

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

Week One: The Roots of the San Francisco Sound & The Birth of Underground San Francisco Rock

Recommended Listening:

The Beau Brummels, *The Best of the Beau Brummels* (Rhino, 1987). Good 18-song survey of the San Francisco band that was the first to combine the Beatles with some elements of acoustic folk, most famously on their hits "Laugh Laugh" and "Just a Little." They had plenty of other good songs in the mid-1960s, some of the ones on this CD including "Sad Little Girl" and the small hit "You Tell My Why."

The Beau Brummels, *Magic Hollow* (Rhino Handmade, 2005). The Beau Brummels recorded a staggering amount of material in the 1960s, much of which wasn't released until decades later. It can be found on numerous compilations, but this four-CD, 112-song box set is the best and most thorough of the lot. In addition to much of their official 1964-68 output, it has quite a few rarities and previously unissued cuts, with a high quality maintained even on most of the recordings that didn't see release at the time. Some other rarities show up on other CDs, particularly Sundazed's three-CD *San Fran Sessions*.

Bobby Freeman, *C'Mon and Swim with Bobby Freeman* (Big Beat, 2000). Arguably San Francisco's first rock'n'roll star, hitting #5 in 1958 with "Do You Want to Dance?," Freeman returned to the Top Five in 1964 with "C'Mon and Swim." This compilation of his mid-'60s work ("Do You Want to Dance?" is not included) captures the time at which he moved into early mainstream dance-oriented soul, though it had little relation to the San Francisco rock scene that followed in the mid-to-late 1960s.

Lowell Fulson, *My First Recordings* (Arhoolie, 1997). A 26-track anthology of recordings made while Fulson was living in the Bay Area, marking him as the first electric blues/R&B musician of note from the region. This has his R&B hit "Three O'Clock Blues," a yet bigger hit when done by B.B. King in 1951. After this period Lowell Fulson moved to Los Angeles, as did perhaps the other Bay Area-based bluesman of most consequence from the late 1940s, Pee Wee Crayton.

The Golliwogs, *Pre-Credence* (Fantasy, 1975). All 14 of the songs the Golliwogs released on mid-1960s singles for Fantasy prior to changing their name to Creedence Clearwater Revival. Despite their historical importance, they're primarily of historical interest only. The British Invasion-influenced material is largely mediocre and not to similar to CCR, especially as much of it's sung not by CCR leader John Fogerty, but his brother Tom. This LP is now rare and long out of print, but much released and unreleased Golliwogs material, as well as early-'60s singles they did as Tommy Fogerty & the Blue Velvets, appear on the six-CD box set *Creedence Clearwater Revival*.

Vince Guaraldi, *Greatest Hits* (Fantasy, 1989). Guaraldi's playful and pop-influenced brand of jazz piano wasn't a significant influence on San Francisco rock, but did demonstrate that music recorded in the Bay Area could have national success. He achieved that with his 1963 hit "Cast Your Fate to the Wind" and his famously bouncy, whimsical soundtrack music to the early *Peanuts* TV specials, both of which can be heard on this compilation.

Jefferson Airplane, *Takes Off* (RCA, 1966). The first major album by a San Francisco group is far more folk-rock-oriented than their later efforts, and to some will suffer from the absence of Grace Slick, this album having been recorded with original woman vocalist Signe Anderson. It still has fine melodic songs that helped set the bittersweet tone often used in San Francisco '60s rock, as well as the male-female vocal harmonies that would be prominent in both the Airplane and numerous other Bay Area bands. "It's No Secret," "Come Up the Years," "Blues from an Airplane," and "Don't Slip Away" would remain among their more popular tunes even after they'd moved to a harder-rocking sound.

Jefferson Airplane, *Early Flight* (RCA, 1974). Most of the outtakes/rarities on this compilation date from 1965 and 1966. While they're not up to the level of the material on their first two albums, most of them are quite decent mid-'60s folk-rock, especially "High Flyin' Bird" (which they're seen doing in June 1967 in the *Monterey Pop* film) and "Go to Her," a *Surrealistic Pillow* outtake with the Grace Slick lineup.

The Kingston Trio, *The Essential Kingston Trio* (Shout Factory, 2006). Two-CD compilation of the most popular material by this phenomenally successful, if extremely clean-cut, folk boom act in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Includes big hits like "Tom Dooley," "Tijuana Jail," and "Reverend Mr. Black," as well as several dozen others. If you want even more, there's the four-CD *The Kingston Trio: The Capitol Years*.

Jimmy McCracklin, *Jimmy McCracklin at His Best: The Walk* (Razor & Tie, 1997). Twenty-song best-of spanning the mid-1950s to the late 1960s from this Bay Area bluesman who crossed over to rock'n'roll and the Pop Top Ten with his 1958 hit "The Walk."

The Mojo Men, *Not Too Old to Start Cryin'* (Big Beat, 2008). For a group with very limited national chart success, the Mojo Men recorded a great deal of material, with no less than four CDs of material from the mid-to-late 1960s (much of it unreleased at the time) now available. This collection of previously unissued 1966 material is about the best, with similarities to other early San Francisco folk-rock acts like Jefferson Airplane in the male-female vocal combinations. Their rougher, woman-less, basic garage rock recordings for Autumn are on the Sundazed compilation *Whys Ain't Supposed to Be*, while somewhat poppier 1966-67 recordings for Reprise are on the Sundazed CD *Sit Down...It's the Mojo Men*.

The Vejbables, *Feel...The Vejbables* (Sundazed, 1995). Decent if not spectacular early San Francisco folk-rock from a band featuring a woman drummer/singer (Jan Errico)

who would leave to join the Mojo Men, after which they did the early psychedelic single "Feel the Music" (also included here).

We Five, *There Stands the Door: The Best of We Five* (Big Beat, 2009). True, they weren't great, and they never did another song as good as their one big hit, "You Were on My Mind." But they were one of the first folk-rock groups to have a national hit, and their male-female vocal blend was typical of numerous early San Francisco folk-rock acts from Jefferson Airplane on down. This best-of wisely concentrates on their best folk-rock recordings with original woman singer Beverly Bevins, eliminating the dreary pop and showtunes that filled out much of their early albums.

Various Artists, *Bay Area Rockers: San Francisco Rockabilly and Rock'n'Roll 1957-1960* (Ace, 1999). Truth be told, aside from Bobby Freeman (represented here by Betty Lou Got a New Pair of Shoes," though his bigger hit "Do You Want to Dance?" is absent) and Jimmy McCracklin, the early San Francisco rock scene wasn't anything special. This compilation proves the city, like almost every metropolitan area in North America, did have an active scene, even if it didn't result in a distinctive regional style or much commercial success.

Various Artists, *Nuggets Vol. 7: Early San Francisco* (Rhino, 1985). It never made it onto CD, but this is a reasonable overview of very early San Francisco folk-rock, with tracks by the Beau Brummels, the We Five, and the Charlatans, as well as very early psychedelia by the Great Society (Grace Slick's pre-Jefferson Airplane band) and Country Joe & the Fish. Some other material from this scene is on the four-CD box set *San Francisco Nuggets*, which covers Bay Area '60s rock into the heart of the psychedelic era and the end of the decade.

Various Artists, *San Francisco Roots* (Collectors' Choice, 2009). Ragtag compilation of mid-'60s San Francisco rock on the Autumn label, originally released in 1968. Has hits and rarities by the Beau Brummels, the Great Society (the original version of "Somebody to Love"), the Mojo Men, and the Vejtables.

Recommended DVDs:

The Kingston Trio Story: Wherever We May Go (Shout Factory, 2006). Hour-long documentary of the popular folk group with plenty of bonus features, even including some commercials they did for 7 Up.

Notable Figures (Excluding Star Musicians):

Tom Donahue: DJ at KYA, San Francisco's most popular AM rock station. Co-founded Autumn Records, the city's most prominent mid-'60s rock label, with Bobby Mitchell, with whom he also produced concerts, including the Beatles' last concert (at Candlestick Park on August 29, 1966).

Matthew Katz: Early Jefferson Airplane manager, later manager of Moby Grape and It's a Beautiful Day.

Bobby Mitchell: Like his more famous business partner Tom Donohue, a DJ at KYA. With Donohue, ran Autumn Records and promoted local concerts. Died in 1968.

Sylvester Stewart: In the mid-'60s, producer of numerous acts at Autumn Records, including the Beau Brummels, and DJ at San Francisco soul station KSOL. Better known as Sly Stone after he subsequently founded Sly & the Family Stone.

Frank Werber: Manager of the Kingston Trio. In 1964 he formed Trident Productions in 1964, which recorded much interesting early San Francisco rock, including material by We Five, Blackburn & Snow, the Sons of Champlin, John Stewart, and the Mystery Trend.

Notable Places:

Columbus Tower: North Beach building housing Trident Productions, with a basement recording facility where some Trident acts recorded.

The Cow Palace: Prior to the emergence of the Fillmore and the Avalon, the leading facility in San Francisco for rock'n'roll concerts, including the Beatles' shows here in 1964 and 1965.

The hungry i [sic]: North Beach folk club at which the Kingston Trio built their following; also hosted the Lovin' Spoonful during their San Francisco visit in 1966.

KSOL: San Francisco soul station, most famous for Sly Stone doing a stint there as DJ in the mid-'60s.

KYA: San Francisco AM rock station, whose DJs Tom Donohue and Bobby Mitchell co-founded Autumn Records and promoted local rock concerts.

The Matrix: Marina club that Jefferson Airplane singer Marty Balin was instrumental in helping start in summer 1965, primarily as a place where the band could play. Continued to stage shows by the Airplane and other leading San Francisco bands throughout the rest of the 1960s, as well as by major touring acts like the Doors and the Velvet Underground. Important live archival releases by the Great Society, the Airplane, the Doors, and the Velvet Underground were recorded there.

Peppermint Tree: North Beach club at which Los Angeles stars the Byrds, the first true folk-rock group, did their first out-of-town gigs in spring 1965, even before they had a hit.

RCA Studios: Before 1969, Jefferson Airplane recorded at the Hollywood branch of RCA's recording studios.

Chris Strachwitz: Founder of Arhoolie Records, the Bay Area company that became one of the leading folk/ethnic music labels in the world. Rarely recorded rock, but did record the original folk version of Country Joe & the Fish's "I Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die Rag" in 1965, revenue from his share of the publishing helping to subsidize Arhoolie.

Notable Labels:

Arhoolie: Bay Area label known mostly for recording folk, blues, and ethnic music, but known to the rock world for its owner (Chris Strachwitz) being the first to record Country Joe & the Fish.

Autumn: The first San Francisco independent rock label of any consequence, noted mostly for hits by the Beau Brummels, though they also recorded rare released and unreleased material by the Great Society, the Charlatans, and the Grateful Dead, among numerous other acts.

Fantasy: Known mostly for contemporary jazz by the likes of Dave Brubeck, Vince Guaraldi, and Cal Tjader, this San Francisco (later Berkeley) label also sporadically recorded rock and soul, including (on its Scorpio subsidiary) the Grateful Dead's first single in 1966. It also put out records by the Golliwogs before they changed their name to Creedence Clearwater Revival.

RCA: Not based in San Francisco and not especially hip, but the first major label to make a major investment in the San Francisco Sound by signing Jefferson Airplane in late 1965.

Notable Publications:

Week One Audiovisual Clips (note that some might not be played due to time restrictions):

Jefferson Airplane: White Rabbit (DVD)

Jefferson Airplane: Somebody to Love (DVD)

Lowell Fulson: Reconsider Baby (DVD)

Jimmy McCracklin: The Walk (CD)

The Beatles: The Walk (CD)

The Kingston Trio: Tijuana Jail (DVD)

The Kingston Trio: Where Have All the Flowers Gone? (DVD)

The Kingston Trio: 7Up Commercial (DVD)

Barbara Dane: I'm on My Way (DVD)

Bobby Freeman: Do You Wanna Dance (CD)

Bobby Freeman: C'mon and Swim (DVD)

Vince Guaraldi: Cast Your Fate to the Wind (CD)

The Beau Brummels: Laugh Laugh (DVD)

The Beau Brummels: Just a Little (DVD)

The Beau Brummels: Sad Little Girl (DVD)
The Beau Brummels: You Tell Me Why (DVD)
Ian & Sylvia: You Were on My Mind (CD)
We Five: You Were on My Mind (DVD)
The Vejtables: I Still Love You (DVD)
The Vejtables: Anything (DVD)
The Grass Roots: The Ballad of a Thin Man (DVD)
John Stewart: Three Week Hero (CD)
Dino Valenti: Get Together (CD)
We Five: Let's Get Together (DVD)
Jefferson Airplane: Let's Get Together (CD)
Fred Neil: The Other Side of This Life (CD)
Jefferson Airplane: The Other Side of This Life (CD)
Judy Henske: High Flying Bird (CD)
Jefferson Airplane: High Flying Bird (DVD)
Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions: Shake That Thing (CD)
Janis Joplin & Jorma Kaukonen: Daddy, Daddy, Daddy (CD)
Country Joe & the Fish: I-Feel-Like-I'm-a-Fixin'-to-Die Rag (CD)
Country Joe & the Fish: I-Feel-Like-I'm-a-Fixin'-to-Die Rag (DVD)