What I Mean," 1971), it has some mighty impressive soulful wailing vocals and keyboards (and, on "Hello," very Summer-of-Love optimism) that put him

somewhere between San Francisco psychedelia and early hard rock. His second album, 1968's *Recital* (also on A&M), is similar and also impressive, though not much of a departure from *Carnival of Life*.

The Steve Miller Band, *Children of the Future* (Capitol, 1968). Like much of Miller's early work, *Children of the Future* was an odd mixture of straightforward blues-rock and spacy flower-power-colored psychedelia (especially the title track). As with the Grateful Dead, his band's early records weren't as exciting as their reputation as one of San Francisco's hottest live acts led many to expect. Recorded in London, it also at times featured a surprising amount of Mellotron (an early synthesizer) that almost sounded as if it could have been airlifted from Moody Blues records. An important member of the lineup at this stage was future solo star Boz Scaggs, who in addition to playing second guitar took some lead vocals, writing and singing on one of the standout tracks, the bluesy shuffle "Baby's Callin' Me Home."

The Steve Miller Band, *Sailor* (Capitol, 1968). Miller's early albums are uneven enough that the best-of recommended on this course's general listening list is probably a better option for most people than his individual LPs. This continued the mixture of blues and psychedelia from his debut, and was more impressive the lighter and spacier it got, as it did on "Song for Our Ancestors" and "Quicksilver Girl." It did include one of his most popular early hard rockers, "Living in the U.S.A."

The Steve Miller Band, *Brave New World* (Capitol, 1969). Miller's third album suffered some loss of depth with the departure of Boz Scaggs, though otherwise it was more of the same blend of blues-rock and period late-'60s psychedelic rock. Though weaker than its predecessors, it also had one of his most beloved '60s tracks, "Space Cowboy."

The Mothers of Invention, *We're Only in It for the Money* (Zappa, 1968). This course is deliberately not listing or examining in depth the many albums from outside the Bay Area that either influenced or were influenced by the San Francisco scene in order to keep the scope manageable. An exception will be made, however, for *We're Only in It for the Money*, which in many respects is a

dead-on satire of psychedelia in general, and the Haight-Ashbury flower-power scene in particular. Of the albums to parody the San Francisco Sound, *Sgt. Pepper*, and the psychedelic explosion, this is far and away the best, down to the deliberately ugly mock-*Sgt. Pepper* cover. Frank Zappa's songs were merciless in both their precise imitation/bastardization of bittersweet San Francisco melodies/harmonies/arrangements and their vicious satire of hippie hypocrisy, but they're no less funny and penetrating for that.

Quicksilver Messenger Service, *Quicksilver Messenger Service* (Capitol, 1968). Quicksilver's debut was considered a bit anticlimactic at the time, since the group had been popular in the Bay Area for almost a couple of years before its release; it did not have much of the extended jams they were in part known for; and the production was more low-key than some people expected. However, it stands as their best record and one that plays to their underrated strengths as folk-rock interpreters by largely sticking to concise songs like "Pride of Man," "Dino's Song," "Light Your Windows," and "It's Been Too Long." Their skill as psychedelic instrumentalists on longer workouts was showcased well on "Gold and Silver," though less successfully on the twelve-minute closer, "The Fool."

Quicksilver Messenger Service, *Lost Gold and Silver* (Collectors' Choice Music, 1999). This might not be the most unbiased appraisal since the instructor wrote the liner notes, but this two-CD collection of live tracks and studio outtakes from the late 1960s is the best Quicksilver record other than their self-titled debut. Disc one presents 1968 concert recordings that feature versions of standouts like "Light Your Windows," "Gold & Silver," and "Codine," as well as some less impressive blues covers. Disc two has studio outtakes that include interesting alternate versions of some of their better early songs and some good blues and folk covers that didn't make their albums.

Quicksilver Messenger Service, *Happy Trails* (Capitol, 1969). Quicksilver's most popular album, both for its music and Wild West cover, was largely devoted to lengthy guitar jams on the Bo Diddley songs "Mona" and "Who Do You Love." It's an arguable point considering the record's popularity, but even for a band that were

much more noted as instrumentalists and interpreters than singer or songwriters, their first album remains a much more disciplined effort and a far better listening experience.

Alexander "Skip" Spence, *Oar* (Columbia, 1969). *Oar* was one of the most obscure San Francisco rock albums of the late 1960s, and indeed one of the most obscure albums issued at the time by any major label, supposedly selling less than a thousand copies upon its original release. By now it's probably sold several dozen times as much, gathering a rabid cult following over the subsequent decades. That cult following is deserved, as the sole album by the acid-fried former Moby Grape guitarist is psychedelic blues-folk at its most penetrating and eerie, as if the ghost of a Delta bluesman has merged with the burnt-out aftermath of Haight-Ashbury.

Dino Valenti, *Dino Valente* [sic] (Epic, 1968). Dino Valenti (as his name was correctly spelled, though the record label spelled it incorrectly on this album) was an important figure in San Francisco folk-rock and psychedelia, both for his own work and as a periodic member of Quicksilver Messenger Service (though not on their first two albums). His sole solo album is a love-it-or-hate-it affair, some listeners getting annoyed by his whiny vocals and meandering songs. But it does show sun-baked hippie folk-rock mysticism shining at its brightest. The judicious use of echo complemented the somewhat spaced-out lyrics well, and Valenti made the most of his limited vocal talents with his tender, inquisitive songs, the work of a troubadour trying to guide the hippie flock (and female targets of his affections) to both spiritual and sensual fulfillment. The album has been reissued on more than one label with a couple of studio outtakes as bonus tracks, and some Valenti solo recordings of murky origins recently came out on the compilation *Get Together*.

The Youngbloods, *Elephant Mountain* (RCA, 1969). The first album the Youngbloods recorded after moving to San Francisco from the East Coast was their best, putting some psychedelic stretch and jazzy arrangements to their folk-rock base. "Sunlight" in particular was a glowing showcase for Jesse Colin Young's soulfully romantic vocals, with "Darkness, Darkness" and the lengthy "Ride the Wind" also standing out. Note that their big hit "Get Together" was recorded earlier and isn't on here, though it's on the

Youngbloods best-of compilation (*Euphoria 1965-1969*) cited on this course's general listening list.

Various Artists, *The Berkeley EPs* (Big Beat, 1995). Four rare independently released early psychedelic EPs from Berkeley bands are smartly assembled in one place for this collection, along with three previously unissued tracks by one of the groups, Notes from the Underground. The Notes from the Underground material is actually the weakest, but everything else here is as good as it is rare. This includes not just the 1966 pre-debut album EP by Country Joe & the Fish (also included on the Fish album *Collectors Items: The First Three EPs*), but also three songs apiece from the far more obscure Frumious Bandersnatch and Mad River. Frumious Bandersnatch's "Hearts to Cry," which is slightly similar to Quicksilver, is one of the greatest Bay Area psychedelic guitar raveups. The Mad River tracks include early versions of two songs re-recorded for their debut album and, more importantly, "Orange Fire," a hauntingly devastating folk-rock-psychedelic anti-Vietnam War protest that counts as the best thing they ever recorded (and was not re-recorded for either of their LPs).

Recommended Books:

Hip Capitalism, by Susan Krieger (Sage Publications, 1979). A thorough history of the pioneering Bay Area underground FM radio station KSAN, from its origins as KMPX. A little on the academic side as it originated as a thesis, and hard to find now, but full of first-hand information now unavailable with the death of many of the participants.

The Jive 95, by Hank Rosenfeld (Backbeat, 2023). With a bit of linking text, this is an oral history of San Francisco radio station KSAN, one of the most celebrated of the underground-oriented stations (for both music and public affairs) operating from the late 1960s to the late 1970s. There are a good share of interesting stories from DJs, engineers, local rock critics, and others who

worked at or were associated with the station, as well as its predecessor KMPX, from which much of the staff moved to KSAN after a 1968 strike. It's not a smooth read, however, including some brief uninformative quotes, imperfect editing, and a few factual mistakes that should have been caught.

Michael Bloomfield: If You Love These Blues: An Oral History, by Jan Mark Wolkin and Bill Keenom (Miller Freeman, 2000). This covers Bloomfield's whole life, including the years in which he rose to prominence in Chicago in the mid-1960s as guitarist in the Paul Butterfield Blues Band (and as an accompanist to some of Bob Dylan's first electric performances and recordings). However, it also has a lot of detail on his years in the Bay Area following his move here in the late 1960s, where he was part of the Electric Flag and did other projects on his own and with other musicians.

My Husband the Rock Star: Ten Years with Quicksilver Messenger Service, by Shelley Duncan (Flower Child Books, 2002). The memoir by the first wife of Quicksilver guitarist Gary Duncan is only fair and difficult to find, but is a reminder that not everything about the Summer of Love was lovely. In addition to the good times with Duncan and the band, this also talks about a husband (and other men) who could be chauvinistic womanizers; the co-manager who ran off with a lot of the band's money; the recreational drug abuse and slovenliness of some of the musicians' living conditions; and the petty vindictiveness among some of the scenes' bands, promoters, and groupies. There's not too much about Quicksilver's music, but there are some bits for hardcore fans. And yes, the name of the publisher *is* Flower Child Books.

On the Road with Janis Joplin, by John Byrne Cooke (Berkley Books, 2014). Cooke was road manager for Big Brother & the Company, and then Janis Joplin, for most of the last three years of Joplin's life. This is his account of his experiences, and not a superficial one, running 400 pages. There is some extraneous material about his non-Joplin experiences, but there are also some inside stories about both Big Brother and Joplin that aren't anywhere else, including some insights into their studio work as well as their concerts. Cooke was himself a musician (with the bluegrass

band the Charles River Valley Boys), and the son of famed journalist/broadcaster Alistair Cooke.

R. Crumb: The Complete Record Cover Collection (W.W. Norton, 2011). Book of reproductions of the record sleeves drawn/created by the famed comic book artist/illustrator include a few for Bay Area artists, most famously Big Brother & the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills*.

The Rice Room: Growing Up Chinese-American from Number Two Son to Rock'n'Roll, by Ben Fong-Torres (University of California Press, 2011). The autobiography of longtime music critic and San Francisco media personality Ben Fong-Torres isn't solely about rock'n'roll. But it has a lot of material about reaching adulthood in the midst of the Summer of Love, and becoming one of *Rolling Stone*'s first editors shortly after the magazine was founded in San Francisco. Originally published in 1995, this recent reprint is slightly updated and expanded.

Rolling Stone Magazine, by Robert Draper (HarperPerennial, 1990). Although this covers the first twenty years or so of the history of the most famous rock music magazine, much of it's devoted to the publication's beginnings in San Francisco in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A very entertaining read heavy on anecdotes about major musicians and rock journalists, especially *Rolling Stone* publisher Jann Wenner. Joe Hagan's 2017 Wenner biography *Sticky Fingers* (Alfred A. Knopf) digs more deeply into his personal life and *Rolling Stone*'s post-1990 activities, though this earlier book has more stories and perspectives about the magazine's peak early days from a variety of sources.

Recommended DVDs:

The Grateful Dead, *Anthem to Beauty* (Eagle Rock, 2005). Although part of the "classic albums" series, this actually investigates an entire era in which the Dead are usually seen to have done their finest work, from 1968's *Anthem of the Sun* through 1970's *American Beauty*. Includes interviews with the Dead's Phil Lesh and Bob Weir, as well as David Crosby.

Berkeley in the Sixties (First Run Features, 1990). Acclaimed two-hour documentary focuses on social protest and radical politics, not rock music, but is still a valuable overview of the context of the revolutionary times in which revolutionary rock music was made. Especially good on coverage of the Free Speech Movement, mid-to-late-'60s Vietnam War protest/draft resistance, and the explosive conflict over the fate of People's Park near UC Berkeley in 1969.

Go Ride the Music & West Pole (Eagle Vision, 2008). The half of this two-hour DVD relevant to this week is *West Pole*, an hour-long documentary of sorts on the San Francisco rock scene that aired on KQED on August 16, 1968 (not 1969, as the back cover states). Valuable for its filmed performances of the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Steve Miller Band, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Sons of Champlin, and Ace of Cups, haphazardly interwoven with images of Bay Area rock concerts street scenes, and scenery. The linking narration by prominent *San Francisco Chronicle* critic/*Rolling Stone* co-founder Ralph Gleason is ham-handed, however, and the overuse of psychedelic effects like solarization diminishes the quality of this otherwise historic footage. It's paired on this DVD with another hour-long KQED program, *Go Ride the Music*, from 1970 with Jefferson Airplane and Quicksilver Messenger Service.

Psych Out/The Trip (MGM, 1968/1967). It didn't take long for Hollywood to exploit the Haight-Ashbury, the 1968 movie *Psych Out* starring Jack Nicholson as the hippie leader of a rock band (miming "Purple Haze" in one scene). An American International Pictures release co-produced by Dick Clark, this was an expectedly tacky look at the tawdry side of Haight-Ashbury, despite some major-league talent in the cast (Nicholson, Dean Stockwell, Bruce Dern, and Henry Jaglom). It does have music by LA bands the Seeds and the Strawberry Alarm Clock, one indication of how authentic a representation of the San Francisco Sound it is. This DVD release pairs it with the slightly earlier, more famous psychploitation film *The Trip* (starring Peter Fonda), which is of slight interest to San Francisco psychedelic rock history for containing some incidental Electric Flag music on the soundtrack.

Officially unavailable films of interest:

Revolution (United Artists, 1968). Pseudo-documentary of Haight-Ashbury has fitfully interesting interviews with hippies, health workers, policemen, authority figures, bewildered adults, clergy, and others. It's more interesting for the period footage of the neighborhood, particularly Golden Gate Park (and particularly Hippie Hill in Golden Gate Park). It's also of interest for the soundtrack, which has material by Mother Earth, Steve Miller, and Quicksilver Messenger Service not on their regular albums.

San Francisco: Film (British Film Institute, 1968). Short (about fifteen-minute) film of extremely rapid and fairly psychedelic cuts of images of San Francisco circa 1967, including some of hippies involved in some apparent mystic rites (with some nudity). Notable not just as a snapshot of the mood of the psychedelic side of Haight-Ashbury, but also for its use of an unreleased 1966 Pink Floyd recording (of "Interstellar Overdrive") as the soundtrack.

Notable Figures (Excluding Star Musicians):

Richard Brautigan: Major San Francisco-based novelist and poet did a good deal to help support local band Mad River when they were struggling, and also recites poetry on their second album.

Ed Cobb: Chocolate Watchband producer, both admired for finding them good garage-psychedelic material and vilified for releasing records credited to the Chocolate Watchband that did not feature any musicians from the group.

R. Crumb: Most famous underground comic artist of all lived in the Bay Area in the late 1960s, and although he wasn't a big rock fan, was responsible for the cover of one of the biggest San Francisco Sound albums, Big Brother & the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills*.

Ben Fong-Torres: One of *Rolling Stone's* first editors, and conducted many of its high-profile interviews with rock musicians from the Bay Area and around the world in the late 1960s and 1970s (some of which are collected in his books *Not Fade Away* and *Becoming Almost Famous*). Also a DJ for KSAN, and involved in

numerous other publications, radio stations, and media projects to the present day.

"Joanna": Girlfriend of Skip Spence, sometimes described as a witch, who has sometimes been reported to have given him bad acid that helped fuel his mental breakdown in 1968.

Glyn Johns: Renowned British engineer/producer who worked on several early Steve Miller albums. More famous for working as an engineer/producer with the Who, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and the Eagles.

Bob Johnston: Producer of Dino Valenti's sole album, and crucial to getting an LP out of a notoriously rebellious anti-establishment figure who had difficulty fitting into the music business. Also producer of other major acts for Columbia, including Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, and Simon & Garfunkel.

Abe "Voco" Kesh: KSAN DJ and producer of Blue Cheer and Harvey Mandel. Also produced minor Bay Area bands Tongue & Groove and Savage Resurrection.

Bonnie MacLean: Wife of Bill Graham (they divorced in the mid-'70s) who was instrumental to helping him run the Fillmore, and also became a San Francisco rock poster designer of note for Fillmore West shows.

Greil Marcus: First reviews editor of *Rolling Stone*, and longtime Bay Area-based writer, still active as author of music and social criticism.

Ron Polte: Manager of Quicksilver Messenger Service.

Al Schmitt: Producer of Jefferson Airplane's final four albums of the 1960s (*After Bathing at Baxter's*, *Crown of Creation*, *Blessed Its Pointed Little Head*, and *Volunteers*).

John Simon: Producer of Big Brother & the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills*, which had a prolonged and troubled gestation. Also

producer for the Band, Leonard Cohen, Blood, Sweat & Tears, and Simon & Garfunkel.

Bill Thompson: Took over management of Jefferson Airplane in 1968. Also managed Hot Tuna and, later, Jefferson Starship.

Nik Venet: Producer of Mad River's debut LP, sometimes partially blamed for the album not coming out as well as the band had hoped. Sometimes spelled Nick Venet; also producer of albums by many noted non-Bay Area artists, including the Beach Boys, Fred Neil, and Linda Ronstadt & the Stone Poneys.

Jann Wenner: Co-founder of *Rolling Stone* with Ralph Gleason. Remains publisher of *Rolling Stone* to this day. Frequently wrote and conducted major interviews for *Rolling Stone*, and co-produced Boz Scaggs's 1969 debut album.

Notable Places:

The Carousel Ballroom: Short-lived club at Market Street and Van Ness Avenue that nonetheless hosted some major acts such as Big Brother & the Holding Company and Jefferson Airplane. When Bill Graham moved the Fillmore here from Geary Boulevard in 1968, it was renamed the Fillmore West.

KMPX Studios: On Green Street on North Beach, the base of the first underground FM radio station before the staff went on strike in early 1968 and subsequently moved to another station, KSAN.

Pacific Recorders: San Mateo studio was first sixteen-track facility in the Bay Area, and used by the Grateful Dead for *Aoxomoxoa*. Also used by Santana for their first album.

Rolling Stone Offices: In two South of Market locations while the magazine was based in San Francisco, first at 746 Brannan Street, and then more famously in a distinctive brick warehouse on 645 Third Street. That brick building remains there today, just a couple of blocks or so from the stadium where the San Francisco Giants play.

2400 Fulton Street: Mansion across the street from Golden Gate Park, near the park's northeastern corner, where much of Jefferson Airplane lived in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Much Airplane business was conducted here as well, and the cover of the Airplane's *Bless Its Pointed Little Head* was taken inside.

Notable Labels:

Capitol: Got the two biggest bands who held out for a record deal a year or more after establishing themselves among San Francisco rock's biggest live draws (Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Steve Miller Band), as well as Mad River.

Mercury: Via KSAN DJ/producer Abe "Voco" Kesh, signed Blue Cheer and Harvey Mandel to its Philips subsidiary, and the Savage Resurrection to Mercury itself. Additionally, Fifty Foot Hose was signed to Mercury's experimental/avant-garde subsidiary, Limelight.

Notable Publications:

Rolling Stone: The first widely and nationally distributed US publication focusing on serious, in-depth, critical coverage of rock music, with its first issue appearing on November 9, 1967. Founded in San Francisco, and based here until moving to New York in the mid-1970s. Mostly admired in its San Francisco days for giving rock music its first intelligent treatment in the press, as well as mixing in much coverage of left-of-center politics and popular culture, although sometimes criticized for being too mainstream or selling out the more radical countercultural ideals.