

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

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

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, *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.

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 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 track 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Recommended DVDs:

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.

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 film of interest:

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):

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*.

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.

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.

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:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

The Grateful Dead: Dancing in the Street (DVD)

Moby Grape: 8:05 (DVD)

Moby Grape: Omaha (CD)

Moby Grape: Sittin' by The Window (CD)

Quicksilver Messenger Service: Dino's Song (DVD)

Quicksilver Messenger Service: Gold and Silver (CD)

Dave Brubeck: Take Five (CD)

The Vejtables: Feel the Music (CD)

The Who: Out in the Street (CD)

The Yardbirds: Mr. You're a Better Man Than I (CD)
The Mojo Men: Today (CD)
The Mojo Men: You Didn't Even Say Goodbye (CD)
The Beau Brummels: The Wolf of Velvet Fortune (CD)
The Serpent Power: Flying Away (CD)
Big Brother & the Holding Company: Down on Me (DVD)
Country Joe & the Fish: The Masked Marauder (DVD)
Country Joe & the Fish: Janis (DVD)
Big Brother & the Holding Company: Hall of the Mountain King (DVD)
Peter Albin of Big Brother: Interview about runaways (DVD)
Scott McKenzie: San Francisco (DVD)
The Flower Pot Men: Let's Go to San Francisco (DVD)
Eric Burdon & the Animals: San Franciscan Nights (DVD)
Micky & Tommy: Frisco Bay (CD)
The Jefferson Handkerchief: I'm Allergic to Flowers (CD)
The Mothers of Invention: Who Needs the Peace Corps? (CD)
The Mothers of Invention: Absolutely Free (CD)
The Mothers of Invention: Lonely Little Girl (CD)
The Mothers of Invention: Flower Punk (CD)
The Daily Flash: Violets of Dawn (CD)
The Sparrow: Tomorrow's Ship (CD)
PH Phactor Jug Band: Skin (CD)
The Beatles: All You Need Is Love (DVD)
Pink Floyd: Interstellar Overdrive (DVD)
Jefferson Airplane: Interview about Summer of '67 (DVD)
Jefferson Airplane: Won't You Try Saturday Afternoon (DVD)