

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

Week Six: San Francisco Rock in the mid-to-late 1970s, from young classic rock veterans to punk and new wave; The Legacy of San Francisco Rock

### Recommended Recordings:

#### A) THE SURVIVORS

**The Doobie Brothers, *Best of the Doobies*** (Warner Brothers, 1976). The early hits by a band that combined San Francisco harmony rock with a bit of funk on singles like "Listen to the Music," "Long Train Runnin'," "China Grove," "Takin' It to the Streets," and "Black Water," which are all here.

**John Fogerty, *The Blue Ridge Rangers*** (Fantasy, 1973). Perhaps legal obstacles and/or personal wishes are preventing the logical combination of *The Blue Ridge Rangers* and 1975's *John Fogerty* onto a single release, along with his three non-LP mid-'70s singles. *The Blue Ridge Rangers* remains more impressive for Fogerty's perennially distinctive, spirited vocals than the material, which is entirely comprised of versions of country songs. That won't make it to every rock fan's taste, though the hit "Jambalaya" (originally by Hank Williams) approximates the sound of Creedence Clearwater Revival.

**John Fogerty, *John Fogerty*** (Fantasy, 1975). Fogerty's vocal talents remain intact on *John Fogerty*, which marked a return to rootsy rock music and mostly original material. The songs, however, are just okay and not up to the standards of what he'd written for Creedence, with the small hit "Rockin' All Over the World" being about the best of them. Fogerty did record another album shortly afterward, *Hoodoo*, but it was rejected by Asylum Records in 1976, and he asked the label to destroy the master tapes in the 1980s.

**Graham Central Station, *The Best of Larry Graham and Graham Central Station, Vol. 1*** (Warner Brothers, 1996). As Sly Stone faded from the scene due to drug abuse and other problems,

ex-Family Stone bass player Larry Graham had success on his own with a more commercial mainstream funk sound.

**The Grateful Dead, *Blues for Allah*** (Warner Brothers/Rhino, 1975). After a hiatus of a year or two in the mid-1970s, the Grateful Dead resumed as if, to quote one of the more famous songs on this album, "The Music Never Stopped." That got them lots of flak from music critics at the same time as they continued to build a huge worldwide following of Deadheads (who didn't especially want the band to change) with their never-ending touring. "Franklin's Tower" is the best known song from this studio album, and indeed sounds as if it could have been written and performed five years earlier.

**Jefferson Starship, *Red Octopus*** (RCA, 1975). Finally billing themselves as Jefferson Starship and bringing Marty Balin into the fold as a full member (as well as ex-Quicksilver bassist David Freiberg), *Red Octopus* both solidified their commercial standing and completed their transition from radical '60s rockers to mainstream album-oriented mid-'70s stars. A lot was lost in that transition, but success was gained with Balin's #3 hit ballad "Miracles" and the rousing rocker Grace Slick co-wrote, "Play on Love." The most popular 1970s Jefferson Starship songs, including their subsequent hits "With Your Love," "Count on Me," and "Runaway," are on the *Gold* compilation.

**The Steve Miller Band, *Greatest Hits 1974-78*** (Capitol, 1978). The radio-friendly standards of the group that started in the psychedelic era, but hit their commercial peak by combining progressive rock and pop on songs like "Fly Like an Eagle," "Jet Airliner," and "Take the Money and Run."

**The Pointer Sisters, *Yes We Can Can: The Best of the Blue Thumb Recordings*** (Hip-O, 1997). Overview of their 1973-77 output for the Blue Thumb label, including the hits "Yes We Can Can," "How Long (Betcha' Got a Chick on the Side)," "Fairytale," and "Wang Dang Doodle."

**Santana, *The Essential Santana*** (Columbia, 2002). Two-CD compilation spanning the late 1960s to the late 1980s has a lot of material postdating the early 1970s (though the biggest early

favorites are here), including the staples "No One to Depend On," "Love, Devotion & Surrender," "She's Not There," and "Dance Sister Dance (Baila Mi Hermana)."

**Boz Scaggs, *Hits!*** (Columbia, 1980). The most commercially successful recordings from the first decade of Scaggs's career, including the mid-1970s hits on which his move to slicker blue-eyed soul paid off, "Lowdown" and "Lido Shuffle."

**Sly & the Family Stone, *Fresh*** (Epic, 1973). The last Sly & the Family Stone album to have reasonably strong commercial and critical success was in a lighter and funkier mode than his heavier previous album (*There's a Riot Goin' On*), including the hit single "If You Want Me to Stay."

**Tower of Power, *The Very Best of Tower of Power: The Warner Years*** (Rhino, 2001). The best of their 1970s material, including the hits "So Very Hard to Go" and "What Is Hip?"

## B) PUNK AND NEW WAVE

**The Avengers, *Avengers*** (Water, 2012). The most significant of the San Francisco punk bands. Though they never released an album in their original incarnation, this collects singles, EPs, live, and unreleased material by a group that combined raw punk with leftist politics, and opened for the Sex Pistols' last (pre-reunion) show in early 1978.

**The Dead Kennedys, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*** (Alternative Tentacles, 1980). One of the most notorious punk bands from anywhere, who were crucial to developing the confrontational harder-faster-louder variant of punk that became known as hardcore. Some of the titles alone – "Kill the Poor," "Holiday in Cambodia," and "California Über Alles – made their ironic social commentary clear.

**The Dils, *The Dils*** (Damaged Goods, 1992). A political band in the mold of the early Clash when they started out with songs like "I Hate the Rich" and "Class War," though within a few years they were actually going in a country-rock direction. This 29-song CD contains

all seven songs from their three singles, along with a 1977 demo and 21 songs from various 1978-79 gigs, although the fidelity on the live material leaves much to be desired.

**Various Artists, *Black Hole*** (Domino, 2010). Compilation of 26 early Californian punk recordings from the late 1970s that, aside from tracks by X and the Dead Kennedys, concentrates on less celebrated punkers with avid cult followings. Not all of these artists are from the Bay Area, but it includes tracks by some bands who were based here, like the Avengers, the Dils, the Sleepers, and Crime.

### **Recommended Books:**

***Gimme Something Better***, by Jack Boulware and Silke Tudor (Penguin, 2009). While this history of Bay Area punk goes way beyond the 1970s, the early chapters have some interesting history on its beginnings in the mid-to-late 1970s.

***Punk '77: An Inside Look at the San Francisco Rock 'n' Roll Scene 1977***, by James Stark (RE/Search, 1992). Slim but interesting, entertaining oral history of the late 1970s San Francisco punk scene. (Despite what the title says, it is about punk, not all forms of rock'n'roll.) First-hand extended quotes from many of the musicians and affiliated scenesters, and plenty of photos from the period.

***Search and Destroy Vol. 1-6 & Search and Destroy 7-11***, edited by V. Vale (Re/Search, 1996 & 1997). Compilations reprinting early issues of the San Francisco punk rock fanzine *Search and Destroy*, from the late 1970s. Includes interviews with dozens of notable figures, from the likes of the Dead Kennedys, X, Devo, the Ramones, Pere Ubu, and many more, including more locally renowned musicians from California. Some of the San Francisco punk bands featured include the Avengers, Crime, the Nuns, the Mutants, the Sleepers, and the Dils. Out of print, but not too hard to find in libraries or used.

***Season of the Witch: Enchantment, Terror, and Deliverance in the City of Love***, by David Talbot (Simon & Schuster, 2012). A

history of social movements, countercultural and otherwise, in San Francisco from 1967 to 1982. Though more oriented toward breadth than depth, it does entertainingly document many of the major developments that were a backdrop to the music and arts scene, from Haight-Ashbury and the Black Panthers to the SLA, Jonestown, and the assassinations of George Moscone and Harvey Milk. While it doesn't focus on rock music, there's some discussion of the birth and growth of the San Francisco Sound, as well as the city's live music scene and the interaction between rock and sociopolitics.

### **Recommended DVD:**

***Louder Faster Shorter*** (RE/Search, 1978). Footage of a "Punks Against Oppression" benefit for striking Kentucky coal miners at the Mabuhay Gardens on March 21, 1978, including local bands the Avengers, Dils, Mutants, Sleepers, and UXA. Only twenty minutes, though.

### **Notable Figures (Excluding Star Musicians):**

**Dirk Dirksen:** Most prominent music promoter on the early San Francisco punk scene, especially for shows at the Mabuhay Gardens, which he would emcee.

**Howie Klein:** Host of punk record show on KSAN, then founder of local new wave label 415 Records.

**Joe Rees:** Founder of Target Video, the San Francisco-based organization responsible for much crude but historically valuable early punk film footage by bands like the Avengers, X, the Dead Kennedys, the Clash, the Sex Pistols, Black Flag, and Talking Heads.

**V. Vale:** Publisher of *Search and Destroy* magazine, one of the first US zines to cover local, national, and international punk and new wave.

### **Notable Places:**

**KUSF:** The University of San Francisco's radio station, and one of the first to play punk and new wave in the US. Active until early 2011, when the university sold the frequency to the Classical Public Radio Network, a controversial transaction still being appealed to the FCC.

**Mabuhay Gardens:** The leading venue, if one of the few venues, for early San Francisco punk, at 443 Broadway in North Beach, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

**Notable Record Labels:**

**415:** The biggest of the numerous struggling late-'70s San Francisco punk and new wave labels, surviving into the 1980s.

**Notable Publication:**

**Search & Destroy:** San Francisco-based punk/underground rock-oriented magazine of the late '70s did a lot of interviews with punk and new wave musicians, from California and elsewhere.