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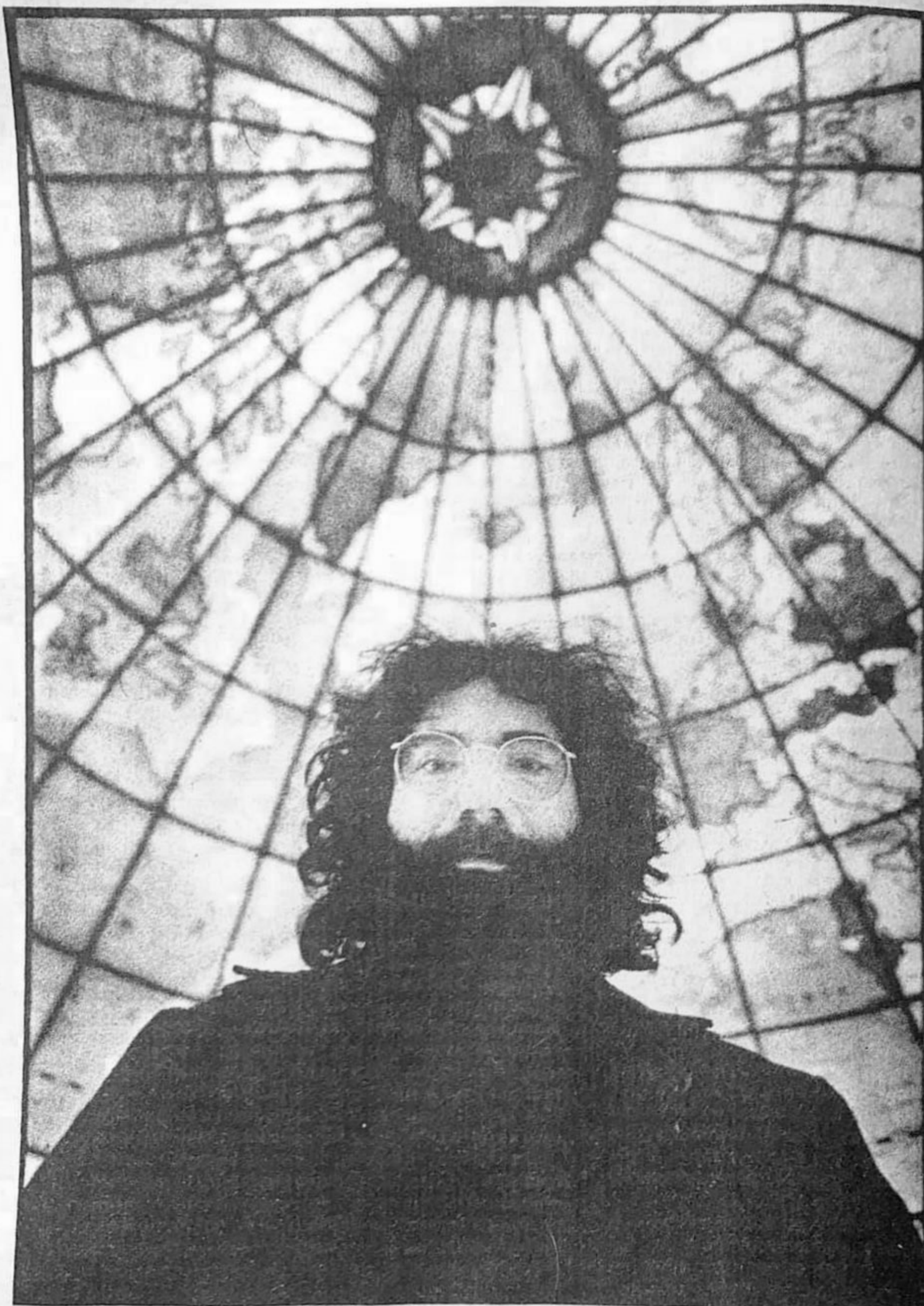


The Wizard Meets the Elf King

(A Findhorn Story by Paul Hawken)

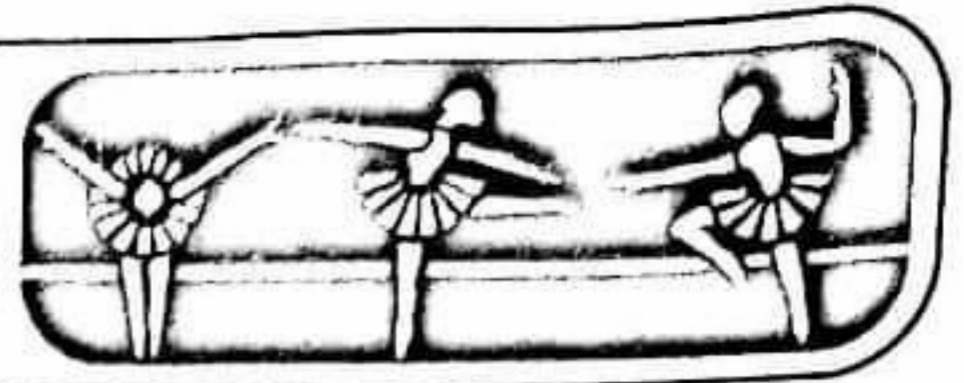
Plus: Wilhelm Reich revisited; Jerusalem: Hidden & Revealed;
an interview with Jerry Garcia; Planetary Grid by Chris Bird

#5



MICHAEL DOBO

Jerry Garcia of The Grateful Dead: Many see him as one of the highly evolved musicians of our incarnation. "Music is my yoga, if there is a yoga, that's it.....Life is my yoga too, but I've been a spiritual diletante off and on for years, trying various things at different times, and I firmly believe that every avenue that leads to a higher consciousness, does lead to higher consciousness. If you think it does, it does. If you put energy into it on a daily basis, no matter what it is, some discipline or whatever, I believe it will work."



Making Musical Miracles

An Interview with Jerry Garcia

by Peter Simon

Jerry Garcia, lead guitarist extraordinaire of "The Grateful Dead" is a man I've wanted to interview for quite a while now. Following the Dead closely for years (I'm a self-admitted Dead-Head for life), often times I've been totally transfixed by Garcia's soaring guitar and saint-like vibration on stage. I've often felt a musical purity coming from him that sets him apart from many of the rock superstars of the day.

The *New Age Journal* (and my radio program, "Good Vibrations" on Cape Cod) proved the perfect excuse to ask him all the questions that have persisted in my mind for so long. The interview took about two weeks to set-up (mostly due to time and space discrepancies), and we finally met at a film lab in Marin County that the group has rented to edit and produce a feature-length movie of their last five concerts. We conducted it in a friendly and good-natured atmosphere over the period of about an hour.

Garcia is an unusually open per-

son, not caught in the superstar syndrome of feeling antagonized by "the press" or remaining somewhat aloof. When I told him where this interview would be published, he was quite pleased. He thought the *New Age Journal* was a "fine, right-on" publication, and was glad to be a part of it.

NAJ: To begin this interview, Jerry, I'd like to ask you about your current projects. You're at work on a Grateful Dead concert film, when might it be finished?

GARCIA: We hope to have it done and maybe out by around October, but it could go longer than that — there's a lot of film — and the big thing is it's going to take a long time making it into anything besides a ten-hour movie. That'll be the hard part.

NAJ: It consists of five consecutive Dead concerts, the last Dead concerts of the current series, right?

GARCIA: Yes, the last gig that we played at Winterland we played for five nights, so it's all five nights, plus documentary stuff all surrounding it and concerned with the setting-up-of-equipment and that sort of thing, the whole thing was covered, in fact. The characters in it are basically the audience, the band, and our whole

technical staff; that's really who's moving in the movie.

We're finding out right now about distribution and all the rest of that stuff, which turns out to be, just like in records, the main bummer in film — because it represents that large middle structure in everything that goes on in America, which is the "middleman," the famous middleman. We want to develop a way to distribute it that makes us feel that we haven't been just building another brick in the wall; that's always part of it, but with this particularly, since it's a new field for us to be involved in, we're trying to approach it with whatever purity we can muster initially rather than having to do it later like with records.

NAJ: When you were playing and filming, did you put more juice into these particular five days than you would in a normal concert?

GARCIA: I would say it definitely had more juice for a variety of reasons, first of all because it was the last concert that will be doing for awhile, it had a certain pitch to it, emotionally. As for the energy, it goes both ways — I mean some of the nights are the kind of nights I like, nights that are kind of effortless and flowing, and

some of them are ones with incredible jagged intensity. Part of the idea of doing this film in the first place was we've been trying to develop alternatives to performing live because of the logistic and economic difficulty involved in touring nowadays. The way we do it is really a trip. This film represents one possible alternative — the idea of filming a concert and seeing, authentically whether any of the feeling or the good moments or the highness is able to be translated to this medium — that's really what it is all about. Hopefully, the film will be able to get you off the way a concert does.

NAJ: Well, it sounds like a great exploration into alternative concert media. Going to a Dead concert can be a drag for the paying customer because they check at the gate for alcohol or tape machines, and jam you into a little space. But just to sit in a theater where it's all controlled, you could really get off on it.

GARCIA: Right, plus it wouldn't have to be very expensive; it wouldn't be in the range that concert prices are these days, so it wouldn't have that level going against it. The inherent concert hassles are what we're trying to deal with too, because where we perform is a result of large demand resulting in intense control situations — big stadiums where there are millions of cops. It's the same problem that everybody has to deal with, so this is one of our tries on that level. On the level of ideas, and just in terms of something to do as an artist, it represents a new level of interest and development for me. I enjoy films, I've been a film buff for a long time and all that — it's neat to be kind of forced into making a movie.

NAJ: So besides this movie, your other current project is the making of another Dead album, how is that going?

GARCIA: It's going pretty well; I would say that it's the most musically adventurous album we've done in a pretty long time. We're working with new and unusual harmonic relationships that may, well, I don't know, quite frankly, some people may not like what we're doing right now. Our development has been to synthesize various forms, like playing jazz, playing country and western, playing rhythm and blues, and forming combinations of these genres and styles within what we're doing, within our instrumentation. Now, we're working on creating styles rather than just being eclectic or synthesizing other

styles. Thus, it's a little bit more difficult, and considerably more experimental. It's still questionable as to whether the things will be successful musically, but we're sort of into defining new spaces for ourselves musically to go to.

NAJ: So do you have songs written?

GARCIA: No, we're developing those ideas en-masse. I'm not, for example, doing what I normally do which is run off for a week or so and Hunter and I knock out nine or ten songs a year, and blam, there they are, and those are the songs and we learn them, and the arrangement grows depending on everybody's contribution. We're not doing that now; we're just developing ideas, musical ideas, with everyone, more or less, participating on the actual ideas, no one person is responsible for them.

NAJ: What about the very early albums, maybe the third or second album with long sides and no cuts, is this anything like that?

GARCIA: In a way, I think we have enough knowledge and experience now to pull off some of the things we tried to do on those albums, that didn't make it, but it won't be like that, it will be something new. At that time, our music was based on certain conceptions of the world and our experimental tries were intended to have a certain "effect". Those things turn out to be delusions later, because everyone hears what they want to hear, really. We were also learning how to record, so we were unconventional just because we were inexperienced — now we have all this experience but we're trying to determine unconventionality. It's a little tricky. We've covered a lot of ground so we've used up a lot of fresh ideas.

NAJ: You're also doing a solo album and touring with Merl Saunders — in that you have so many projects at once, how do you channel your energy so productively?

GARCIA: Well, things tend to work and overlap, generally speaking. I wouldn't really be able to concentrate on sitting in front of a movie-editing device for eight hours a day; I can do it pretty easily for six though, I feel my attention is on it and I can do a good job keeping up with it. I like to play music in a studio situation — that can also hold attention for six or eight hours. If I'm on the road, I'm not doing anything during the day; I'm playing evenings. So during the day is a time which is convenient to compose. I might sit around an hour a day

just playing the guitar and practicing and maybe learn something and maybe some ideas would come out that are like songs. That represents maybe two or three hours a day on the road where nothing else is happening but television and a gig that night, usually a gig will take maybe four or five hours, total time actually playing maybe two of those or two-and-a-half. It may look like more, but it isn't really that much.

NAJ: You seem to be one of the most productive musicians around, viewing you from afar.

GARCIA: That's just because I'm crazed. I'm obsessed.

NAJ: People see you as a musical junkie . . .

GARCIA: Yes, that's as good a description as any.

NAJ: As a performing band, the Grateful Dead sound **much** different live than on a studio disk. Do you have any preference?

GARCIA: I prefer playing live for sure, just as an experience, it's definitely richer, mainly because it's continuous, I mean, you play a note and you can see where it goes, you can see what the response is, what the reaction is. It's reciprocal. In a studio, you can also do that, but you're doing it with the other musicians. When you have a group of musicians in a studio, it's not unlike having a room full of plumbers. I mean, what we might be interested in as musicians and what we're doing might not relate to anybody else. That's the difference.

We're a live band, for sure; we're not anything but that, and recording has been sort of gratuitous. Because we play music, one of the forms that music can go out in is the record, but it's a distinct form and not necessarily a reflection of what we do, so we just treat it for what it is. If you're an artist, you might prefer to work in lithographs, even though sometimes you do a water color even though lithographs still might be what you get off on the most. But if you have to do a water color, you do it. It's that sort of thing.

NAJ: With that distinction in mind, what was the reason you decided not to play live anymore?

GARCIA: Well, there's really a lot of reasons for it. The amount of money that we make at the gigs basically hasn't been able to pay for moving us around and being able to develop everything and also to pay everybody; we had a huge organization with a colossal overhead on a weekly

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basis. So past a certain point, we were really working to keep the thing going, rather than working to improve it or working because it was joyful, which brings up the next level. We were interested in doing stuff that's joyful or fun, y'know, then how could we reconcile that with economic survival, how could we work and have a good time and also pay the bills. We didn't have that together. Also, the thing of always playing large venues, and feeling the remoteness and feeling as though we're creating an unpleasant situation for the audience to come into which is not what we want to do. We don't want people to be busted at our concerts, we don't want them to be uncomfortable or any of those things, and that's more or less the standard way they've been. Also, it's basically sort of de-humanizing to travel the way you have to travel in a rock-and-roll band, and the quality of life on the road is pretty slim. Mainly, however, it has to do with economics and the fact that we've been doing it for ten years, and we haven't spent any time away from it. That's a long time to do anything. So we've just decided to stop it before it overwhelms us. Now we're trying to consciously see what the next step is for us. We don't want to go into the success cul-de-sac you know, we don't like that place. Yet, it's not possible for us to really do something that would be totally altruistic, like going and playing free everywhere. What we really need is a subsidy, the government should subsidize us and we should be like a national resource.

NAJ: It's better than putting green energy into making war You reunited recently at the Kezar S.F. school program BENEFIT concert, and we all had a quick flash of sound for thirty minutes which was beautiful. Do you see getting back on the stage eventually and if so, in a different format?

GARCIA: I can see getting back on the stage eventually, format is part of what we're trying to determine. One possible fantasy that we've thought of is moving toward playing at a more or less permanent musical fixture with the possibility of eventually building a place that would be like a permanent performance center that could be designed around us and our specific ideas.

NAJ: Ah yes, people would have to come to you . . .

GARCIA: Yeh, right. Well, at least for like two months of the year. Because

our music gets finer and finer if we can keep playing in the same room, we can really get to understand it. Thus, the music gets really articulate, which is one of the directions in which it needs to go to be more clearly stated with greater subtlety and nuance. That has to do with understanding a room really well and you can only do that if you play in a room quite often. It's also conceivable that the room could be equipped with a facility for recording, video-taping and filming or whatever in the event

that the idea of a "canned concert" could work. That would be one possible approach; it would also let us live comparatively normal lives; we wouldn't have to tour, but if we wanted to, we could do it with more selectivity, like certain times and places, or whatever. It sure would be good for the music.

NAJ: You must know by now that there's an incredible library of Dead tapes circulating the country through underground tape recorders. Do you feel ripped off by this phenomenon?



ANNIE LIEBOVITZ



ANNIE LIEBOVITZ

Garcia, playing in the band: Both photos were taken during the last five concerts at Winterland (in October '74) all of which were elaborately filmed for a forthcoming movie. "We're trying to develop alternatives to playing live because of the logistic and economic difficulty involved in touring nowadays. Hopefully, the film will be able to get you off the way a concert does."

GARCIA: Not particularly. I think it's OK, if people like it, they can certainly keep doing it. I don't have any desire to control people as to what they are doing, or what they have . . .

There's something to be said for being able to record an experience that you've liked, or being able to obtain a recording of it. Actually, we have all that stuff, too in our own collection of tapes. My responsibility to the notes is over after I've played them, at that point, I don't care where they go, (laugh) they've left home, you know.

NAJ: Do you pattern your music at all upon what you think the audiences wants to hear?

GARCIA: No, we never do that. It has to come from us, it has to be genuine on that level, and that's one of the things that makes it difficult because we've really used up a lot of ideas. In a sense, we've just bankrupted a lot of our own material by using it so much. When we do a show and it's 40% new material, (when that rarely happens), people welcome the changes, and I don't feel as though there are certain things we must do for the audience. The whole thing is pretty mutable. There are some songs that you can keep doing over and

over again and they still live. Some material just really lasts that way; some doesn't.

NAJ: Do you have signals on stage so that people know: "let's stop this riff and go into that now?"

GARCIA: No, but we all are so well acquainted with each other's playing and also with what the ideas contain and the tunes that I can play the barest minimum of an idea from another tune that we do and the band will understand it immediately, even if I don't intend it, and if it's even accidental. That kind of thing happens a lot. A lot of it is *miracles* and that's part of what creating new forms has to do with; it has to do with creating a situation where miracles can happen, in which amazing coincidences can happen, so that all of a sudden you're in a new musical space. That's the challenging part about coming up with structures that are loose-tight you know what I mean? They have an element of looseness to them which means they can expand in any direction or go anywhere from anywhere, or come from anywhere, but they also have enough form so that we can lock back into something. It really has to do with the element of what's know-

able and known and what isn't known and what isn't knowable and what can be invented on the spot. There's a delicate balance in there and since we're dealing with several consciousnesses at the same time, everybody going through their individual changes, that those times when everybody is up for it and everybody feels right about it and the form provides openings, then miracles can happen, amazing miracles. That's what we're in it for, that's one of the reasons that we do it is for those moments of ah . . . unexpected joy, just amazing stuff. We definitely think about how it works mechanically, we have to sort of explore that thing, and we've been exploring it for a long time and we don't really know anything about it. Orchestrated twists of fate.

NAJ: What particular album that you've done seems the most satisfying complete work or song?

GARCIA: It's kind of hard to say, because most of the time that we're working on an album, we're so distracted by what's going on in life that the work has a mysterious life of it's own, that we don't even notice until later. Sometimes you don't know 'till

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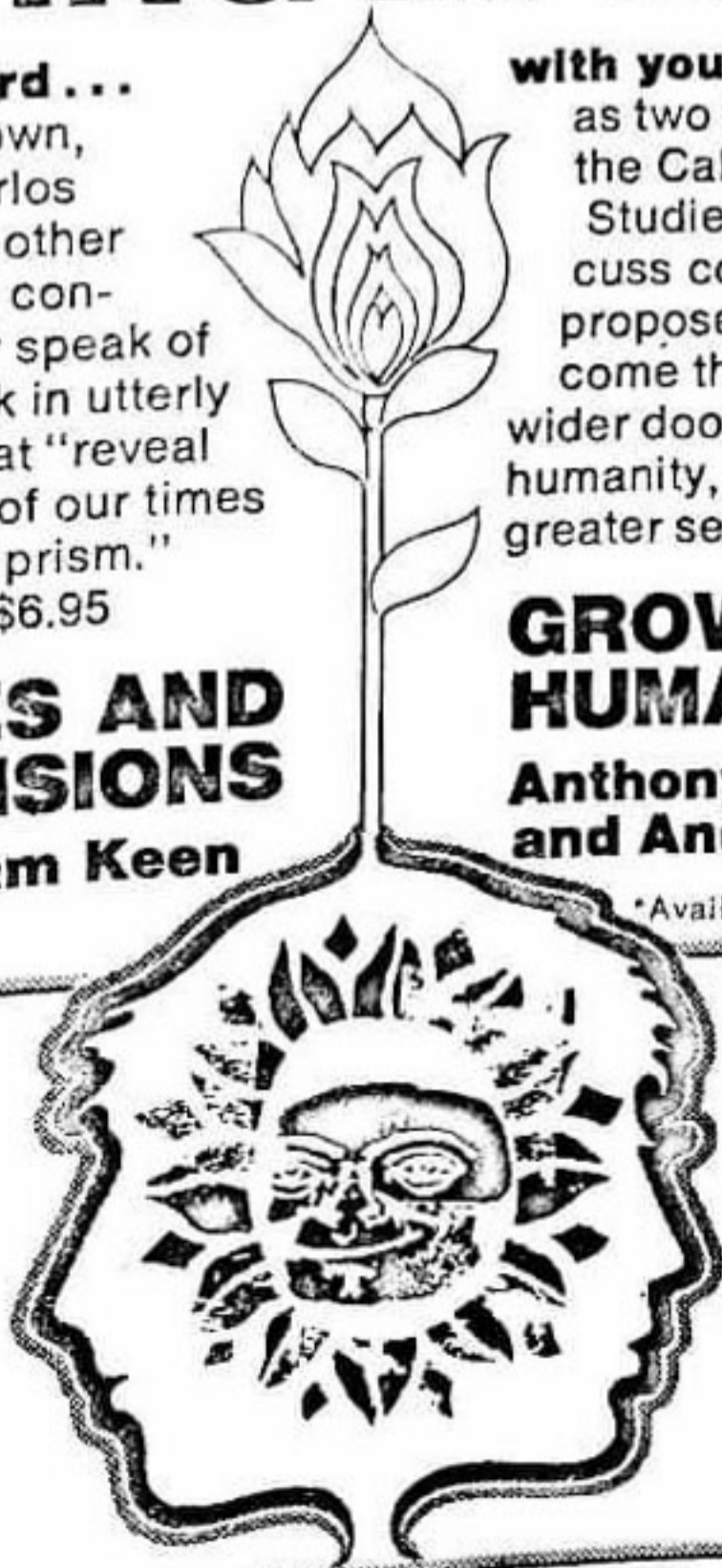
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somebody says to you, "that album says this and that and whatever." For example, "Workingman's Dead" which has turned out to be our most "significant" album, was the album that we worked the least on — I think we spent about nineteen or twenty days and finished the whole album. And while that was going on, that whole "being-busted" scene in New Orleans was hanging over our heads. It was like the record was an afterthought. With "American Beauty," there was this rash of parent deaths where everybody's parents croaked in the space of about two or three months. We were working on that and it was just incredible. It was just like tragedy-city — bad news every day, really.

NAJ: I notice on your albums that any song that comes from you is also associated with Robert Hunter — have you ever tried to actually write words yourself?

GARCIA: Oh, yeh, I've tried (laugh), but I have never developed the necessary tools to really write gracefully. I'm a better editor than I am a writer, for sure. I usually find that if I have an idea that wants to be expressed in words, then Hunter can express it

better than me. Also, he and I have such a good working relationship that if I have a suggestion of any sort, it works very smoothly. We don't clash in terms of our egos and we both tend to focus on our work rather than on ourselves so it works out to be very comfortable. My capacity as a person who chooses a lyric to sing is really about as much as I would want to have toward the responsibility of the content. Only a small part of Hunter's output gets to be he-and-I songs and those are usually edited quite a lot from what they originally were.

NAJ: His lyrics do have a certain feel to them; they're rather amorphous and you can't always grab them and say "oh yeh, I understand this song..."

GARCIA: Well, see, that's part of my editorial finger in there, that's the editorial hand of Garcia in there. I have this hangup about songs; I'm fascinated by fragments because of my involvement in traditional music — there's a lot of things around that are fragments of songs, and they'll be this tantalizing glimpse of two or three verses of what was originally a thirty-verse extravaganza, and there will be two or three remaining stan-

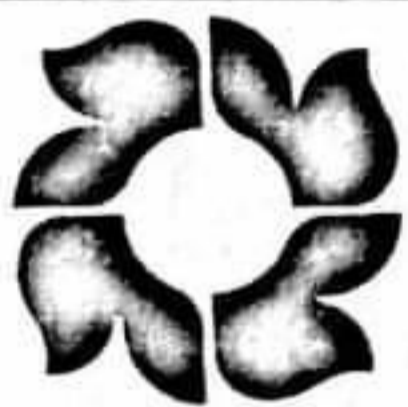
zas in the tradition and you read them or hear them and they're just utterly mysterious and evocative for odd reasons at different times. I have a tendency to not have a song be topical in the sense of an idea surrounding an idea. I like a song to be speaking to the mysterious, because that makes it possible for your own images to happen. It's a little like radio plays; you fill in what you want on the basis of what you're hearing.

NAJ: What musicians stand out in your mind as having influenced you?

GARCIA: Oh, every one, everything, all music. I'm not particularly attached to any one idea or format, or anything. I just appreciate whatever is good. It's whatever I hear, like endless numbers of anonymous musicians whom I don't know on the radio and stuff have influenced me, not to mention all the people that are well known whose names I do know. They've influenced me, too; I listen to everything.

NAJ: Your guitar playing is kind of unto it's own, there's nobody that I can think of that plays like you — how did you learn that kind of whatever it is?

GARCIA: I can't really say. The only



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thing I can really relate it to in terms of the roots of my own playing has to do with a sound that I wish I would hear, maybe a little snatch of a guitar player on some record or just a moment . . . and there's something about it that says, "that is a door to something" — I can't really explain it, it's emotional and it goes back to my earliest years, it's that deep. It just is me really selecting out of the Universe stuff that's part of that sound. It's a thing that sometimes I hear very clearly and sometimes I don't hear at all, but it has produced my whole development.

NAJ: Did you pick up the guitar at an early age and start learning basic chords?

GARCIA: No, I didn't. Unfortunately I wish I had, I got my first guitar when I was fifteen. It was an electric guitar, and I played it for six months, almost a year without knowing how to tune it at all, I had it in some silly open tuning, so that it sounded good to my ear. I didn't really start playing or start working at the guitar until I was about twenty-three. All the rest of the time I just screwed around. I'm still working at it, I'm still learning. It's not a process where you're finally through learning and you know how to play. I feel that I'm a person that doesn't have a great amount of talent. What I've learned, I've had to really work at learning; it's been a hassle, basically. That's one of the reasons I play a lot: I need to play a lot just to keep myself together, just to keep my chops together.

NAJ: One thing that I get from your playing is the sense that what you play is coming through you from a higher place, can you relate to that?

GARCIA: Oh, sure, I can definitely relate to that, and when I'm talking about playing, I'm talking about being ready for that, just like when I talk about miracles and stuff. I'm talking about being ready for that and for me, it has to do with being technically ready, to be able to let it flow if that's what it's going to do. And when it's work, is when it's me doing it, when I have to do it. If there isn't a flow, either I'm hanging it up or it's just not happening, or whatever, then I have to work at it, which is a level of confidence I like to have. I like to be able to at least rely on my own resources if that's what it comes down to, but I prefer to be ready to be able to play whatever is there at the moment. I can't say that there's a certain sense when I am transformed, you know, in that all of a sudden God is speaking

through my strings; it isn't really like that. It's more like if you're real lucky, and practice a lot and play a lot and try to feel right and everybody wants for it to happen, then there's a possibility that special things will happen and when those things happen, everybody gets off on it, not just me. I can get off on an evening that is, for an audience, mediocre. I'll get off on it because it feels good, or the group is nice or my hands are working well. I can get off on a lot of different levels, but really getting off is something that is inescapable — if the whole band gets off, then the audience gets off, if the audience gets

off, the band gets off, and it becomes one continuous thing. I don't know any more about it than anybody in terms of what "it" is, how "it" happens, or if "it" is controllable. You're tempted naturally in that position to try and control it, to say "let's see now, for sure now, is this me or is this it." Any number of stances that you can take emotionally doesn't affect it, whatever that is, it enjoys greater purity than I can muster, certainly. I can almost put my head in any kind of weird place or be confused, or be distracted, or suffering or have a toothache or just not feel right, or any of those things, and if it wants to



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happen, it will happen, no matter what I do.. It doesn't really have anything to do with me, I feel sort of removed . . . I don't want to feel as though I were responsible because it's not that kind of a thing. I believe that what we do and the level that we get to is a product of the desire of consciousness to get to that level and we've just accepted that structure, and said OK, if it's going to happen, we'll do it. This is also relevant to all the other parts of this discussion just insofar as that's the thing that we would like to be able to work on developing, but how? You know, how do you do that on earth?

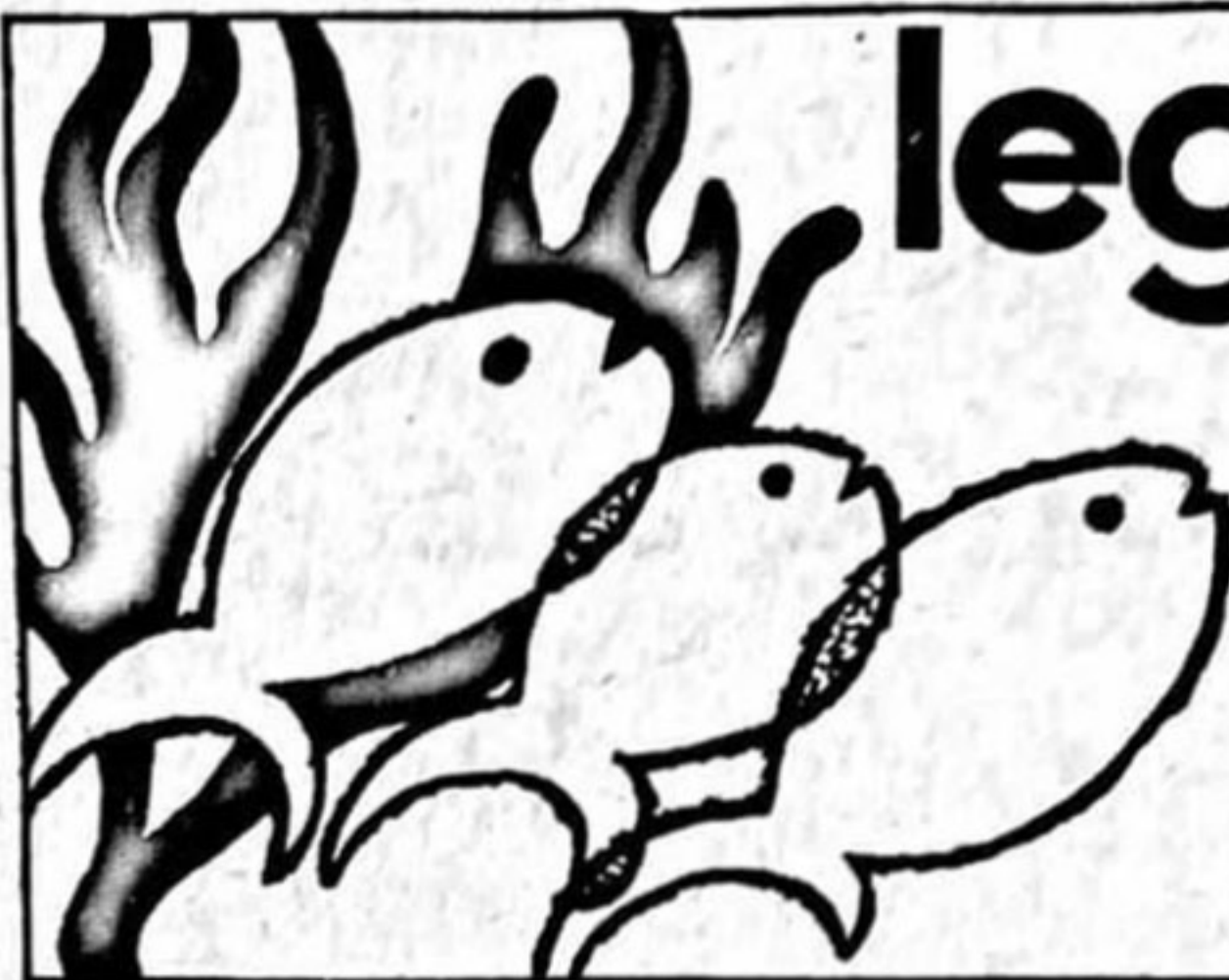
NAJ: Do you have much ego identification with Jerry Garcia as a rock star or is music your main form of meditation?

GARCIA: Music is my yoga, if there is a yoga, that's it. Practicing and keeping my muscles together, that is like what I would relate to a physical yoga, a certain amount of hours every day. Life is my yoga, too, but I've been a spiritual dilettante off and on through the years, trying various things at various times, and I firmly believe that every avenue that leads to higher consciousness does lead to higher consciousness. If you think it does, it does. If you put energy into it on a daily basis, no matter what it is, some discipline, or whatever it is, I believe it will work. I believe that it's within the power of the mind and consciousness to do that.

NAJ: Do you feel interviews are a part of that machine?

GARCIA: Well, about every year or so, I have a new rap, and there are a few new ideas that I have. It's great to have that kind of a forum to be able to say, "Well, listen to this, you fools out there:, but I've prefaced interviews in the past by saying that I can't do really anything but lie, all talking is lying, and I'm lying now, and that's true, too. I mean, you can go and hear me play, that's me, that's what I have to say, that's the form my thoughts have taken, so I haven't put that much energy into really communicating verbally. It's all open to misinterpretation, just like the songs are, it's that way, so I tend to pull the roots out of my own ideas, just conversationally, that's one of my bad habits at an interview.

NAJ: I think you're pretty eloquent, I wouldn't worry about it. Thank you very much, Jerry, for granting me this short slice of your life, and God Bless You.



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