

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

Week Five: They Also Served: Obscure Bay Area '60s Artists, Garage Bands, and New Arrivals

Recommended Listening:

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*.

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 Ethix, bassist Cork Marcheschi's previous band.

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.

Van Morrison, *Tupelo Honey* (Warner Brothers, 1971). The first of the albums Morrison recorded after moving to the Bay Area has his signature combination of rock, soul, and some folk and jazz, all integrated into the singer-songwriter format. Though considered by some not to be as daring or cutting-edge as his previous albums *Astral Weeks* and *Moondance*, it has one of his most popular and accessible songs in "Wild Night," while romantic songs like the title track might reflect a peace of mind he fleetingly found with his American wife, Janet Planet (sic), in California.

Van Morrison, *Saint Dominic's Preview* (Warner Brothers, 1972). A continuation of the moods of *Tupelo Honey*, with a slight drift toward longer and more rambling songs, with "Listen to the Lion" and "Almost Independence Day" exceeding ten minutes. However, among the shorter songs was one of his catchiest soul-rockers, "Jackie Wilson Said (I'm in Heaven When You Smile)."

Van Morrison, *Pacific High Studios Concert on KSAN, September 5, 1971* (wolfgangsvault.com). This is cheating a little since it hasn't been officially released, but this hour-and-a-half concert was the best of the many live concerts broadcast on KSAN. Indeed, it's one of the best recordings of Van Morrison's career, as he and a tight band perform songs both famous ("Domino," "Blue Money," "Tupelo Honey," "Into the Mystic") and surprisingly unpredictable ("Hound Dog," Bob Dylan's "Just Like a Woman"). This can be heard, legally, on wolfgangsvault.com, as can a slightly earlier San Francisco concert of note at the Fillmore West on April 26, 1970 that predates his move to the Bay Area.

Sir Douglas Quintet, *The Mono Singles '68-'72* (Sundazed, 2011). Kind of an honorary inclusion as Sir Douglas Quintet mainstay Doug Sahm is more identified with Texas than San Francisco. However, he was based in the Bay Area for much of the late 1960s and early 1970s, in common with other Texas musicians seeking a freer musical and social climate. His ever-shifting blend of rock, soul, blues, and honky-tonk fit in well with the San Francisco sound's eclecticism. This 22-track collection of singles functions as a best-of for the period, including the one big hit they scored at the time, "Mendocino," and his well-known soulful ballad "At the Crossroads."

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:

Texas Tornado: The Times and Music of Doug Sahm, by Jan Reid with Shawn Sahm (University of Texas Press, 2010). Sahm was based in Texas for much of his life, but the leader of the Sir Douglas Quintet did live in or near the Bay Area in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This adequate if patchy book covers that and the other periods of his wide-ranging musical career.

Recommended DVDs:

Notable Figures (Excluding Star Musicians):

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.

"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.

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.

Notable Places:

Caledonia Records: Record store in downtown Fairfax in the 1970s run by Van Morrison's parents, whom their son had brought over from Northern Ireland when he moved to Marin County.

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.

Notable Labels:

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.

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

The Youngbloods: Get Together/Sunlight (DVD)

Harvey Mandel: Christo Redentor (CD)

Charlie Musselwhite: Christo Redentor (CD)

The Electric Flag: Sitting in Circles (CD)

Moby Grape: It's a Beautiful Day Today (DVD)

Skip Spence: Lawrence of Euphoria (CD)

Dino Valenti: Time (CD)

Dan Hicks: Innocent Bystander (CD)

Tina & David Meltzer: I'll Forget You (CD)

The New Tweedy Brothers: I Can See It (CD)
The Sons of Champlin: Don't Stop (CD)
Sons of Champlin: Freedom (DVD)
Frumious Bandersnatch: Hearts to Cry (CD)
Country Weather: Fly to New York (CD)
Fifty Foot Hose: Rose (CD)
Van Morrison: These Dreams of You (DVD)
Sir Douglas Quintet: Mendocino (DVD)
Sir Douglas Quintet: At the Crossroads(CD)
The Count Five: Psychotic Reaction (DVD)
The Syndicate of Sound: Little Girl (DVD)
The 13th Floor Elevators: Splash I (CD)
The 13th Floor Elevators: You're Gonna Miss Me (DVD)
The Chocolate Watchband: Misty Lane (CD)
The Chocolate Watchband: Expo 2000 (CD)
The Stained Glass: My Buddy Sin (CD)
The Trolls: Walkin' Shoes (CD)
The Brogues: I Ain't No Miracle Worker (CD)
The Mystery Trend: Words You Whisper (CD)
The Other Half: Wonderful Day (CD)
Jimi Hendrix: Foxy Lady (DVD)
The Who: I Can See for Miles (DVD)
Pink Floyd: Astromine Domine (DVD)
Cream: Sunshine of Your Love (DVD)
Pink Floyd: Grantchester Meadows (DVD)
Otis Redding: Dock of the Bay (CD)
Pink Floyd: Interstellar Overdrive (DVD)