



True Confessions in Hartford

By John Hall

Part 1 of 2 parts

Ten years ago, perhaps to the day, I ran into an old friend, home for a visit from Berkeley. We were both Aquarians, born in the same year, a day or two apart. We went to the same high school, and later the same junior college in the San Fernando Valley.

That summer day we stood in the driveway of his parents' house, and he talked about *San Francisco* (which had, in the summer of 1967, a magnetic fascination). As a joint passed between us the rest of the world fell away, as my friend (who I saw as a messenger from the Holy City) delivered the good news. He rambled through many magical topics, and came at last to a tale about a religious ceremony and the wizards who performed the music. He came to a point from which he could go no further: a point where the truth seemed excessive and incredible, and anything less profane. He paused, eyes drifting, as he slowly shook his head and softly spoke the name . . .

A year later my new home was in San Francisco, in the Fillmore district at the low end of the Haight, in a crowded apartment on Oak Street (a California port of entry for Toad Hall refugees from Takoma). Sandy Hoffman, the

proprietress, had been with Leary at the Hudson River mansion. I remember standing by the refrigerator door the night I arrived as she handed out the last of that Millbrook acid . . .

The Carousel Ballroom, dark and crowded, vast overhead crackling with acid. The long stage like the floor of a planetarium, glowing with a cosmology of red amp lights. Double trap set lurking in the shadows, stands and cymbals gleaming with lovely geometry: seven foot gong and scaffold, mike stand angles. A golden matrix where science embraces spirit. Everything fine, sharp and electric, soon beginning to speak. Harmonics flash in the air and the drums snap and hiss.

*Underfoot the ground is thatched
With climbing arms of ivy wrapped
Around the manzanita, dark and
shiny in the breeze*

The floor begins to roll slowly with the bass, as Garcia goes into a blues about death.

He played with tears streaming down his face. I believe someone close had just died, and he felt that the best possible tribute and solace would be to do the gig, offering his broken heart to

all of us. Lesh and Weir exchanged proud smiles on the stage, and before the song (Rev. Gary Davis' "Death don't have no mercy") had ended, I was crying too.

The stage begins to pop again, a little faster now, rolling into "Dark Star." Tension swells in small pockets and then dissolves. Sacred images appear on the stage: Garcia the father, Lesh the son, Weir the holy ghost: God, Delmarva and Calumet pursued by the drum demons. Mickey Hart, the mexican devil, dances around the percussion to stroke his gong, then dashes behind his traps like a mad Indian sorcerer at his cauldron. Parts of a great creature form in the air and cohere behind Garcia's dripping, mescaline guitar. As through a kaliedescope, the creature becomes a comet and burns through the reaches of empty space, into the Time Past Believing . . .

And left a smoking crater of my mind. In the end, which I now know was always the beginning, I waited for the ballroom and those assembled to dissolve in light and ascend to heaven, though I knew this had already happened. Neither did the band put down

their axes and retire from music, destinies fulfilled. No eyewitness ran to the telephone to report musical history to the newspapers and television stations.

Disturbing . . .

Events were apparently to continue as scheduled. What kind of people were these blase California angels? Was I in a place where any freak could walk in from the street and dance while a great Bodhivista and his Avatars summoned the Almighty? All around me were those who went through the same experience, and yet emerged unchanged. A neurotic skepticism stalks the land. There are none so blind as those who will not see. Jon Landau's complaints about "the absence of a lead singer" and "no drive" are not germane. This is hardly a band to be judged as part of any rock and roll tradition. The **Grateful Dead** play soul music in the primeval sense, religious music, the music of the spheres. "This is a magic band, playing in a space most other bands don't even know exists."

Open your eyes ye sightless! Open your hearts and souls! I begrudge you no other musical form, but I bid you welcome the transcendant. As we stand on the edge of eternal darkness, let our chant fill the void that others may hear that *the Ship of the Sun is drawn by the Grateful Dead!*

Thus it was ten years ago, and thus it stands now. Through many changes and many strange places, the Grateful Dead are still the Grateful Dead. Though most of the energy that crackled through the Haight ten years ago has returned to the void, the Dead still have it, mellowed and cured by age. Ten years from my initial encounter with the Dead, I have had the opportunity to speak with Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir, and their long time associate, Danny Rifkin. The interview took place before a show in Hartford, May 28, 1977.

The participants are identified as follows:

JH — myself
JG — Jerry Garcia
DR — Danny Rifkin
BW — Bob Weir.

Thus we proceed to where those four heads were at that afternoon in Hartford.

JH: What happened with the Central Park gig? Did you blow it off?

JG: It didn't come together. The city wouldn't go for it.

DR: Then we were trying to get somewhere else, and that didn't happen . . .

JG: It turned into a municipal ping pong ball.

JH: It used to be real easy to get to your gigs. When I first heard you guys, it was '68, and I was living in Sausalito. It was

easy for the three or four months I was there to get to you. It was almost hard to avoid. But lately it's been difficult. The connections have been there, but there've also been these obstacles.

JG: Strange obstacles, gotcha, gotcha.

JH: I've been hearing about your movie for two years. Now it's gonna hit the fan?

JG: It's done, and we're putting it out in its own little world and see whether anybody can dig it. It works pretty good in my opinion, although I would say that even if it was horrible, probably.

JH: Is Steal Your Face the soundtrack from the film?

JG: No, not really. It's just music from the same five shows. Five shows is a lot. In the movie the criterion for the performances wasn't always strictly a matter of musical performance, but there might be a couple of tunes that are the same. Maybe two, maybe three. But in the movie, it has as much to do with the way it looks as the way it sounds, so we picked the performances that fundamentally had the best footage working with 'em. It's a different criterion for judging. The effect is pretty amazing. There would be a performance of a tune we were working on, taking it for the movie, and I'd go listen to the 16 track tape. I'd ask Phil about it, or Weir, or anybody, and they would say "what a horrible performance that was, what are you going to use that for?" you know. But then we'd have a screening, and the whole effect was completely different.

JH: What kind of things were you looking for?

JG: Well, graceful camera moves, and things that reflected the energy in the performance. And the tune, the audience, a combination of ingredients, not any one thing. And the general grace of things, whether they looked really nice or not. It wasn't so much a matter of the way people looked, but the way the whole of it looked. Each tune was really shot by five or six guys, sometimes as many as nine. So we'd take a tune and synch up all the cameras that were shooting then and just watch it. On six screens, you know

JH: You must have been putting a lot into this thing.

JG: I spent two and a half years working on this thing. There would be parts that were just fantastic and it wasn't even a matter of musical performance. That would have something to do with it. Some of 'em would have great energy but no articulation. If you were judging them strictly musically, you could find reasons not to like the stuff, but the combination as a whole is a whole other trip.

JH: Who directed the shooting crews?

JG: There was nobody really directing; they were directing themselves. Actually, the only direction they got was

that a guy called Leon Gast and Rakow, during the tune, would tell all the cameramen that were shooting handheld to get off the stage so the boom could get some shots that weren't full of cameramen. Other than that, the cinematographers used their own sensitivity. They started to get a feel for it. It's not a predictable show. We don't

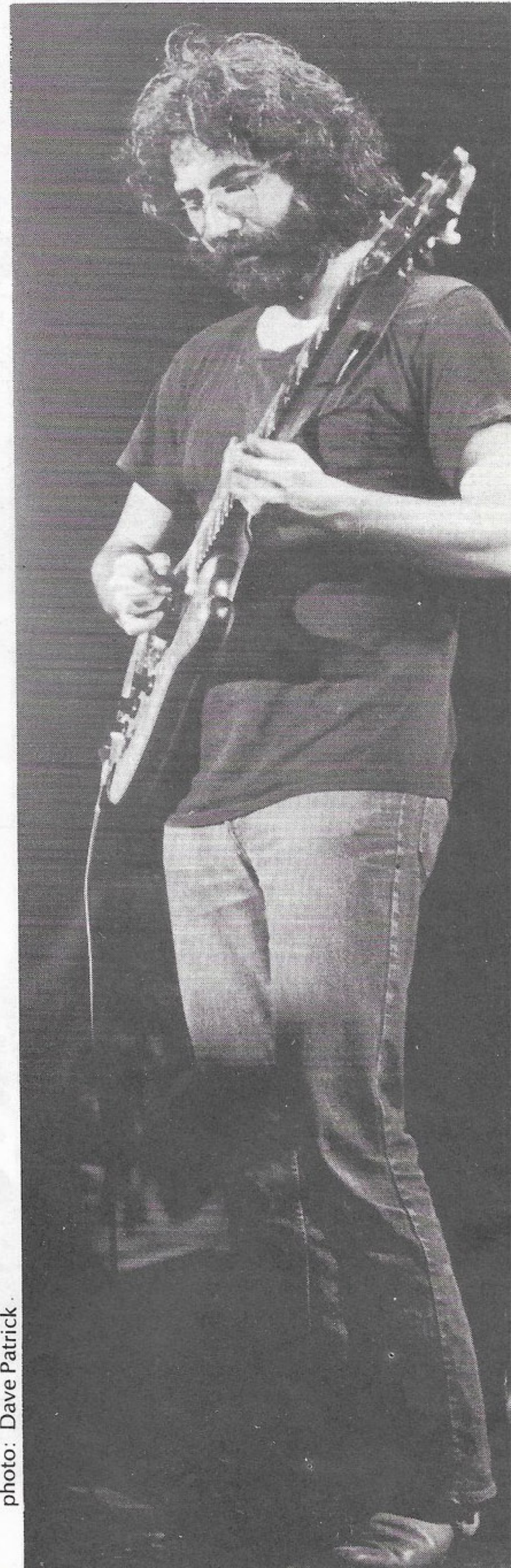
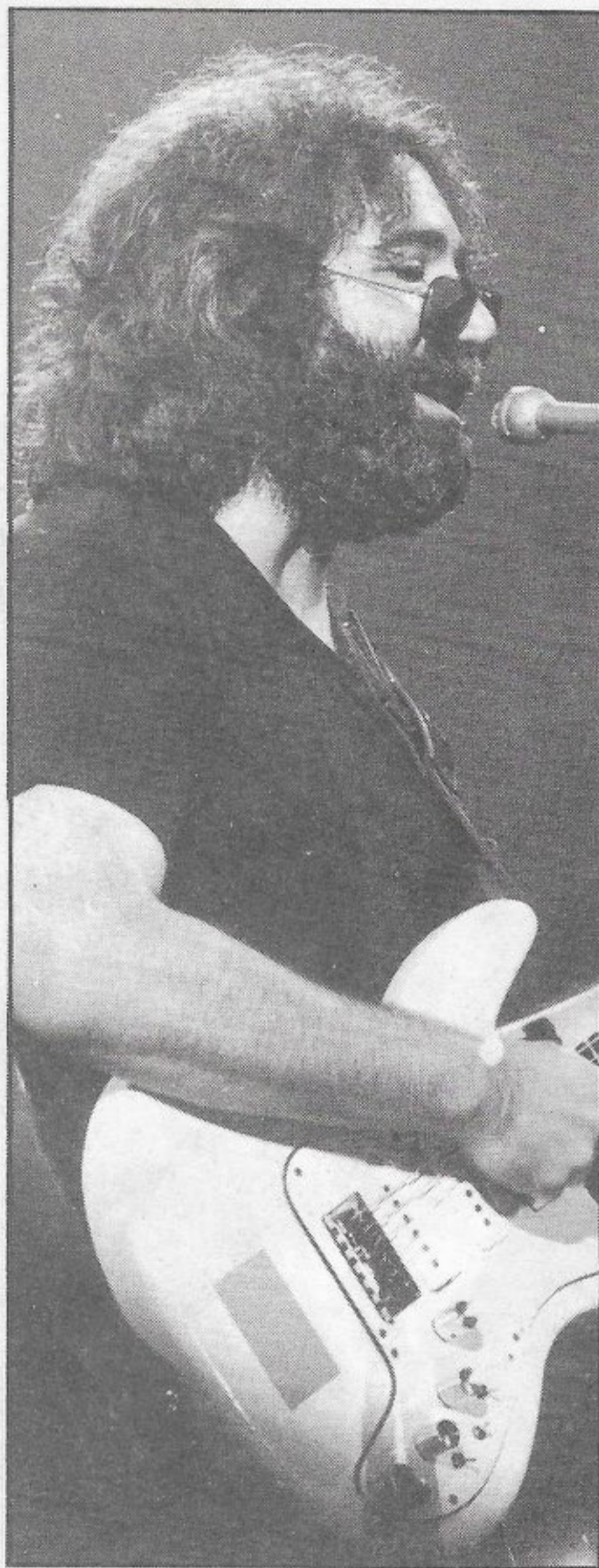


photo: Dave Patrick

photo: Steven Bedney



even know what we're going to do, much less how we're going to do it once we've decided. So they started to feel that that was the case around the second or third night, and things started really clicking. They started to pick up on the immediacy of it. Also, by that time we'd adjusted to turning around and looking into a lens. The guys would film it however they felt it, and a lot of the time it would be pretty comical. Looking at the rushes, something would happen where it was clear the guy realized that he fucked up: "Shit, I'm in the wrong place!" You see him try really quickly to recompose, but then something else had already happened, and so there'd be this moment of total confusion. But most of the time, once they got into it, it's really far out. I was blown out because I never really thought about the visual side of things.

JH: That seems strange to me. The shows at the Fillmore East used to be so perfectly visual.

JG: I never really thought about it. I've never seen it from that point of view. When you're on stage, of course, you see something else.

JH: I'm glad to see you guys back. When I first saw you, Phil was in the middle of the stage. That was '68.

JG: There's always been a lotta dickering for that middle position. I've opted out of it years ago. But Weir and Phil have classically always gone around about that middle position because there's logic that says that, yeah, the bass player should be right with the drummers. However, from Weir's point of view, when he's over in that isolated space on the end, he feels like he can't hear anything over the bass.

JH: Right, he can't hear you.

JG: Yeah, so that our communication goes to pieces. It works like that.

JH: Don't you have the monitoring worked out now so that Weir can hear exactly what you're doing?

JG: There isn't any way of making that work that makes sense for everybody. At this point that's really our only problem in terms of where everybody's at, what everybody wants to do, and where everybody's playing ability is at. All that stuff is really in a good space. The whole thing now is down to incredible fine tuning trips, physical fine tuning, inventing a setup that functions properly. We still haven't done it, but we're working on it.

JH: There'll be something else, won't there?

JG: Of course there will, but, you know that's the next one. It used to be that there would be these clouds of subjective mysteriousness.

JH: Well, you still must have that, because the sound guys are running your volume.

JG: No, not at all. We're not concerned with that. What we're concerned with now is what we're doing, right on stage. The trip is that, if we can feel good in that space, it's gonna project. It doesn't really matter. It could be a ridiculously poor mix in the house, but Healy has been mixing us for so many years that he pretty much knows what we're trying to do, even if we're not doing it. He'll try to bring the sense of it out, even if we're fucked up. If we can improve psychologically what we're hearing, so that we're liking what's going on, then we'll have something really happening. The times when we have that kind of clarity on the stage, at this point, are almost accidental.

JH: Then you're still at the mercy of the man outside, right?

JG: Yeah, but that's okay, cause he's not affecting what we're hearing. We're responsible for what we're hearing on the stage.

JH: It looks like you're going to be playing in smaller places. The Baltimore gig was the first one I've been to that wasn't sold out.

JG: That's probably because it was booked real late.

JH: Not only that, but I think that the promoter had some presumptions about the automatic sell out in terms of advertising money spent, and so on.

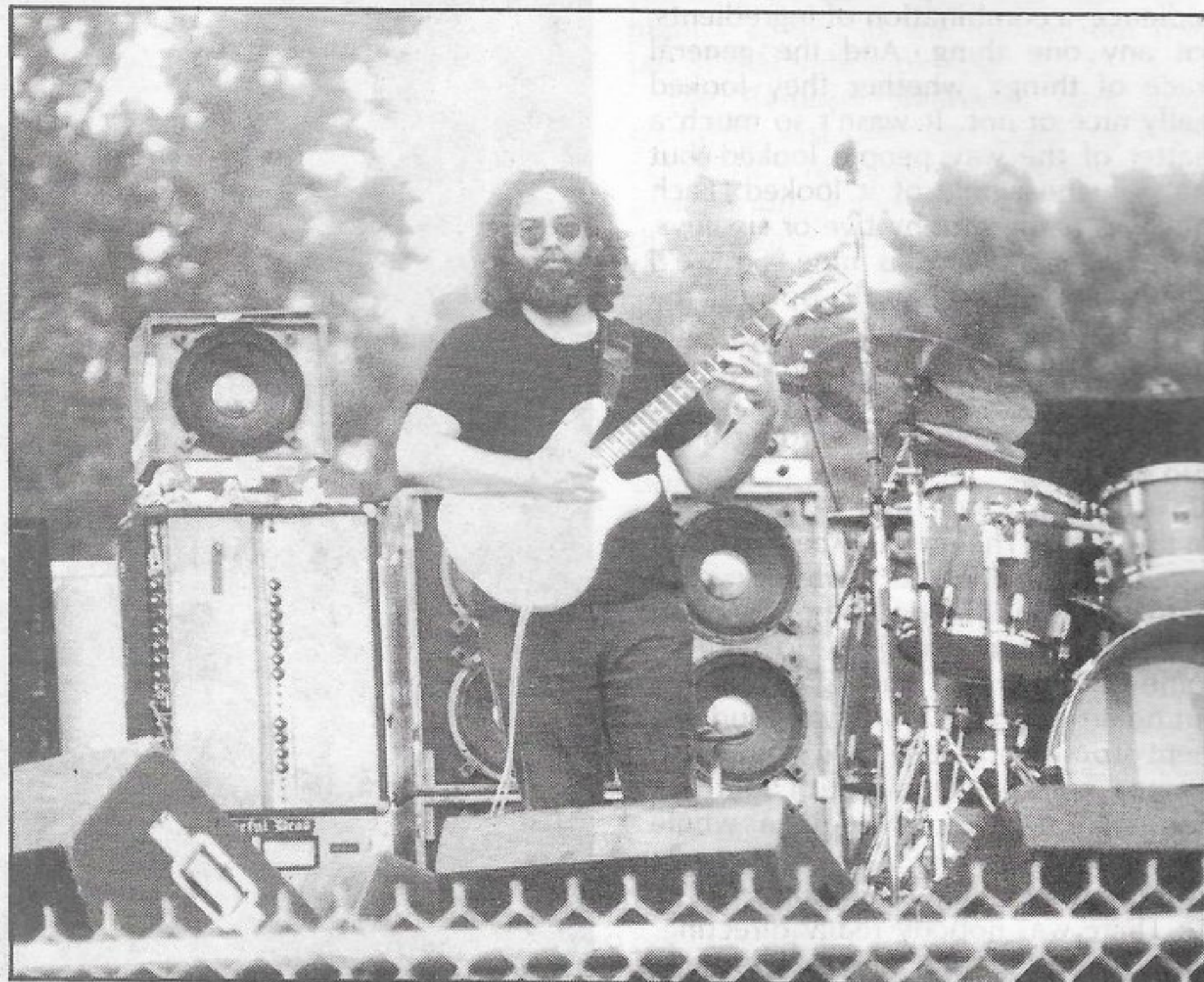
JG: Yeah, they've been coasting on that, a few of 'em have, you know.

DR: We've played some big places, too, that haven't sold out.

JH: How do you relate to lyrics?

JG: Gee, I don't know. I can hear a song and have a whole fantasy about what the song is about, and never really know at all. Sometimes I notice that last, sometimes it's the only thing that comes out. Lyrics are a funny thing. I'm not a writer, so it's weird for me. It's hard for me to relate to 'em on certain

photo: Chuck Pulin



other levels. I'll get sucked in by the music or the setting, the tone of the voice, the chops, and all that stuff.

JH: Were you guys ever in Hawaii?

JG: We played like three gigs there with Lenny Hart (*Mickey's father, and ex-manager of the Dead* — ed.). Healy was over there, Nicky Hopkins, and Steve Miller. We had a rented house on the beach, and Steve Miller had a place two houses up.

DR: Beautiful.

JG: It was! It was real loose, it was a good party. It was only for about a week, and we only played a couple of gigs, and also Lenny fell in with that oleomargarine millionaire who wanted to give all his money away . . . remember that kid? It was a newspaper flash back there in '69 or whenever.

DR: Oooooohhh! The million dollar phoney.

JG: That's the one. That guy. That fraud. Lenny was trying . . .

DR: The fraud . . .

JG: He was trying to get him . . .

DR: To give it to us.

JG: Yeah, or anybody, or anything. That guy was really a nerd.

JH: What about Taos? Didn't you have a Taos address for a while there?

JG: No, we never lived in New Mexico, though we once had an expedition out there. . .

DR: A scouting party.

JH: What were you scouting for?

JG: I think we've been too crazy to do that, though now more than ever it might be possible to cop some ideal like that. But I think the Soloman Islands would be greater, someplace really outside. I'm into making the big getaway. We might be able to do it now.

JH: You'd have to have a whole island, though. You couldn't live together anymore, could you?

JG: Oh yeah, I think we could . . .

DR: We've been living together for the last five weeks.

JG: And it's really not too bad. Not too many bruises.

JH: About Terrapin Station . . . what does "Estimated Prophet" mean?

JG: That's Weir's title. It's his tune [*groans all around*]. It's one of his pun titles. Clive Davis liked that.

DR: and Phil has a new song on there.

JG: A new song called "Passenger," like a heavy metal song. He doesn't sing on it.

DR: And Donna has a new song.

JG: She wrote the words to it, and the melody, and everything. Beautiful song. It's an interesting album. It's our most rounded, well formed, and also best performed album, I think. It's far out, working with a producer has really been a boon.

JH: What happened to "The Eleven?" Have you blown that off?

JG: We haven't restructured it. Now we're in a different incarnation. A lot of

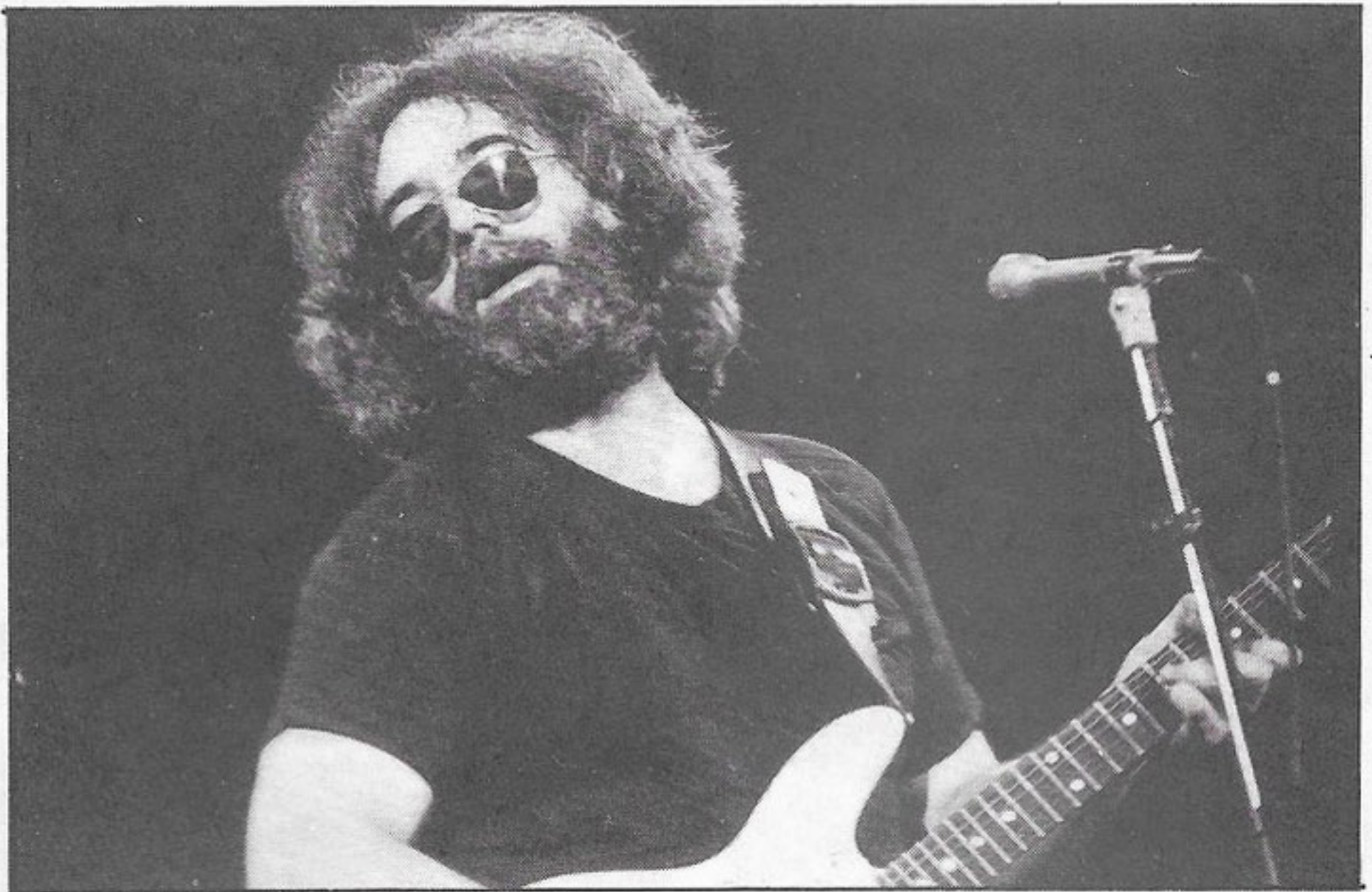


photo: Steven Bedney

those old tunes we haven't had a chance to look at and make them more for us now. We can't just do 'em. Most of them are too difficult to just pull out. And also, a lot of the tunes Phil used to sing on. He doesn't sing anymore, so we have to restructure the vocal part. As soon as we start doing that, me and Weir and Donna have new flashes on 'em, harmonically and so forth. So things are changing. Eventually we'll bring all of our old material through that keyhole so we have access to all of it. During the tour we flash on things. Some things we're not doin' because we've just done 'em. We haven't been doing "Casey Jones" or "Truckin'," our big hits (*chuckles around*).

JH: The new record was produced by Keith Olsen?

JG: Yeah. I think he has really an excellent ear, and he's worked really well with us. It's an indication that he's a pretty good man. It's hard to work with us. It is not fuckin' easy. And he's a good enough musician and astute enough: pays enough attention and really did his homework. It really worked out well. We're all really happy with it, especailly on the level of the sound of everything. The drum sound is the best we've ever had. The performances are really amazing, much better than we're able to flog out of ourselves when we're in there producing ourselves.

Two of the parts of the whole *Terrapin* suite, that we haven't been performing on the tour, are on the record. They're Mickey's. They're combination compositions. Mickey had these ideas that weren't exactly fragmentary, but skeletal. We started working on them and fleshing them out, and they gradually turned into movements of the whole *Terrapin* thing. So his influence is really in there. On some tunes Bill played the basic drums. Some tunes they worked it out where both of 'em played. It's different.

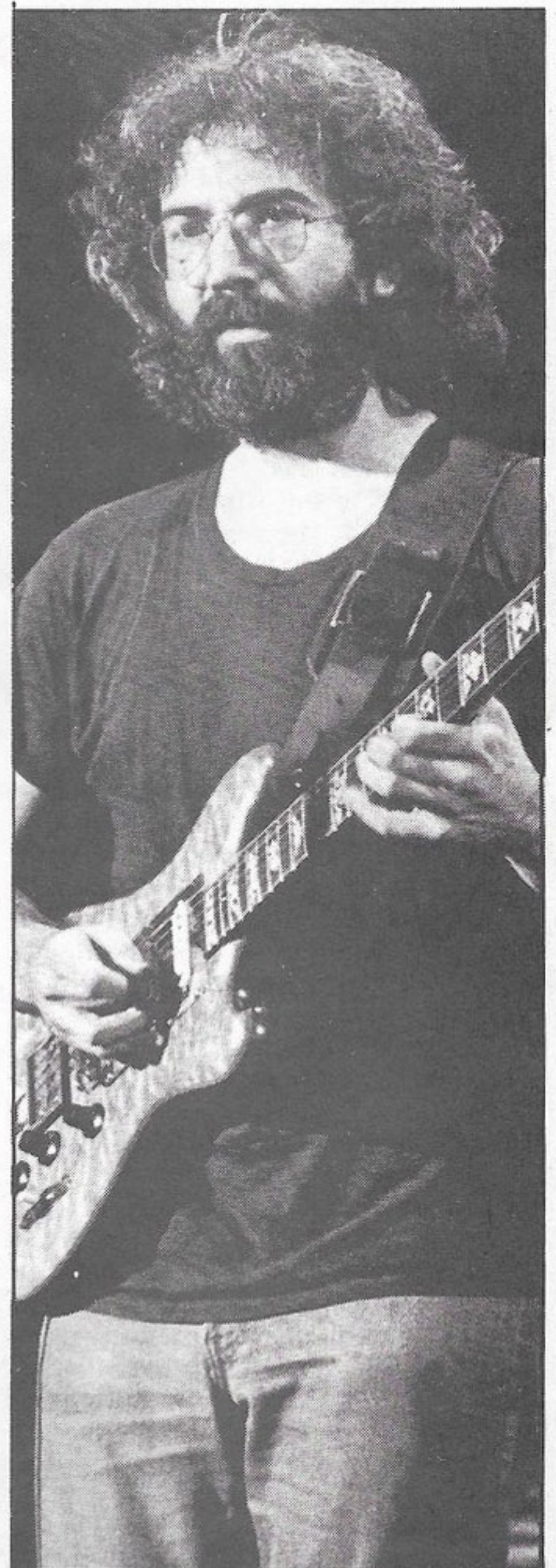


photo: Dave Patrick

There's a lot of changes through the record on that level, but the point is that everything you hear sounds good.

JH: I like the studio records. And this gets me to one of the other things I meant to ask you about; bootlegs. How do you feel about them?

JG: Shit. I don't care. They don't bother me. It's in the realm of the random, you know. Even if I cared I couldn't do anything about it, so what's the point? It's the kinda thing where, if I could have any control, I would want it. It would be neat if they would submit them to us for approval. "Is this good enough to put out?" based on the sound quality. Since they cost a lot, they're not that much cheaper than normal records. Somebody apparently is making some kind of money off 'em somewhere.

JH: I'm talking mostly about tapes.

JG: Oh, tapes I don't care about. The tapes are totally cool. I spent a lotta time in bluegrass music doing the same kinda stuff: swapping tapes and doing all that shit, you know.

JH: There's a tape from the Great American Music Hall, 1975. Was that the first gig after your sabbatical?

JG: We weren't even gigging, we just did that as a special one-shot. We didn't do a tour to follow it or anything. We'd just been working in the studio, and we weren't performing at all, period.

DR: That was just a party. I thought it was a hot night.

JG: Yeah, it was, a lot of energy. We were having fun.

JH: It's hard to tell what you like and what you don't. The day after a show at the Fillmore in New York, someone told me you guys were all disappointed, and kinda bummed at something you'd done. I'd seen it, and thought it was outstanding.

JG: That happens all the time. A lot of times we think it's really horrible, and then we listen to the tapes and it sounds great. You can't really judge. For us it's subjective. A good night is effectively invisible. A good night is like no night at all. A good night is when you never think there's anything funny, everything happens smoothly, and you hear everything perfectly and effortlessly. On a good night everything is easy, from our point of view. Because that's when we're most open to everything else. You're not hung up on your own axe and the sound of it. The vocal monitors might be weird or anything. All those things are little stumbling blocks that start to call your attention. *Ideally*, that space is best when you aren't thinking at all. I don't know whether that's a good show. People might be bored stiff when we feel great. It might be that the continuous struggle and adjustment provides a lot of interest. I don't know.

JH: The reason I ask is that the night I'm talking about was Janis' debut with her

new band. The Allman Brothers were also on the bill.

JG: Yeah, I kinda remember that. It was a little awkward. We couldn't do our regular stuff.

JH: It didn't affect me much, but I knew I was going to see you again. But I was trying to turn some people on to you that night. . .

JG: Right, that's tough. That happens a lot, you know. It happens to us. It's that thing: "God, we gotta make a good impression." This is our first big show in New York or whatever, and you wanna be really good and it turns out horrible. That's another one of those special fuckups.

DR: I think it's just random.

JG: As far as I can tell it's pretty fuckin' random. There's so many elements involved.

DR: Also, I think what appears to be happening on stage is not necessarily what is happening. When you see a scowl it *could* be a warm beer.

JG: Right, Right! There was one gig on this tour where, when we started playing, somebody threw up a whole bunch of those tiny marshmallows. Everything else was fine, but I really hated those marshmallows.

DR: They were always there.

JG: Yeah, it was just a bad flash (*general*

laughter). This is our year of deliverance. We're delivering the movie, and we're delivering the new record. And there're all these other changes. We're into a new record company and its big changes and feeling good. If all our ships come in we'll go on the trip of incorporating all our old routines in the show, like the fireworks and all that shit. Cause we like all that stuff too. Once a guy did a fireworks thing that really knocked me out. Boots, the guy that used to travel with us, was our pyrotechnician, and used to do all the fireworks. It was on a New Year's Eve, I guess 'it must have been '72 or '73. It was in San Francisco and he had these things set up that had the numbers 72 or 73 or whatever, and right at the stroke of midnight he touched them off. They were like some kind of flash powder or flash paper, and they had an amazing effect. It left a reverse image on my retina, like a flashbulb of 72 or 73. Man, it was really weird. I'd close my eyes, and *there it would be*. It was there for an hour. Whatever it was, it was on there, and I'm saying "well, that's interesting." It could have been anything, it could have been the ten commandments. It was pretty heavy.

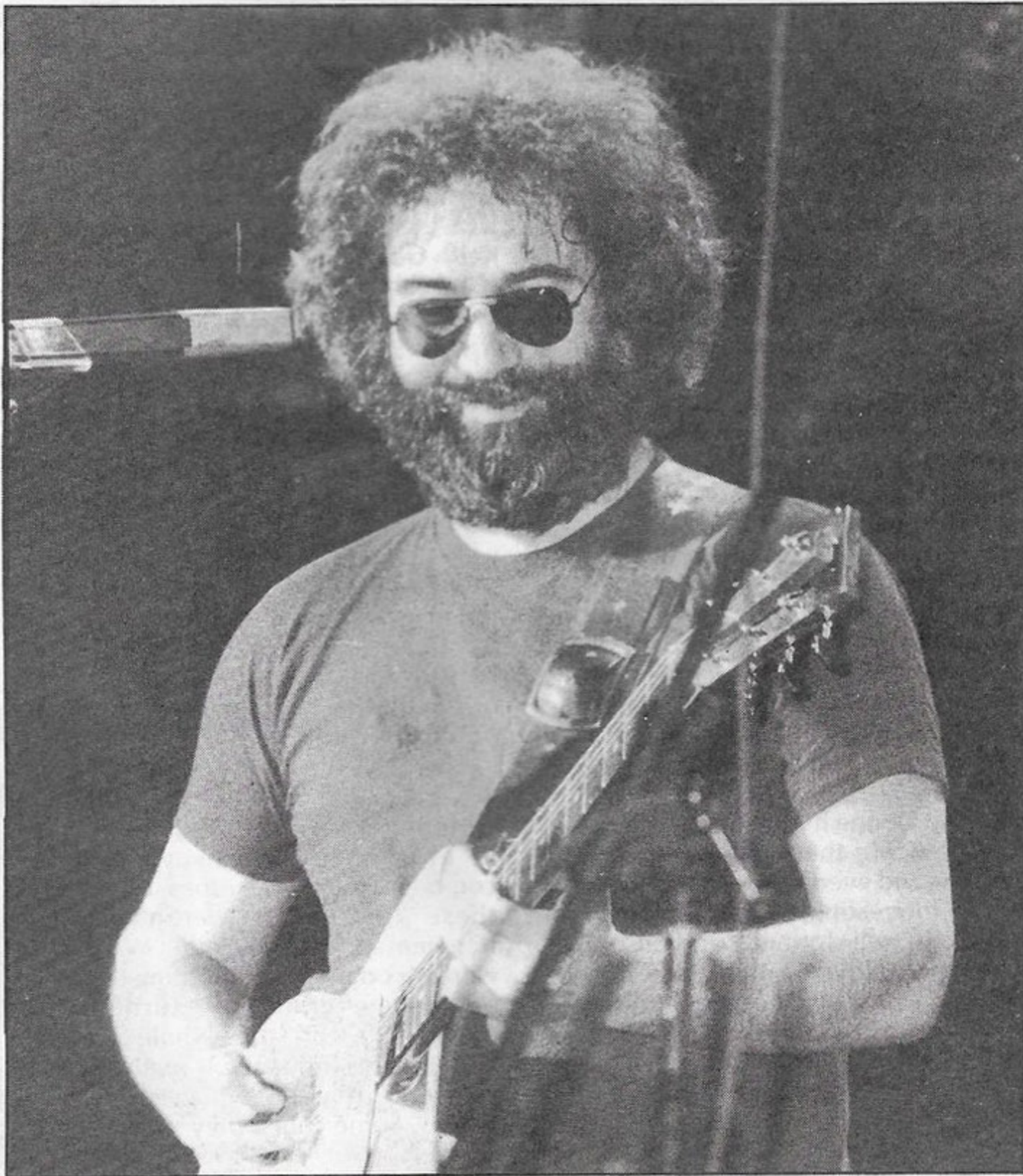


photo: Jim Shive

Garcia Band at The Benefit to Save the Whales

photo: Bobby Minkin



Both **Country Joe McDonald** and the **Jerry Garcia Band** have recently done "Save The Whales" benefits. **Crosby and Nash** have been committed to fighting for the whales for quite a while now, and promotional t-shirts for the **New Commander Cody Band** feature a whale front and back. We also find ourselves in sentiment with this movement. Whale oil is a useless luxury, bought at the price of the very possible extinction of a genus of creatures far more than animals. I suspect that the average whale is about as intelligent as the average Relix staff member. Help stop the murder however you can.

Country Joe and the Fish, once more (once more, once more . . .) reunited, have a new album out on Fantasy, called **Come To The Reunion**. None of us have heard it yet, so we can't give you a report. Promising sign, though.

There is now a rolling paper on the market that comes complete with built in wires. Voila! No messy leftover roaches. The wires form a roach holder when you get down to the end of whatever, and you can smoke that whatever down till it burns your tonsils.

I'd like to wrap this all up by tellin' ya all a funny story. Country singer **George Jones** (writer of "The Race Is On" and a bunch of others) must get jittery around big city crowds. He was due to play here at the Bottom Line, for two nights in September. The man never showed up. His band did, though. They faked their way through the first night's early show without him, kinda hoping he was caught in traffic or some such. The show ended, and no George. The bass player, Ernie Rowell, had sung all his songs for him at that show, but that couldn't have worked through three more shows. The late show that night was cancelled, as were both shows the following night. The total loss to the Bottom Line was rumored to be in the neighborhood of \$15,000. As I write this, the man still hasn't shown up. Even his agent denies knowledge of his whereabouts. The boy's just high strung, as we figure it. Couldn't face the Apple. Who can?

GRATEFUL DEAD
 November 4 - Colgate University
 5 - Rochester, N.Y.
 6 - Binghamton, N.Y.
 December
 Tent. Dec. 29, 30, 31 - Winterland

January
 California Tour

GRATEFUL DEAD MOVIE

November
 1-15 Compass Theatre, New Bedford, Mass.
 2-8 College Theatre, Storrs, Conn.
 2-17 Cinemart, Hamden, Conn.
 2-22 Cinema World 3, Eugene, Ore.
 2-22 Fifth Ave. Theatre, Seattle, Wash.
 4-24 Plaza Theater, San Leandro, Ca.
 9-29 Century 21 Theatre, Sacramento, CA.
 16-29 Century 25 Theatre, San Jose, Ca.
 16 - Dec. 6 Sunset Theatre, Berkeley, Ca.
 16-Dec. 6 Catalina Theater, Tucson, Az.

NEW RIDERS

November
 11 - Valley Forge, PA
 12 - Pace Coll, Pleasantville, N.Y.
 14 - Cal State, Calif, PA
 15 - Lissner Aud, Wash, DC
 18 - Wesleyan Coll, CT
 19 - Palladium, N.Y.C.
 21 - Flynn, Burlington, VT
 23 - Paramount, Wilksbarre, PA
 25 - Calderon Theater, L.I., NY
 29 & 30 - Paradise, Boston.

December
 2 - Leona Theater, Pitts, PA
 3 - Agoria, Columbus, OH
 4 - Keil Aud, St. Louis
 6 - Orpheum, Minn
 7 - (tent) Ivanhoe, Chicago
 8 - Beginnings, Shaunberg, Ill
 9 - Royal Oak, Detroit
 10 - Mich. Theater, Ann Arbor.

BOB WEIR BAND

Tour postponed until March, when the new Bob Weir album will be released.

HOT TUNA

November
 9 - Albany, N.Y.
 10 - Poughkepsie
 11 - Comack, N.Y.
 13 - Oswego, N.Y.
 15 - Wash. D.C.
 17 - Trenton, N.J.
 19 - Phila, PA
 22 - Keane Coll, N.J.
 23 - Hofstra Coll
 25, 26 - Thanksgiving in N.Y.

COMMANDER CODY BAND AND DAVID BROMBERG

November
 1 - Van Couver, B.C.
 3 - Billingham, WA
 4 - Seattle, WA
 5 - Portland, OR
 6 - Eugene OR
 11 - San Bernadino, CA
 12 - Berekeley, CA
 13 - Sacramento, CA

17 - Bakersfield, CA
 19&20 - Pheonix, AZ
 21 - Tucson, AZ
 22 - Flagstaff, AZ
 25 - San Diego, CA
 26 - San Amonica, CA

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

November
 12 - Pasadena, TX
 22 - College, TX
 December
 2 - Denver, CO.

STEVE MILLER BAND

November
 4 - Spokane, Wash.
 6 - San Diego, Ca.
 7 - Las Vegas, Nev.
 9 - Los Angeles, Ca.
 11 - Tempe, Ariz.
 12 - Tucson, Ariz.
 17 - Vancouver, B.C.
 18, 19 - Seattle, Wash.

JERRY GARCIA BAND

November
 20 - SUNY at Binghamton
 21 - Hofstra, L.I., N.Y.
 23 - Palace Theater, Waterbury, CT.
 25 - Tower Theater, PA
 26 - Capital Theater, NJ
 27 - Palladium, N.Y.C.
 29 - New Paltz

December
 2 - Orpheum Theater, Boston
 3 - Leroy Theater, Providence
 4 - Rutgers Univ. NJ
 6 - C.W. Post
 8 - Palace Theater, Albany, N.Y.
 9 - Stonybrook, L.I.
 10 - Warner Theater, Wash. D.C.
 11 - Penn State (Univ. Park)

SIERRA

(Formerly The Burritos)
 East Coast Tour at end of November

MY FATHER'S PLACE

Roslyn, L.I.
 November
 4, 5 - John Mayall
 6 - Captain Beefheart
 9 - Cate Brothers/Terence Boylan
 10 - Burning Spear
 11 - 13 Poisette Dart Band
 17 - Tower Of Power
 18 - 20 - Andy Pratt/Rowan Brothers
 25, 26 - Stuff

MIDNIGHT MOVIES

Playhouse Cinema
 Westport, Conn
 Tel - 203-227-3998
 November
 11-12 to be announced
 18-19 Jim Hendrix in "Jimi Plays Berkeley" plus The Rolling Stones in "Sympathy For The Devil"
 26-27 Pink Flamingos, plus The Diane Linkletter Story