

SYLLABUS FOR SAN FRANCISCO ROCK OF THE 1960s: THE SOUNDTRACK TO THE SUMMER OF LOVE

Fromm Institute

8 Wednesdays, 1pm-2:40pm

April 12-May 31

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Week 1:

I. The Roots of the San Francisco Sound

A. Blues, soul, rock'n'roll, jazz, and folk are recorded in the Bay Area throughout the 1940s and 1950s, without establishing a strong regional identity for San Francisco popular music. Key artists include: Lowell Fulson, Jimmy McCracklin, Vince Guaraldi, Bobby Freeman, Barbara Dane, and the Kingston Trio.

B. San Francisco radio DJ Tom Donahue helps establish a rock label, Autumn Records, that gets one of the first Beatles-styled national hits by an American group with the Beau Brummels. Key artists: The Beau Brummels, the Mojo Men, the Vejtables.

C. Kingston Trio manager Frank Werber handles We Five, who have one of the first folk-rock hits with "You Were on My Mind" in 1965. Meanwhile, the Beau Brummels mature from British Invasion imitators into a folk-rock sound of their own. Key artists: We Five, the Beau Brummels.

Other themes: the growth of independent record labels and studios in the Bay Area; the power of local radio DJs and AM radio stations.

II. The Birth of Underground San Francisco Rock

A. Young adults and students start to populate the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, bringing with them a new counterculture and a hunger to create art without commercial restrictions. Bohemian folk musicians, including future members of Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe & the Fish, and the Grateful Dead start to move into electric folk-rock.

B. Jefferson Airplane's founder and singer, Marty Balin, opens the Matrix Club in the Marina for the band to play in summer 1965. Their brand of personal folk-rock, reflecting the bohemian community of which they're a part, attracts attention from *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist/nationally recognized jazz/folk critic Ralph Gleason, and a deal with RCA Records.

Week 2:

I. The Birth of San Francisco Psychedelic Rock

A. In 1966, the San Francisco rock scene grows as musicians become more adventurous, combining not just folk with electric rock, but also drawing upon jazz improvisation, Indian music, blues, poetic lyrics directly reflective of personal experience, and electronic distortion. Key artists: Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe & the Fish, Quicksilver Messenger Service, the Great Society, Big Brother & the Holding Company (with Janis Joplin), Blackburn & Snow, the Grateful Dead.

Other themes: the rise of local promoters Chet Helms and Bill Graham, and their venues the Avalon and the Fillmore; the influence of psychedelic drugs and San Francisco's bohemian counterculture on the musicians' lifestyles and songwriting.

II. The Summer of Love: The San Francisco Psychedelic Rock Explosion

A. Jefferson Airplane's second album, *Surrealistic Pillow*, becomes a huge hit, with two singles from the LP, "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit," becoming Top Ten smashes. They draw national attention from the media, and give rise to the term "The San Francisco Sound."

B. Major record labels, and large independent labels, battle to sign San Francisco bands as they sense a trend on which to capitalize. Key artists: Country Joe & the Fish, Moby Grape, Big Brother & the Holding Company, the Grateful Dead.

C. The Monterey Pop Festival, held in June 1967, features all of the above artists, as well as others from the San Francisco Bay Area like Quicksilver Messenger Service and the Steve Miller Band. The biggest rock festival held up to that point, it brings yet greater attention to the region's rock, as does the *Monterey Pop* film, which helps make a star of Janis Joplin.

Other themes: the rise of Haight-Ashbury as a globally famous neighborhood; the interaction between the Bay Area rock scene and countercultural figures such as Ken Kesey, Timothy Leary, and Owsley Stanley; the lack of prestigious studios leads most prominent SF acts to record in LA or New York.

Week 3:

I. The Summer of Love: The Music Matures, Haight-Ashbury Endures

A. While debut albums by Country Joe & the Fish, Moby Grape, and the Grateful Dead appear and the Airplane become superstars, Steve Miller and Quicksilver hold out for record deals; Big Brother & the Holding Company sign with top manager Albert Grossman and endure protracted negotiations for a new record deal; various musicians get busted, including members of Moby Grape and the Dead; and countless local bands

form to get a piece of the action, many producing obscure records ranging from near-classic to near-worthless.

B. Tens of thousands of youngsters invade Haight-Ashbury in the summer, straining the area's resources and contributing to rising drug abuse and crime. But the local concert scene thrives more than ever, with shows by both local acts and visiting stars.

C. New forms of media form as offshoots of the San Francisco rock scene: the Haight-Ashbury underground paper *The Oracle*, the first underground FM rock stations (KMPX/KSAN), spearheaded by Tom Donahue; psychedelic poster artists for shows at local rock venues; and *Rolling Stone*, co-founded by Jann Wenner and Ralph Gleason.

Other themes: suspicion by local groups of Los Angeles music business entrepreneurs looking to move in on the scene; the rivalry between Bill Graham and Chet Helms; the sometimes hysterical national media coverage of the San Francisco scene.

Week 4:

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

A. As the Summer of Love ends, Jefferson Airplane moves into a harder, grimmer, less folk-rock-oriented sound on their *After Bathing with Baxter's* album.

B. Even as other San Francisco bands build a higher national profile, they run into problems with the law and each other. In the midst of personnel changes and tensions, however, Country Joe & the Fish gain national attention with their anti-war anthem "Feel Like Fixin' to Die"; the Grateful Dead build a reputation as live improvisers willing to play for free and for benefits; and the San Francisco ballroom/club circuit is the most renowned region for live progressive rock in the world.

C. Quicksilver Messenger Service and Steve Miller sign with Capitol and record their first albums; Big Brother & the Holding Company, with Janis Joplin ever more at the forefront, sign with Columbia Records and become superstars; Blue Cheer have a big hit with "Summertime Blues"; and the Grateful Dead record their most psychedelic album, *Anthem of the Sun*.

Other themes: the decline of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood; *Rolling Stone* and FM radio become established voices of the counterculture; San Francisco rock becomes a bigger and bigger business as hit records are generated and bands tour internationally; the music's role as a voice for protest and celebration of alternative lifestyles.

Week 5: They Also Served

I. Obscure Bay Area '60s Artists, Garage Bands, and New Arrivals

A. Along with the Bay Area acts to get national attention, many other fine and innovative ones make significant musical contributions, though these are often not fully appreciated until they are discovered by collectors in subsequent decades. Key artists: Blackburn & Snow, Dan Hicks, Skip Spence, Mad River, Frumious Bandersnatch, Lee Michaels, Fifty Foot Hose, Dino Valenti, Tina & David Meltzer.

B. Somewhat younger teen garage bands, from the suburbs and San Jose, also make their mark on the Bay Area scene. Key artists: the Count Five, the Chocolate Watch Band, Country Weather.

C. The Bay Area develops such a reputation as an enjoyable and supportive place for rock artists to live and work that some established artists move here. Key artists: the Electric Flag with Mike Bloomfield, the Youngbloods, Elvin Bishop, Van Morrison.

Other themes: how record labels handled (or mishandled) cult or non-star Bay Area acts; the circuit for teen/underage bands and audiences; the influence of San Francisco rock on artists from other regions and countries.

II. Notable Visitors and Temporary Residents of the San Francisco Scene

A. Notable artists from elsewhere in the US that only made the Bay Area their base briefly, or played here so often they were sometimes mistaken for Bay Area acts: the 13th Floor Elevators, the Daily Flash, the Other Half, the New Tweedy Brothers, PH Phactor Jug Band, Kaleidoscope

B. Famous musicians from elsewhere who made career breakthroughs and landmark recordings in San Francisco: Jimi Hendrix, the Who, Cream, the Velvet Underground, Pink Floyd

Other themes: the attraction of San Francisco venues for touring acts; what happened to those who tried to move to San Francisco, but couldn't stay

Week 6: San Francisco Soul and Latino Rock

I. San Francisco Rock of the late 1960s/early 1970s in the African-American Community

A. Prior to the Summer of Love, the Bay Area has an active blues and soul scene, though not one that results in many national hits or any trend-setting styles. Key artists: Sugar Pie DeSanto, Bobby Freeman, the pre-fame Sylvester Stewart (aka Sly Stone).

B. Sly Stone, more than any other artists in the Bay Area or indeed the world, brings soul into the psychedelic age with sensational results. His band the Family Stone are also innovative in combining black and white, and male and female, musicians and singers into the same ensemble.

C. Other artists from the Bay Area combine rock and soul, sometimes with a political inclination influenced by the Black Panthers. Key artists: Elaine Brown, the Lumpen, Two Things in One, Dorando, the Pointer Sisters, Cold Blood, the Tower of Power.

Other themes: independent soul/R&B labels in the Bay Area, especially the Music City label; soul/African-American-oriented radio in the Bay Area (on which Sly Stone was at one time a DJ).

II. San Francisco Rock of the late 1960s/early 1970s in the Latino Community

A. Carlos Santana forms a band, starting as the Santana Blues Band and evolving into Santana, that combines rock, blues, jazz, and Latin music into a new style of psychedelic rock.

B. With a groundbreaking multicultural lineup of Latino, African-American, and white musicians, Santana electrify the crowd at Woodstock and become superstars.

C. Malo, led by Carlos Santana's brother Jorge, become a popular act in their own right with a sound that draws more from Latin-pop music.

Other themes: the spread of the psychedelic counterculture into minority and ethnic communities; the influence of Santana on rock in Central America and South America; the significance of bands such as Santana on the burgeoning Chicano Power movement.

Week 7

I. San Francisco Rock at the end of the 1960s and in the Early 1970s

A. Major Bay Area bands go through serious changes as Jefferson Airplane gets into harder and more political sounds with *Volunteers*; Janis Joplin splits from Big Brother & the Holding Company to start an uneven solo career; and Country Joe & the Fish, Moby Grape, and Quicksilver Messenger Service all suffer major personnel changes. Fewer major new bands emerge, though some do, such as It's a Beautiful Day.

B. Creedence Clearwater Revival, from El Cerrito, become superstars as the leading roots rock band of that or possibly any other time, combining straight-out rock and roll with country, soul, and John Fogerty's passionate social commentary.

C. With Bob Dylan and the Byrds leading the way, as they had for folk-rock, artists begin to combine country and rock in the late 1960s to form country-rock. Several Bay Area artists are part of this trend, particularly the Grateful Dead, who go into softer country-

influenced rock on what many regard as their strongest albums, 1970's *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*.

Other themes: Bill Graham's consolidation of power over the San Francisco scene, as concert promoter and manager; the influence of local political unrest, in the community and on campus, on the region's music.

II. The End of the Psychedelic Era

A. All of the major bands of the 1960s break up in the early 1970s, except for the Grateful Dead, who continue to build an unprecedented international cult following, especially as a concert act (though even they take a break in the mid-1970s).

B. The relocation of *Rolling Stone* from San Francisco to New York signifies that the Bay Area is no longer regarded on the cutting edge of trends in rock, or even popular culture. However, especially with the long-awaited establishment of top recording studios in the area, musicians continue to base themselves and record here, even if (like Van Morrison and David Crosby) they first became stars elsewhere.

Other themes: the decline of the hippie and drug culture; the mainstreaming of underground FM radio and the alternative press; the evolution of Jefferson Airplane into Jefferson Starship.

Week 8

I. San Francisco Rock In the Second Half of the 1970s

A. In the early-to-mid-1970s, some local acts take a turn toward a more commercial and funky direction. Key artists: The Tower of Power, the Doobie Brothers.

B. Some of the top veterans of the 1960s San Francisco music explosion continue to be stars in the 1970s with a more commercial sound. Key artists: Steve Miller, Jefferson Starship, the Grateful Dead, Boz Scaggs, Santana.

C. In the mid-to-late 1970s, San Francisco unexpectedly becomes a major center for early US punk and new wave. Key artists: the Nuns, the Dils, the Avengers, Crime.

Other themes: A new brand of media springs up to support this new underground music, including clubs such as the Mabuhay Gardens; fanzines such as *Search & Destroy*; video production company Target Video; and radio programs at the University of San Francisco and UC Berkeley that are among the first of their kind in America.

II. The Legacy of San Francisco Rock

A. Present-day musical activities of veterans of the golden age of San Francisco rock, from Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead to Penelope Houston of the Avengers.

B. San Francisco rock veterans who brought their sensibilities to other fields, such as public defender Barry Melton (Country Joe & the Fish), Bread & Roses founder Mimi Farina, and politician/commentator Jello Biafra.

C. Archiving San Francisco rock for the ages, via reissues, museums, special projects, Wolfgang's Vault online concert site, collectible posters, and more.

Other themes: the free festivals that have descended from the original free concerts/festivals of the 1960s and 1970s; where to find San Francisco rock history on the Internet.