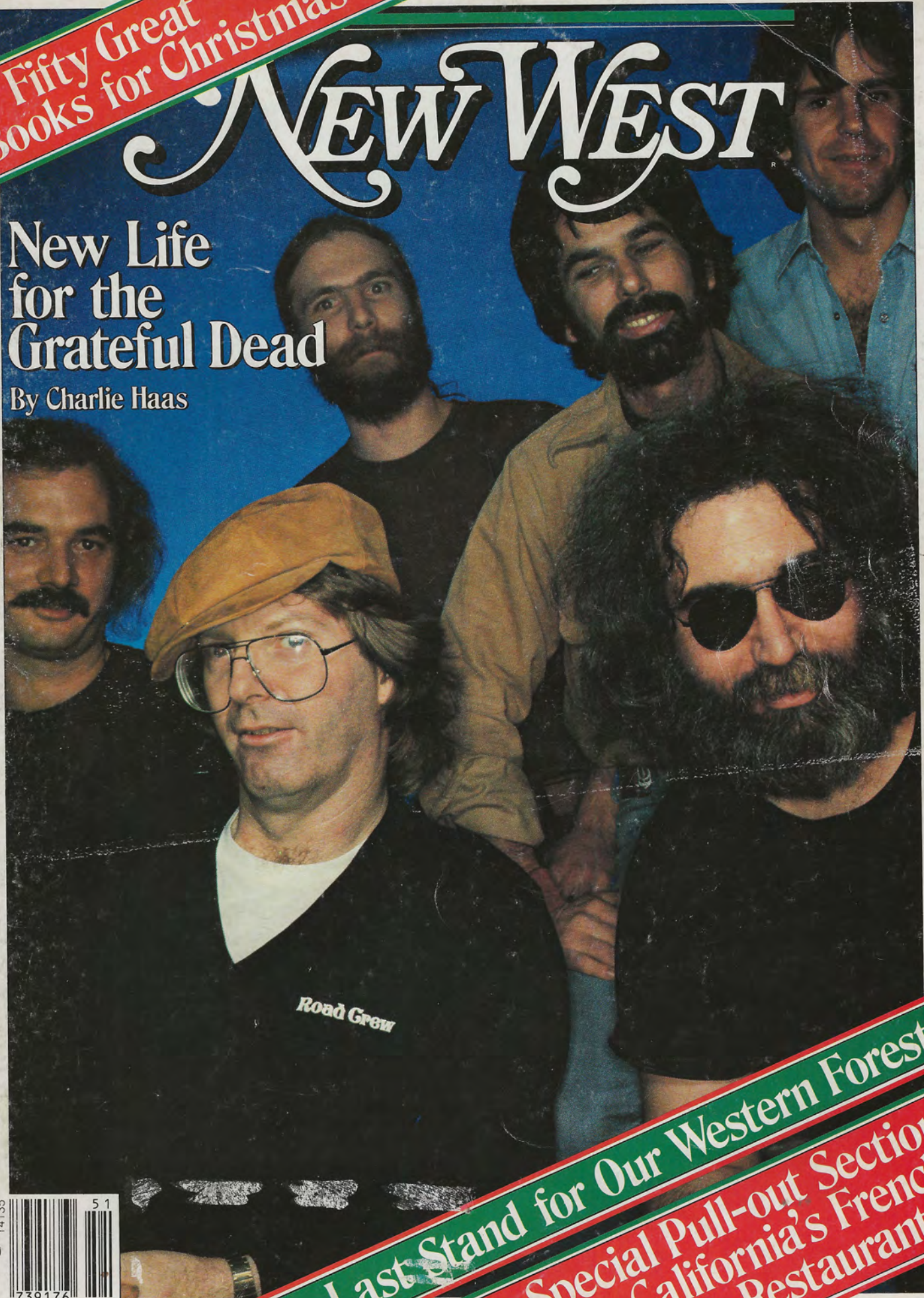


Fifty Great Books for Christmas

NEW WEST

New Life for the Grateful Dead

By Charlie Haas



Road Crew

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Restaurants



739176

STILL GRATEFUL AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

IN WHICH THE GRATEFUL DEAD,
PINUP UGLIES OF THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY,
BECOME THE HOUSE BAND OF THE AGE OF CERTAIN DOOM

BY CHARLIE HOAS

NEW ONES COMING
AS THE OLD ONES GO

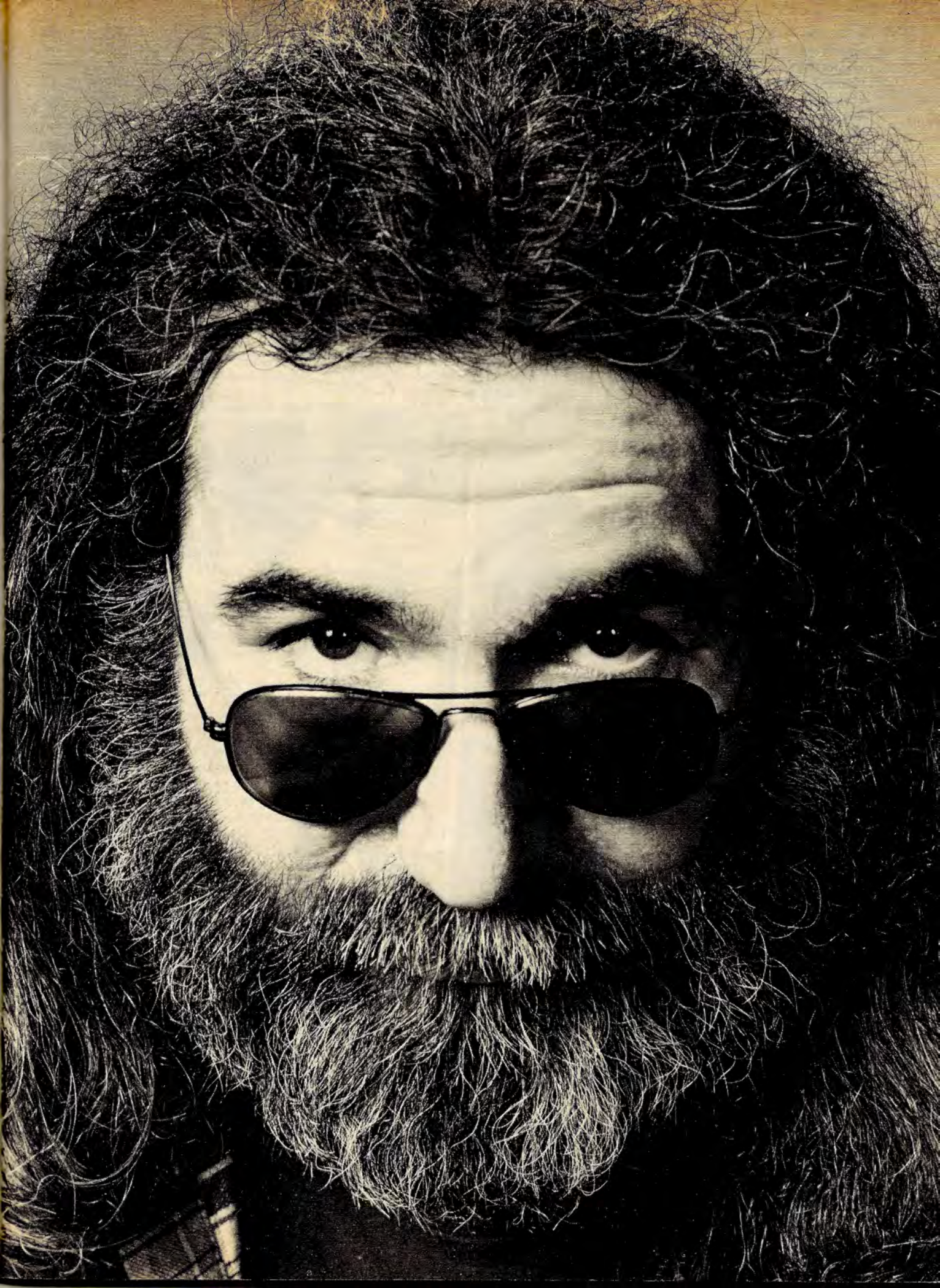
GUYS IN THE traditional clown makeup and cardboard stars-and-stripes top hats; a circle of five grinning people gobbling sections of an orange fortified with vitamin LSD; skulls, skeletons and red roses on patches sewn to the breasts of denim jackets and the butts of denim pants; a girl in a garland of red roses like the one worn by the skeleton on the second live album and another girl in a baldy clown mask like the one worn by Garcia in the *Europe '72* photographs; and raiments silk-screened, heat-transferred and appliquéd with every known piece of Dead artwork, from the sperm-shooting skull on *Aoxomoxoa* to the fiddling fright-wigged skeleton on *Blues for Allah* to the skull-and-lightning-bolt on *Steal Your Face*; all of them wafting across the UCLA campus to Pauley Pavilion and most of them getting inside by 7, when the Dead secure the stage and start into "Jack Straw":

*We can share the women,
We can share the wine . . .*



Dawn of the Dead: Above, the original cast (from left: Jerry Garcia, Bill Kreutzmann, Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Ron "Pigpen" McKernan). At right, Garcia today.

Shortly after this article was completed, Keith and Donna Godchaux retired from the Grateful Dead, and were replaced by keyboard player and tenor vocalist Brent Mydland.

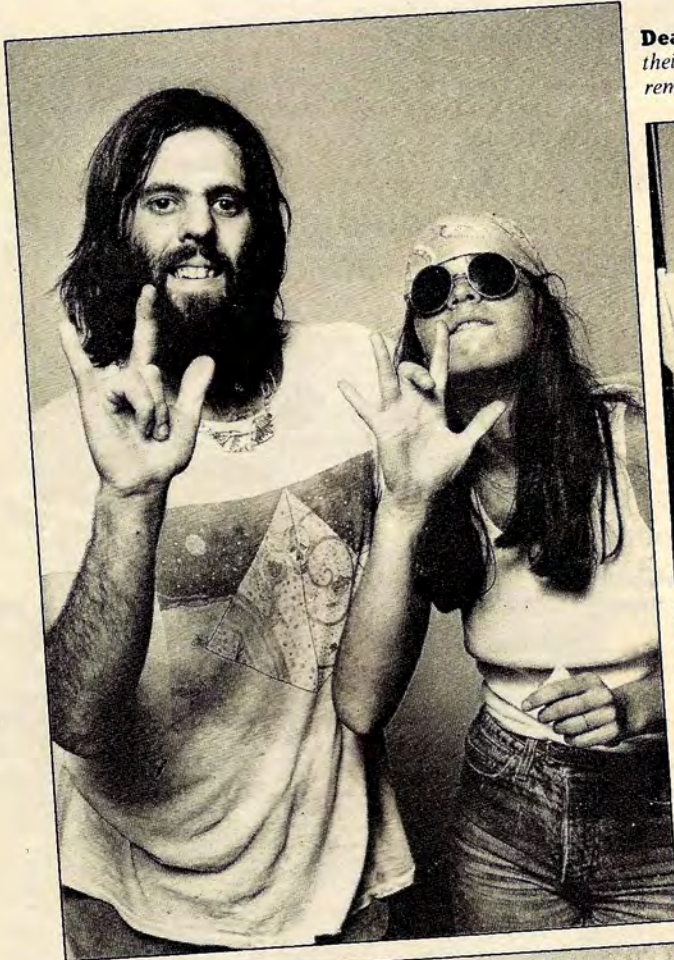


—the vocal harmony shakily apportioned among lead guitarist and reluctant hep arbiter Jerry Garcia, bulbous in a blank black T-shirt and extravagantly hairy around Sphinxomatic shades; Donna Godchaux, who plays with the ends of her straight brown waist-length hair during tricky passages; and Bobby Weir in his aviator glasses, the one actual handsome rock star connected with the enterprise. The other Dead—Keith Godchaux on piano, Phil Lesh on bass, Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann on drums—are off to one dark side of the stage, but it's Garcia's attention the Deadheads in the third row want anyway. They're holding up a Charlie McCarthy-sized Jerry Garcia rag doll, a grotesque but accurate

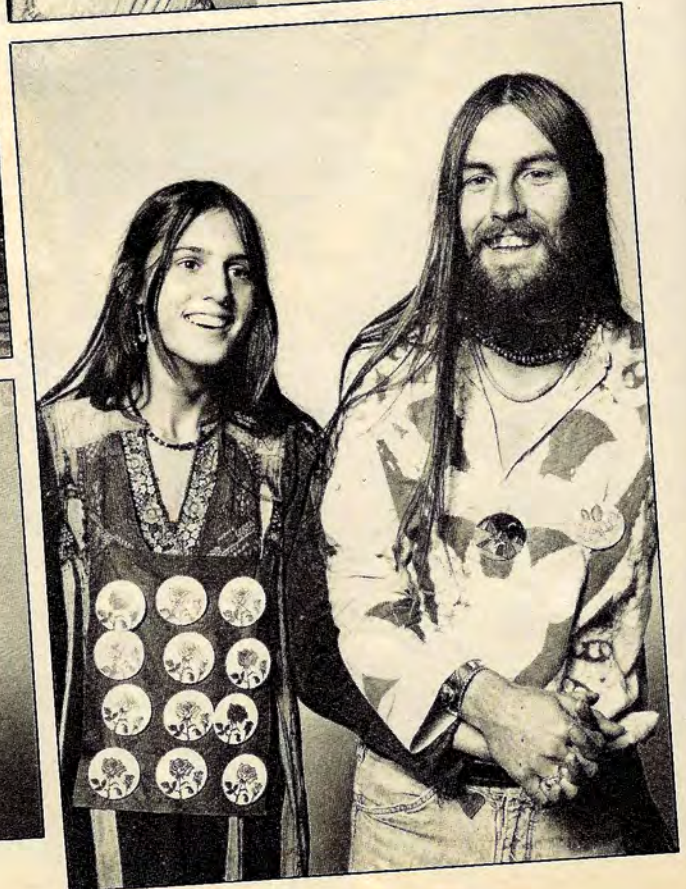
little sucker with black shirt and glasses, teeny loose blue jeans and a scarlet rose sticking out of a mouth obscured by a real-hair beard. He doesn't notice it—or, rather, he doesn't acknowledge it; Garcia, they say, notices *everything*—and the doll is down as Weir goes into "Mama Tried" and "Mexicali Blues," short versions without extended solos, because the first 90 minutes or so of the Dead show is prelude, a vigil kept until the vibes reach critical mass so the seance can get under way, so the band and the audience will be available to the magic if it should choose this night to visit.

Ten years after the Haight-Ashbury cashed its food stamps, the Grateful Dead are still selling out halls. The funny

thing about tonight's college-campus crowd, though, is that there are very few people of college age. There is a scattering of old people—30 to 35, looking the way they looked at the be-ins, like Japanese World War II soldiers on remote Pacific islands who haven't surrendered yet. These older types are mostly charter Deadheads, who heard them play for free in Golden Gate Park or for \$1.50—punch included—at the Acid Tests in '65. They may even have heard the Dead before they were the Dead, as Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions in Palo Alto, and then, in the Haight, as The Warlocks "Featuring Ron 'Pig Pen' McKernan," the original scary motorcycle hippie, whose glower was marketed on pinup



Deadheads: Concert-going fans show off their album-art chic and the "Garcia salute," a reminder that the complet guitarist is minus one finger.



“...THE KIDS WILL FOLLOW A DEAD TOUR ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SEEING TWENTY SHOWS IN SUCCESSION...”

posters in head shops and who became the first literally dead Dead in 1973. Certainly they recall the Dead's enmeshment in the fatal fiasco of the Rolling Stones' Altamont concert in 1969, and their almost simultaneous departure from weirdly layered improvisations and tone-poem lyrics in favor of folksy story-songs about miners, gamblers and outlaws, songs whose musical structure comes straight out of Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag* but whose lyrics are pocked with the darkest intimations of roller-coastering doom. They may recall tsk-ing Random Notes about the Dead's propensity for being stolen blind by managers or the bath they took when they started Round Records and poured their money into a scheme to laser-encode music on pyramid-shaped software that would make round records obsolete.

But that's the *old* people in the audience. The majority here, and the bulk of the present-day Deadheads, who can buy out a two-night stand at Madison Square Garden without benefit of advertising and who made the Dead's last album, *Shakedown Street*, the fastest-selling record in their history—these Deadheads are mostly fifteen or sixteen years old, which means that in the Summer of Love they were just barely three or four.

And among these Deadheads are some whose involvement with the Grateful Dead far transcends the normal fan-star parameters. They follow a Dead tour as if it were the circus come to town, working their way across the country or down a coast to see twenty shows in succession. Their notions about life and morality rest heavily on the blank-check aphorisms built into Robert Hunter's lyrics for the Dead. Whatever positions the individual Deadheads may take in the endless factional contretemps over the merits of the Spacy Period versus the Pretty Period versus the Post-Round Period, they are all unshakably committed to the chief article of Deadhead faith, as stated on the bumpers of half the cars in the parking structure across the quad from Pauley tonight: THERE IS NOTHING LIKE A GRATEFUL DEAD CONCERT.

A true statement, on several levels. The sound of the Dead is not blues nor metal nor disco, but a loose and sometimes sloppy tumbling along, centered around the guitar of Garcia, whose solos are mercury-bright mutations of the western swing cadences of Bob Wills, and whose virtuosity is conceded even by the many critics who find the Dead boring. The lyrics recurrently catalogue symbols of chance and loneliness (“trains, rain, highways, cats and card games,” as Phil

Lesh puts it). While the simple dynamics of tension and release supply the cues for the normal rock audience to get excited, the Dead's long jams are after something more elusive. Anyone who says that fifteen-year-olds have no attention span hasn't seen them sit raptly through 40 minutes of Grateful Dead noodling, wordlessly passing joints and mirrors as the quirks, accidents and epiphanies are marshaled in pursuit of a spark. Though the art of shared improvisation is commonplace in jazz, especially since the Parker/Coltrane/Davis dynasties, it's almost absent from current rock 'n' roll, which may be why both the Dead and their fans feel free to toss around concepts like synchronicity and the Group Mind.

A little after 8:30 they strike up “Tennessee Jed,” a litany of insults and injuries from *Europe '72*—

*Dropped four flights and cracked my spine,
Honey come quick with the i-o-dine . . .*

—and the crowd tangibly starts getting off during a pauseless medley of “All New Minglewood Blues,” Chuck Berry's “Promised Land” and Weir's plaintive-ballsy version of “Good Lovin'.” It's unlikely that many of the kids now pressing the stage-front barrier remember the Young Rascals' hit of 1966, but it makes a perfect Dead rave-up—standard I-IV-V chords and a straight four time that supplies Hart and Kreutzmann with a playground of ready-made crescendos. Then “Playing in the Band,” Weir's rock-star-as-working-stiff credo, and “Shakedown Street,” which leads into a long drum duet. The other band members drift off and cop Heinekens as Mickey and Billy's congeries becomes a locomotive third party that can no longer be reasoned with by the time Mickey deserts his kit for a marimba parked upstage and starts a simple melody that grows an architectonic complexity under Kreutzmann's goading, Billy now playing in some diabolical uncountable time signature for a series of ecstatic exchanges with Mickey and then—almost before the Heads can be sure they've seen him and not imagined him—a short, smiling black man in a white robe and turban, carrying a round, flat white drum, comes stage front where Garcia stood earlier and starts bouncing riffs off the drum and chanting in *Arabic*, okay, as six young white men in robes and beards materialize on stage in a semicircle around him. They chant along, hand-clapping, bowing and rising and ritualizing their brains out.

Well. Even those Deadheads who've seen Mickey jam with Ravi Shankar's

tabla player have to regroup a little. It's like We Interrupt the Grateful Dead to Bring You Some Wiggy Religious People, or maybe it's a likely enough hallucination in the middle of a Mickey-Billy duet—but then the other Dead start wandering back on. Keith sits at the piano and drops some gospelly chords into the chant; Weir and Garcia pick up their guitars and lay some riffs around it. The little black man—turns out later it's Hamza el-Din, Mickey's very favorite Upper Egyptian drummer, but who knew?—takes his back-up pray-ers off the stage, and the Dead screw around with the residue of the ceremony until Garcia is ambushed by the heraldic, thumping opening riff of “St. Stephen,” the vaguely religious puzzler (Hunter is very big on vague religiosity) that debuted on *Aoxomoxoa* in 1969. Garcia works toward his and Weir's vocal entrance at half-speed, a luxurious sexual slowness intended to milk the maximum from the loveliest lyrics and melodic hooks in their repertoire—

*Saint Stephen with a rose,
In and out of the garden he goes.
Country garland in the wind and the rain,
Wherever he goes the people all complain*

—and Garcia's fat raindrop notes go cascading down the guitar neck, the thunderous drums making it a full-scale storm, and the crowd is hot; a high-speed jam connects “Stephen” to Buddy Holly's “Not Fade Away” with its a cappella chills and Chuck Berry's “Around and Around,” wherein Weir jumps and whoops and the lines “No they never stopped rockin'/Till the moon went down” seem to contain all the hoodoo that's been sliding back and forth between the Dead and the Heads all night—all the Americana and Arabica and psychedelia and cokeabilia boiled into four measures like a spoon of 1970 street speed, with Weir airborne for good this time and the audience hysterical, stomping, lighting matches and butanes, screaming almost as loud as the twenty speakers stacked on each side of the stage. Got some.

BELIEVE IT
IF YOU NEED IT



ES KIPPEL, 32, manages apartment houses in Bedford-Stuyvesant for the New York City Housing Authority. He also publishes *Relix* magazine, using the back room of his



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Brooklyn apartment as a business office. *Relix*, a 20,000-circulation bimonthly whose principal subject matter is San Francisco-area music, particularly the Dead's, runs articles with titles like "Bring Back the Sixties, Man" and "Where Have All the Hippies Gone?" and carries advertisements for every skull-and-roses *tchotchke* conceivable and rare photographs of Pig Pen grabbing Janis Joplin's left breast.

Kippel—earnest mustached face, International Marijuana Wholesalers and Distributors T-shirt—sits down over tea and oranges in his kitchen and says, "The first time I saw the Grateful Dead was in 1970, at Fillmore East. I had recently moved out of my parents' house and traded twenty hits of Orange Sunshine acid for my first stereo. I'd been listening to Vanilla Fudge, Melanie, the Doors, stuff like that, but I was unaware of the Grateful Dead.

"Then a friend of mine said, 'I got tickets,' and I said, 'I'll go.' I sat in seat F122. Amazing, right? To remember your seat number? Well, they played a couple acoustic sets, and then they played electric until dawn, and it was *phenomenal*. I couldn't believe it. 'St. Stephen,' 'Dark Star'—the audience was going crazy. In those days, they would open the doors at 11 P.M. and you wouldn't leave until 6 A.M., so you could take an entire trip, mentally and physically, with the Grateful Dead. In '70, '71, I was satisfied with just their local shows, but in '72 I started traveling as far as Philadelphia. In '73, '74, I had my period of total involvement as a fan. My car got stolen and I got \$2,000 for that and I just started following the Grateful Dead. I went to Winterland in San Francisco on New Year's Eve, followed them from Florida to Rhode Island on an entire East Coast tour.

"When I put an advertisement for *Relix* in a program at a Dead concert at Meadowlands in New Jersey, I get coupons back from Ohio, Michigan, Florida, Mexico . . . we're talking about a whole audience that travels to see the Grateful Dead. 'There's a Grateful Dead concert in Detroit tomorrow night.' 'Okay, let's go.' And the Dead won't be on every

night, and you want to see the best you can. Therefore, travel.

"If you send five people down to get tickets, and they allow you four tickets per person, you'll have twenty people sitting together, and what better place is there to have a party than twenty people together at a Grateful Dead concert? That's the whole concept. Brotherhood. I mean, even enemies will pass joints at Grateful Dead concerts. Even enemies will get into water-gun fights at Grateful Dead concerts. Of course, there's LSD in the water . . .

"You know that old science-fiction TV show where they said, 'We now return control of your set to you until next week'? The Grateful Dead are like that. When you come to that concert, if you catch the right concert, it's 'Give us control of your senses and at the end of the concert we will give you back control.' That's what they did to me. They took control of my mind and opened it up to music.

"I'm constantly quoting things from their songs and applying them to my personal situations. It's intelligent music. The *thinking* that goes on! The tons of imagery in the lyrics—to understand a song like 'Box of Rain,' you have to sit down and listen to it. It's just making such a *statement* about things—I mean, it's crazy. It's so intense, it all works out so well, Hunter is so intelligent . . .

"If not for the Grateful Dead, I can see where I'd have been married at 21, narrow-minded and simple-minded, with three kids, working as a statistician at some company and being a Mason. The Grateful Dead saved me from that. The Grateful Dead energy constantly affects everyone, and it's a very catchy energy. If the Grateful Dead are sluggish, everyone else is sluggish. If the Grateful Dead are like *this*"—he snaps his fingers—"moving along quickly, they're an energy center. The musicians on that stage are shooting off energy in all directions, and if the twenty people who are at that Grateful Dead concert say, 'Catch this fuckin' energy, man; I gotta get my friends here,' then those other people will come and after one concert they'll just be addicted."

JUST LIKE NEW YORK CITY, JUST LIKE JERICHO



COUPLE OF WEEKS after the UCLA date, the Dead come to New York for a pair of sold-out concerts at Madison Square Garden, to be attended by every rowdy fifteen-year-old stoner in the metropolitan area. The shows are makeup dates, this chunk of the tour having been postponed because of Garcia's bad throat, which is acting up

again after a couple of cold nights in Philadelphia.

The day before the first show, Mickey Hart goes to visit Arthur Jones, who was his band teacher at Lawrence High School, out on the Island. "I sent him twelve free tickets to the Grateful Dead, and I went out to see him," says Hart, whose acute, hungry face and fast speech recall Alan Arkin. "Years ago, when I



If you like what happens to grapes in Bordeaux,

was starting to play drums, I came into this new high school as a freshman, and I had my sticks, I knew the rudiments, and I wanted to be in the band. Mr. Jones said, 'Mickey, there are 28 drummers in the band, I don't know what I can do. Play for me.' So I play him a couple ratta-tats. Had he said no, I might've gone up on a steeple and shot people, flipped out totally. Given up drumming, at least. He said, 'Okay, you can be in Band II,' and he put a strap on me and I pulled the bass drum in the band, and finally worked my way up through the cymbals, the tenor drum line, and finally snares.

"So he's been 37 years teaching at this high school and I wanted to go back and honor him. I told him, 'Don't tell anybody I'm coming.' But somebody saw me in the parking lot, and when I went into the office of the high school and started talking with Mr. Jones, the kids started leaving their classrooms, and all of a sudden they're in the office with us, yelling, 'Grateful Fucking Dead! Grateful Fucking Dead!' The secretaries are moving back to the wall, the kids are jumping over desks, I'm signing autographs, which I never do, and the whole place just went kablooiie. Mr. Jones was enjoying the hell out of it. I had no idea. I walk back in the high school and *whoosh*."

On the other hand, this rheumy kid comes reeling up to Bobby Weir after the first night's show—a show that suffers badly from Garcia's throat problem—and corners him against a wall backstage. "Why don't you just come out and *admit it*?" the kid yells, hysterical.

"Admit what?" Weir says, trying not to incite this Drug Burnout Poster Boy any more than is necessary.

"About your lyrics!" the kid shouts. "Admit that all your lyrics are about the Guru Maharaj Ji! Why don't you just come out and say it?"

So Weir hotfoots it to the limo and back to the Hilton, but he's not safe yet, because in the hotel lobby he's intercepted by a blonde teenage girl who says, "Bobby. I was waiting the whole *time*, at the door in the *back*. They didn't know to let me in . . ." He looks at her blankly. "I'm *Kathy*. From Florida, last week?"

Weir nods, trying to be nice. "Hi, yeah, I'll make sure you're on the list, uh, tomorrow—"

"Where are you going *now*?" Kathy demands.

"Uh . . . I was just going upstairs and have a . . . beer and . . ."

"Can I come?" Weir, cornered again, nods. "Can I go get my friends?"

"Your *friends*?"

"We came all the way from *Florida*." It appears that she may cry.

Weir sighs. "Okay." He tells her the number of a suite occupied by the Dead's logistician, Rock Scully. "You can come up in a little while."

The girl nods and runs for the hotel

exit doors. Weir, shaking his head, takes the elevator up to Scully's suite, where a half-dozen people are hanging out.

Bill Kreutzmann, the 33-year-old senior drummer, who appears to be in his cups, maybe in his spangles and not inconceivably in his nostrils, is stalking the window, waving his arms and making faces at the street twelve floors below.

"Billy's entertaining the corner of 53rd and 6th," Scully's wife, Nicki, says. Weir nods, and sits down on the floor between a bed and the wall to talk to an editor from *Saturday Night Live* who's been hanging around with the Dead a little since they appeared on the show a few months ago.

Nicki complains that the room service food hasn't shown up yet. The phone rings. She answers it and talks for a few seconds before Bill comes over and takes it from her. "Hi," he says into the mouthpiece. "How ya doin'?" Okay. Look, we're up here in ... 1219 and we need some sandwiches, about a couple cases of beer and, uh, some wine. About enough wine for fifteen people, okay? Thanks." He hangs up and goes back to the window.

"I think maybe I better call room service again," Nicki says.

"Bill just ordered some sandwiches and stuff," I say.

"Yeah, but that was Phil on the phone," Nicki says, dialing. The girl from Florida arrives with two clones and is shown to the back bedroom of the suite. Garcia is sequestered in his room with a humidifier tonight, but there is a mounted black-and-white photograph of him propped on the Scullys' night table. "Did you see this picture of Jerry?" Nicki asks Weir. He nods.

"Boy, that's him, isn't it? I mean, that's really him, don't you think?" says a member of the Dead crew, looking at the photograph.

There's a knock at the door. Bill wheels abruptly from the window and asks, "Who is it?"

"It's Phil, Bill."

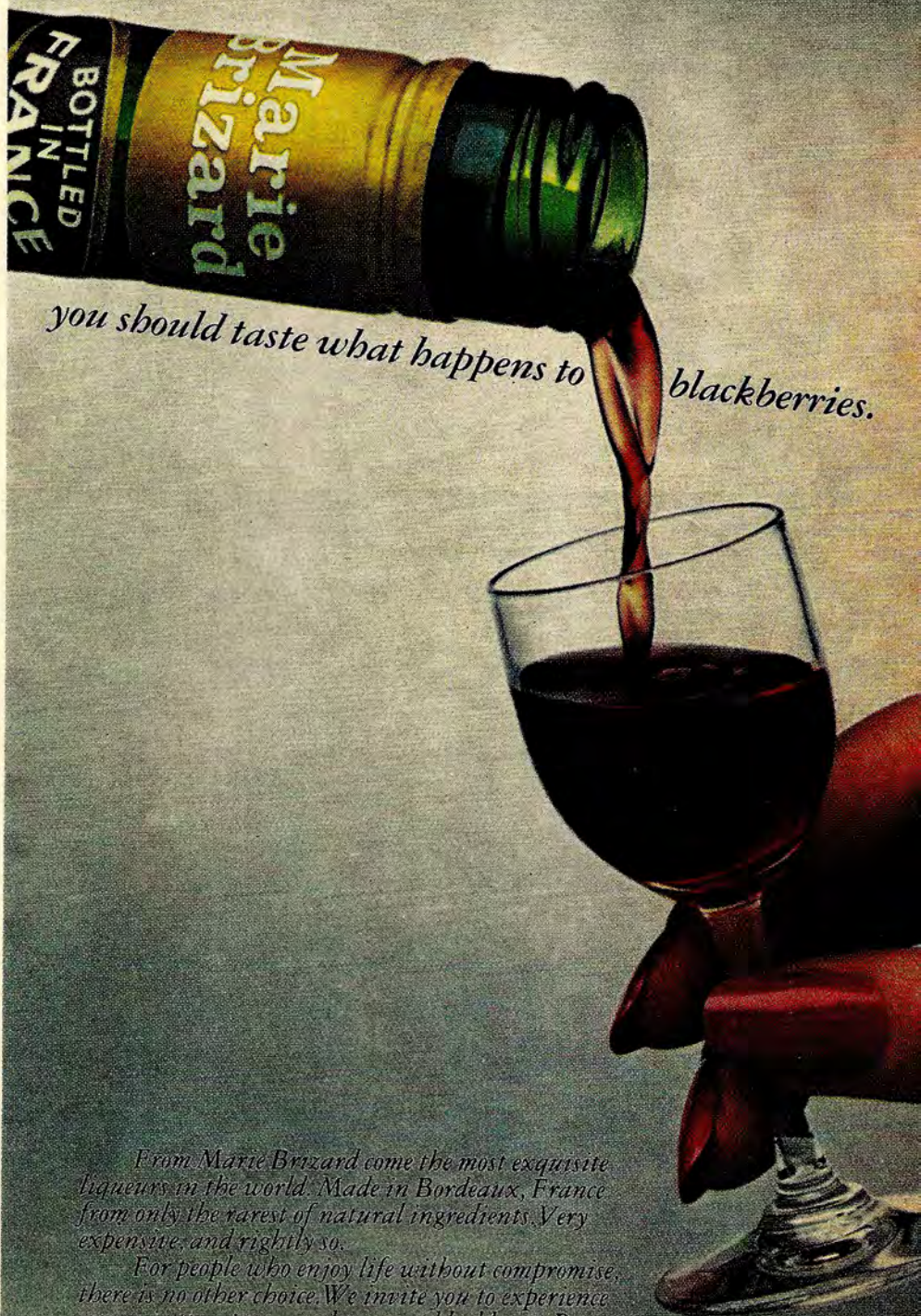
"It's *Phil!*" Bill says excitedly. He has just spent four hours on the same stage as Phil. He and Phil used to live in the same house. "How *are* you, Phil?"

"I'm fine, Bill," says the voice on the other side of the door.

"Phil, I'm so sorry that there's this ... this barrier between us," Bill says.

"I am too, Bill. Don't you worry, though ..." Nicki opens the door and Phil Lesh walks in—a slight, likable man whose intellectual curiosity was not satisfied by a formal education in music and composition, nor by a couple of seasons of dropping acid in the Haight, and who enrolled in the Dead as a kind of protracted graduate study in both of the previous disciplines. He sees Bill confronting the window. "You can fly, Billy," he says.

"Phil," says Bill, "that was such a burn about the overtime, man."



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"What overtime?" I ask.

"There are—what—57 unions in Madison Square Garden?" Bobby says. "You can't play past 11 or they fine you. Ten thousand dollars for every minute past 11."

"I mean, one minute you're making money and the next minute you're broke?" Bill says. "They can't do that to us. And you know why they can't? It's because . . . because when you check in your room here, both the faucets say 'C' on them and . . ." He turns toward Weir, points at him. "You have to do your paper airplane," he says.

"Oh, okay," Bobby says. He gets up, finds a piece of paper and begins folding it into one of those crafty *Scientific American* jobs. "I was the best at this in high school," he says.

"But I'm gonna make you a bet," Billy says. "I'm gonna bet you that if you throw that airplane out the window it won't stay up for more than 6.457 seconds." He turns to Phil. "Does your watch do three decimal places?"

Lesh looks at his watch. "No, only two."

"That's no good," Billy says.

"Well, hell," Lesh says, and takes the watch off and tosses it over his shoulder.

The airplane flirts with an updraft but goes down fast. The food arrives. The girls from Florida leave. Keith Godchaux comes in, sits down in a chair in the middle of all the noise and says nothing—just smiles to himself, falls asleep and wakes up several times in the space of an hour, then gets up and leaves as silently as he came.

Weir is talking about a book that explains how to "walk out of your door naked, with nothing, and just survive on the earth. All the herbs and everything. That ought to be required reading for everybody. I mean, I was born into civilization, and civilization gave me something to do that I'm good at, or I'm getting good at, which is making art in order to make a living. But if I had to make an art *out* of living, I'd want to be able to do that too."

"I have a friend that does all the stunts for Fonzie," Billy says.

"They were searching the kids pretty heavily tonight," somebody says.

"Hey, let 'em search," Billy says. "I don't want some freak that likes Kiss coming to a Grateful Dead concert and trying to blow me away. Probably miss and hit Hart anyway."

"Einstein," Bobby Weir is saying to his friend the editor, "believed that an idea, a real original idea, is something that happens to people maybe two or three times in their lives, if they're lucky. So when the whole *band* comes up with an idea, it's—I mean, we can always take some lick and put a twist on it, but to have a real musical *idea*, well, that's Christmas. In fact, that's the only real Christmas there is."

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Direction: GARY BORMAN MANAGEMENT

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DRINK DOWN A BOTTLE
AND YOU'RE READY TO KILL



THE GRATEFUL DEAD, it is said, once proposed to their record company that they be allowed to record the hot air of the desert and the cold air of the high mountains and mix them together in the studio to see how it sounded. The Grateful Dead are now on their fourth record company.

"They were difficult," says an executive who worked with the group at one of their former labels. "Anything that was in the realm of everyday happenings, they didn't want any part of. They wanted to be different.

"For example, the two-record live set that they did for us was originally going to be called *Skull Fuck*. Now, we felt at the company that that wasn't an appropriate title for getting the album into Sears, say, or the other department stores. However, it was Garcia's feeling that he would settle for 15,000 in sales if the album could go out as . . . with that title.

"But any decision that concerned them had to involve everybody in the band, and their *families* were involved in the decision as well, and the other people associated with them. So, on that title, it was necessary to hold a meeting with all of them here at the record company, but the record company's conference room wasn't big enough, because the Dead had brought 55 people with them, so we had to rent the conference room at the Continental Hyatt House to discuss the whole *Skull Fuck* question. So they were unique.

"Their music, of course, is incredible. It's fantastic. People who are aware of it are enjoying something that . . . well, they're sensational live. You get your music fix for the *month* at a Grateful Dead show. They play their asses off and they love it. Just get high and go on and play half the night.

"I remember, I was at the Palladium one evening when they were playing—I think it was fall of '71—and I must have had a Coke or a beer or something, backstage before the show, and a while later I began to feel this total . . . hallucinating . . . effect coming on, and—maybe I shouldn't admit this, but I had never taken acid before that point, and that's what it was.

"I had to leave. It was craziness. I'd always been told that when I was around them I should watch what I ate or drank, because they got a kick out of that, but I just forgot and . . . it was funny the next day, but it wasn't funny at the time, because I had no idea what was happening to me. I mean, they could have *said* something."

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I NEED A MIRACLE EVERY DAY

GARCIA CANNOT shake the aura. Knowledge is ascribed to him. Powers. It gives him pause. He never volunteered to be the ayatollah of hip culture, though he never quite ran away from it either—giving out quotes like “In my version of the universe, it’s far out: There’s more than meets the eye in every situation” and submitting to an epic interview with Jann Wenner of *Rolling Stone* and Charles Reich, the greener of America, which was published as a book called *Garcia: A Signpost to New Space*.

Nor can he shake the throat trouble. A couple of weeks after Madison Square, his voice, which is rickety even when he’s well, is even thinner and wheezier, like taffy with a fine coating of rust. He sits in the San Rafael house occupied by the Dead’s booking agency, watching a country music show on color television and coughing. More than one person who works for the Dead has suggested to me that Garcia’s throat problem would yield to a cutback from three packs of unfiltered Camels a day, a vacation from central nervous system stimulants, and some sleep. When I ask how he’s feeling, he shakes his head and rasps, “I just can’t seem to get rid of this thing. Must be some persistent . . . bacteria.”

I ask him how it feels to be 37 and have all these new fifteen-year-old fans. “Well,” he says, lighting a Camel, “I think there’s maybe a certain percentage of people in the population that can dig the Grateful Dead at any given time, and they can dig it for as long as five, six years, maybe longer than that, depending on who they are. It’s an additive factor that’s useful in some people’s lives. Every three or four years there’s a whole bunch of new people who can dig the Grateful Dead . . . but we live in a world in which there *isn’t* any Grateful Dead, as an experience. Our version is bound to be different from theirs.”

And why is the fans’ version so crucial in their lives—why all the traveling and lyric quoting and the 9 zillion skulls all over everything?

“That’s an interesting question. It can’t be solved by examining *our* motives. I’ve pondered this, man, I’ll tell you. And I’ve always been on the trip of, like, I’d sure hate to mislead anybody with this. It’d be a drag to have people believing weird things because of what we’re doing. But our old psychedelic experiences always pointed out the possibility that, like, the best thing you can do is to do what you’re doing the best way you can and hope for the fuckin’ best. Because psychedelics suggest, I think, that there are bigger and better things as far as human

consciousness is concerned. There’s someplace to go, something to look for. I think of our audience as people who are out lookin’ for something. We’ve sort of gamely stuck to those initial possibilities and maybe they pick up on that and it gives us some kind of vaal-lidity.” He giggles.

“Whereas for us, playing together is what’s real. For me, emotionally, if I have a show and it’s a bad show, I really don’t feel like *anything* is together. I don’t feel like answering questions or signing autographs. I feel like everything that’s ever happened has been so we could play this bad set. It’s existential. It’s an emotional reality I can’t avoid; I mean there’s no comfort from your past glories or anything like that. The audience fuckin’ knows it, they know if we’re havin’ a good night or if we’re struggling, and they can dig it if we’re struggling. They know we’re going to get off eventually—if not at this gig, then at some other gig.

“As to when we get off . . . you can’t make it happen by acts of will or addressing it in a direct way, so you look for devious ways. It’s like dialing a combination: Let’s see, I remember that night I had two glasses of brandy, smoked a little hash and took a snort or two, and I felt just perfect and that night the band played beautifully, so maybe if I repeat that combination—but it never works that way, so that automatically keeps it interesting, because it isn’t a matter of will. The fact that things work out as well as they do as often as they do is like on the level of miraculous; I mean it’s way outside of chance.

“There are times when I spend the whole night thinking about things like, ‘God, my feet hurt,’ or, ‘I gotta pay the rent,’ or, ‘Why can’t I get my guitar in tune; it doesn’t sound quite right’—I never get past the trivial little bullshit, so I never see the audience, I never see anybody in the band, I’m just locked up in a little private hell—heh, really, man. But sometimes on those nights people will come up to me and say, ‘God, that was the most incredible music you guys have ever played; it sounded—’ And I just go, ‘What?’ I listen to a tape and it sounds amazing and I say, ‘I don’t remember that; I didn’t play that,’ and it’s those moments that I realize that my conscious will, the me I know of as the day-to-day me, is just really not very involved in this whole thing in a way that can interfere with it substantially or cause it. It’s something that occurs in a mediumistic way, something involuntary. I trust it because I know it’s *not* me. If it was me, I wouldn’t trust it because I couldn’t dig it; I know myself too well.

“I go to science quite a lot, in trying to

figure this out, because science has the best consensus. I also go to astrology and the *I Ching* and random input—you know, people stop you on the street and say, 'Hey, man, there's a big flood coming next week and look out your car's got four flat tires.' Prophecies. You learn to just let things happen to you because it's random input. You've got science with its world of structure and legitimacy, you know, and the intuitive and the occult with their nonlinear relations to primal questions, and philosophy, and religion—they're all addressing the same thing in a lot of ways and we're addressing it in another way, which has to do with getting a lot of people together and playing music and having energy of some invisible kind that's nonetheless real for everybody involved with it.

"I've been reading a lot about probability and quantum mechanics, because all that stuff contains clues about what we're doing and what the importance of it is and why people feel involved with it. There seems to be a lot of evidence coming to the fore now that ideation is an inductive process rather than deductive, which means that what consciousness can imagine, it can achieve. My favorite story is the one about boron. The element, you know, in the periodic table? It used to be an inert material, which meant that chemically speaking it didn't interact with anything. Then a mathematician postulated a situation in which it would interact, created a number as a model, so from that point on it was no longer inert. I mean, he *changed* the physical properties of a substance; once they created the model the material followed suit. That's pretty dramatic. You dig? Pretty far out. The consequence of that is that whatever we can imagine is what's real.

"Then, the idea of probability—we play randomly. We don't have signals. While there are various tip-offs that we're all aware of, we also know from our own experience that enough things happen that *aren't* the result of signals or planning or communication that we're aware of, but that are miraculous manifestations, that keep proving it out, that there's no way to deny it. We're just involved in something that has a very high incidence of synchronicity. You know, the Jungian idea of synchronicity? Well, shit, that's day-to-day *reality* for us."

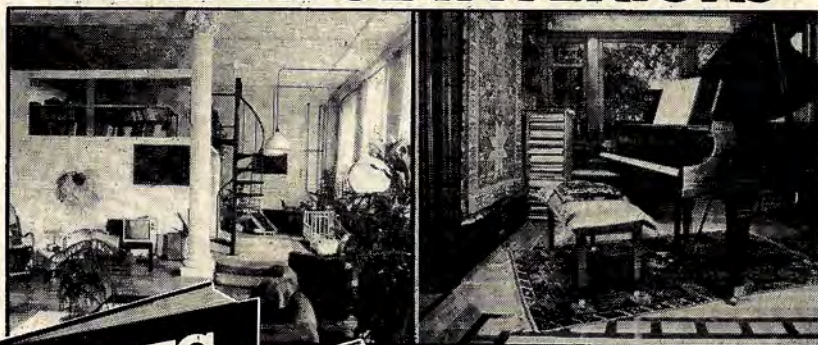
He does a couple of lines and lights another cigarette. "We're looking in a nonlinear way for clues to try and further this idea, from Mickey going out in the desert with a tape recorder to me poring through quantum mechanics and Alfred North Whitehead. We're all just poking around. So where are you going next?"

"I'm going to have dinner with Phil Lesh," I say.

"Oh," Garcia says. "That'll be a *good* experience."

[Continued on page 72]

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Phil Lesh

STEVE SMITH

but I do know that we've never been able to really *do* it two nights in a row, including Egypt. I don't know if we really did it in Egypt or not, musically, but to be there was so deep and so dense and so thick and so impressive that it was almost . . . I don't know, it changed my life, it was the high point of my life to date. But it still wasn't good enough.

"Now, getting the band into Egypt: Having ascertained that that was a place of power, we started trying to do it around January of 1976. We asked Bill Graham to help us, because we really didn't know how to go about it ourselves. We discussed it with Bill and it was agreed that he would make the first moves because he knew all these people in our government. He was saying, 'I know so-and-so and so-and-so in the White House, rucka rucka,' right? So we call up every day and ask what's happening with Egypt.

"Now, Bill is a busy man. You can imagine how busy he must be. I was him, I'd be busy too. *Buy* them condominiums! Plant shows at the Coliseum. Whatever.

"So we abandoned Bill Graham to the vagaries of his own conscience, and it turned out that we had a contact with Jonathan Wallace, who edits the *Middle Eastern Economic Digest* in London, and he knew a guy named Joe Malone, who was president of the American University in Beirut for 25 years and now has a consulting firm. Anything you want to do in the Middle East, he'll help you.

"So in March we go to Washington and meet with Joe Malone and his wife, Lois, and they have got the Egyptian thing covered—they know all those people by their first names, from Sadat on *down*. And we plot out a strategy revolving around the fact that we're not going to take any money out of the country. The money will be donated to the Department of Antiquities, which is our idea, and to Madame Sadat's favorite charity, which was Joe's idea. It was slick as hell, man.

"Then we had to go over to our side and deal with the American diplomats. Some of the people we allow to represent us abroad, man—I mean, they're ugly to me, and I'm an American, cross my heart. But Joe was such a wheeler, he talked to these guys about what we wanted to do and how mellow it was, spicing it up with anecdotes about people they all knew from the Middle East—it was priceless; I mean he charmed these guys right out of their *pants*. There they were—shoes, socks, garter belts, yes. Pants, no. You shoulda seen it. So after an hour with these USIA guys in Washington, it turned out that it was cool with our government if it was okay with Egypt's. You know, 'it's okay with me if it's okay with him.' Grateful Dead works a lot that way. So both governments sent their communiqués to Cairo, and we go over there in March with Lois Malone.

[Continued from page 69]

PHIL LESH lives in a small house in the Marin County hamlet of Fairfax, with a red Lotus and a large library of classical records (Bruckner is on the turntable when I arrive). Lesh, who studied composition with Luciano Berio before he started hanging out at the fringes of Ken Kesey's Stanford acid scene with Garcia, was a prolific songwriter for the Dead during the *Aoxomoxoa*–*American Beauty* period—arguably the height of their musical creativity. He has had several formal music projects on hold for the past few years.

"I have a project in the back of my head. A symphonic poem. You're familiar with the form? Invented by Liszt in the nineteenth century. Mine is based on Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan.' You know the poem? An opium dream, or so they say. It's for percussion, synthesizer and voices. That's one project, and there are others, but the rehearsal time for all the players is so expensive. . . . Right now I'm just playing the bass. I'm kind of bored with trying to write for the Grateful Dead, because I tend to write some pretty dense shit, and it's almost antithetical to rock 'n' roll skill. It's hard to get them to play it. That period around *Live/Dead*, when the music was a little more complex—that was the peak for me. Now we've gotten into a format.

"But I don't get bored with being *in* the Grateful Dead. To me, the Grateful Dead is life—the life of the spirit, and the life of the mind, as opposed to standing in line and marking time in the twentieth century. I went through the Acid Tests with the Grateful Dead, and all I can say is, you had to be there. That was the *baptismo del fuego*. When you're up there and your *face* is falling off and you've still

got to play, and you do this over and over again, spilling your guts in front of thousands of people . . . you develop a certain *flip* attitude, even toward performing. You begin to believe that you could go out there naked and nobody'd notice, as long as you played loud enough."

Over dinner, Lesh talks about the Dead's trip to Egypt in September of 1978 for a series of concerts at the pyramids. "It sort of became my project, because I was one of the first people in the band who was on the trip of playing at places of power. You know, power that's been preserved from the ancient world. The pyramids are like the obvious number-one choice, because no matter what anyone thinks they might be, there is definitely some kind of *mojo* about the pyramids. And when you get there you find out that there *is* power. The same kind of power you get from the audience, only there's more of it, because it's older and because of what was built into it.

"Ever since the Acid Tests, we've been into that power. That's what powered the Acid Tests, *behind* the acid, and it later became apparent that you didn't need drugs if you had the enthusiasm. It was a rawer order of energy, less information riding on that raw carrier wave of power, but the power was always there. It was a matter of awareness . . . feeling . . . intuition . . . anything but rational thinking. I wonder sometimes if the audience is as aware of that as we are. Obviously, if it's not there, you stroke it and get it up. In that sense it's a traditional show-biz trip: Stroke the audience and get 'em up. Build it up to the point where it's self-sustaining. This is true of all performers, yes? But for some reason especially true of the Grateful Dead. There's a special lock-in with the audience that can occur—it's totally random in a lot of ways,



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"First we had to convince these two guys at the U.S. Embassy, which we did in half an hour, thanks to Lois. Then we went over to see a most remarkable person, Dr. Saad el-Din, who was the Egyptian second deputy minister of culture, I believe. Poet, writer, friend of Lawrence Durrell's and former head of the secret police, all in one person. He was so perceptive that it was amazing. The terms in which he *grasped* it . . . The report had come in from their embassy in Washington. I saw it. It said: 'P.S. This group is very heavy in the United States. These people are not playing,' in effect. 'They mean it.' So we talk to Dr. Saad el-Din about how we won't make any money except from the record of the performances and the Egyptians have a piece of that too, so there's no feeling of here come the white boys gonna rip us off again.

"About fifteen minutes into it Dr. Saad el-Din turned to me and said, 'Have you ever played any place outside the U.S.?' I said, 'Yeah, we've played in Europe.' He said, 'Have you found that your music changes when you play in different places?' I said, 'Precisely, and that's why we want to play at the pyramids,' and he said, 'I thought so.' And that was it. That was the fulcrum, right there—those three sentences changed it in their eyes from somebody jacking off to somebody meaning business. Remarkable guy. After that, it went through various government officials, but from that moment on it was essentially a *fait accompli*."

And the Egyptian Booking of the Dead relieved some of the boredom . . . ?

"It was handy as hell. I'd have been real bored if I had to stay home during that period . . ."

"But you still have musical ideas and impulses that aren't satisfied by the Grateful Dead?"

"Yeah," he says quietly and a little wanly. "There's just things in heaven and earth, Horatio, that are undreamt of by the Grateful Dead. And things that are impossible for the Grateful Dead as a unit, or as a Gestalt . . ."

"Like what?"

"Anything with more than four chords! Ha ha ha ha ha! Just had to slip that in. Ha. No, there's no way to make it all come out even. When I started with the Dead in 1966, I said, 'Look, guys, I don't want to be doing this when I'm 30.' Well, I'm 38 now, and I'm gonna be doing it when I'm 40. It may turn out that I'll just go gentle into that good night, you know? I may just become a country squire and forget my musical ambition . . . because I've seen what musical ambition can lead to for people who are incapable of handling success, or failure, or frustration, or whatever. Loneliness. I would love to be able to contribute something to the culture. I don't know whether I can at this point. It remains to be seen. Let's not get too serious . . ."

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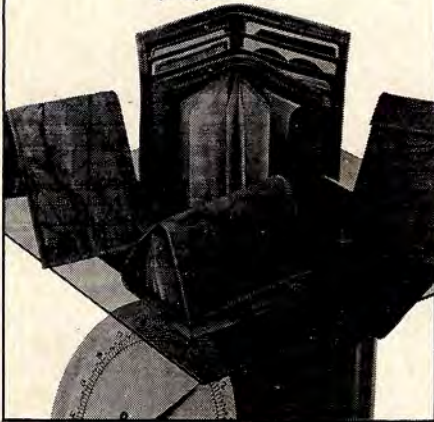
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HEAD'S ALL EMPTY AND I DON'T CARE



IT'S JUST a loop, you dig, and here we are back in New York for the second night of the Garden gig. By 5:30 the Long Island Railroad commuter terminal is dotted with these weirded-out high school and junior high school kids, kids who have mastered the one-big-bandana school of fashion that you saw in the East Village twelve years ago. Al, for example, a seventeen-year-old girl from the Island ("Don't put what town I'm from; it's a totally lame town to be from"), is not only wearing a shapeless white peasant blouse and paisley-patched jeans, but also has unearthed one of those cut-glass refraction balls and has it hanging from a ribbon around her neck.

"I would say there's about 80 percent Deadheads at my school," Al says.

"There's too many," says her friend Dave, in an exquisitely faded denim jacket. "It's just getting to be a fad to be a Deadhead now."

"That's 'cause of their new music," Al says. "They're getting disco'd out. I like *Aoxomoxoa*."

"Do you think you missed out on something by not being around in '67 and '68?" I ask.

"God, definitely," says a girl named Leslie. "Those concerts must have been something. Everybody was so into it. Nobody trusts anybody anymore. I mean, the attitude then... I think people were doing more drugs."

"This isn't a time when you can have an attitude, though," Al says. "It's just a thing in your head now."

"Do you think that attitude is going to come back?" I ask Leslie.

She answers quickly and indignantly: "Well, God, it *better*."

On the cover of the Grateful Dead's *Europe '72* is a painting of a fried-eyed boy with enormous buck teeth trying to eat an ice cream cone. He has missed his mouth and crash-landed the cone on his forehead with a vivid *splat*.

Rock 'n' roll is a splayed, factional music now, and the junior Grateful Dead faction is roughly coincident with a strange swelling in the high school malcontent army. The kids in question are stoned, and on many of the same agents used by the kids who saw the Dead for free in the park in the sixties, but with none of the guileless optimism attributed to those flower children. Instead there is a cynical contempt for the exhausted present and the querulous future and anyone over *twenty* (there are fifteen-year-old boys with hair down to their shoulders who deal "pyramid acid" and use the word "hippie" to denote a retrograde fig-

ure of high comedy and pathos).

It is no coincidence that the Dead repertoire is so threaded with spookadelic images of disaster and treachery, that so many of the songs portray the universe as a tumble-down casino in which all the games are fixed. Train wrecks, shotgun murders, collapsing roofs and hungry wolves: The common ground between the Dead and the young Heads is the belief that the way to meet an impossible circumstance is with voluntary craziness. To get as far out there as the ice cream kid. To go palling around with death's signatures and sandblast the line between what is hopeless and what is just funny.

On the cover of *Shakedown Street* is a drawing of a terminally decayed street scene—cops frisking people, hookers swinging their purses, bums and pimps patrolling the corners. Everyone in the picture is grinning like crazy.

The song that gets the big response on the second night at Madison Square is "U.S. Blues," from the Round Period. From the first stanza—

*Red and white,
Blue suede shoes,
I'm Uncle Sam,
How do you do?*

—the kids are standing and singing along, partly because, for their purposes, the Grateful Dead is America. Not the crypto-optimistic America of Jimmy Carter, but the real America, where the roof is caving in and all concerned are too fucked up to feel it.

"The whole mythos is right there in the name," Phil Lesh says. "The Grateful Dead? I'm glad to be dead? And I'm still walking around?" Just so, like the zoot-suited phantom on the back of *Shakedown Street*, swinging his chain and grinning his Cheshire grin without a body to call his own.

*I'm Uncle Sam
That's who I am
Been hidin' out
In a rock 'n' roll band*

It is the kids' best guess that they have been born into the sudden-death overtime of Western Civ—or at least, as Garcia sings in "Shakedown Street," "It's midnight, and the dark of the moon besides," with no guarantees about the dawn—it is time to sew on these skulls—

*You can call this song
The United States Blues.*

And it will look like Halloween all year round pretty soon, is what the kids suspect. What is getting mixed into the Kool-Aid these days is not LSD. The skeletons are asking for the next dance. And if the whole situation is irretrievably warped, as Tennessee Jed and the Deadheads can tell you in a second, it becomes incumbent upon the human to warp himself *into* shape by any means necessary, starting now, and not fade away. ■