

# zigzag 35

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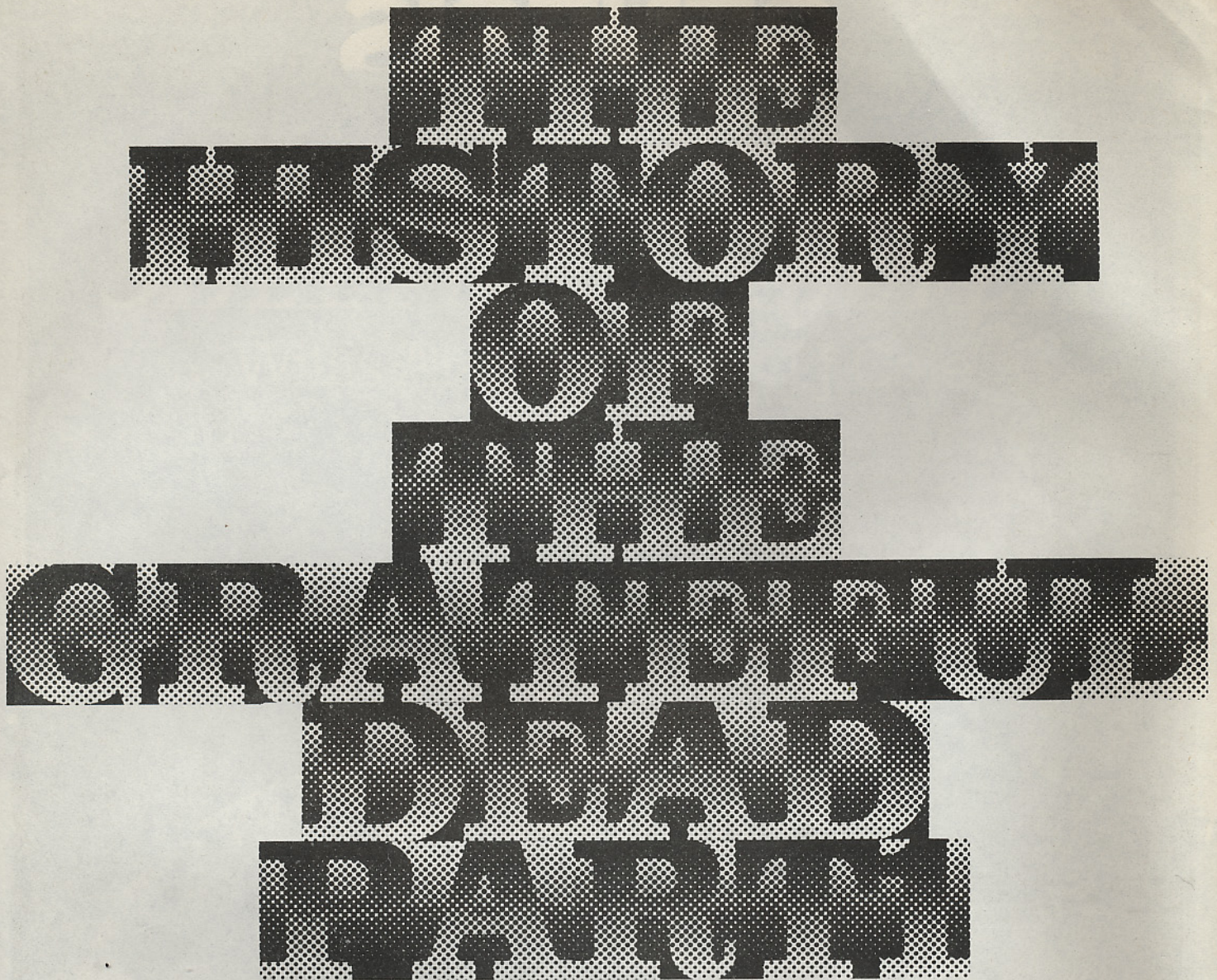
# THE GRATEFUL DEAD



**DON NIX  
COMMANDER CODY  
GRAM PARSONS**

UN-  
RELEASED  
GENESIS  
TRACK FREE  
INSIDE





—'weird, black satanic weird, white archangel weird. As weird as anything you can imagine, like some horror comic monster who, besides being green and slimy, happens also to have seven different heads, 190 IQ, countless decibels of liquid fire noise communication, and is coming right down to where you are to gobble you up. But if you can dig the monster, bammo, he's a giant puppy to play with.'—Michael Lydon (*Rolling Stone*)

I have in my possession a bootleg two-album set recorded on one of 'The Last Days At The Fillmore West', and unlike the official commemorative box set, the music is consistently good, being provided by just one band . . . a quality rock band that has a reputation for being one of the most accomplished in the world. The sound quality is very good, the songs have been thoughtfully chosen, and of the band themselves, the

announcer at the beginning of the record introduces them thus:

'After all that's been said and done over the years, and all the shit that's gone down, I'm very grateful to them for the joy they've brought to all of us, and I consider them friends—the Grateful Dead.'

And just so that you know where I stand, that is exactly how I feel about them too.

As you can imagine, a history of the Grateful Dead is a fairly complex and lengthy undertaking, so the whole story has been split into three parts, the first of which takes us up to the release of their fourth album, 'Live/Dead', a few months before they first set foot in England. In this section, emphasis has been placed on the Dead's 'pre-history', a period that has been largely ignored before but which I feel essential to know about in order to grasp a full understanding of

their music, and I hope that in true ZigZag tradition, no important detail has been spared, and no source of information left untapped. Compiling this first part has been especially difficult and consequently more rewarding, but in keeping it to a reasonable length I have deliberately concentrated on what I feel are the least known aspects of the Dead's history, and these I think need clarifying. Basically I have given what I'm confident is an accurate account of the facts behind the evolution of the Grateful Dead that are only part of a large scale social and political movement that took place throughout the sixties in San Francisco. It starts with the Beat Poets like Kerouac and Cassady and runs through to the very latest disciples of Ken Kesey & His Merry Pranksters, and it encompasses many people and numerous incidents too complex and inter-woven to summarise. In this respect, you may feel that addi-





*The good old Grateful Dead*

ional reading is necessary for a fuller picture of the sort of changes that were going on at this time. I can recommend 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test' by Tom Wolfe (although Jerry Garcia says that this book is inaccurate and misleading . . . still makes good reading though), 'The Dead Book: A Social History of The Grateful Dead' by Hank Harrison, which if you intend reading this article you really must get to see, and issues 40, 100, and 101 of Rolling Stone. 'The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test' is especially useful as I have tended to gloss over in scant detail the Dead's association with Kesey and the Pranksters, the Acid Tests, and the Trips Festival. Lastly, there are sources of information which I have plundered that are blatantly contradictory regarding dates, events, etc, but after a giant piece of Sherlock Holmes-type detective work I think I've just about got it right. So if you're a 'Dead-head'

read on, and if you're not, read on anyway because by the time we're finished I hope I will have changed your mind.

The story in fact starts at many different places with many different people almost simultaneously, but I suppose the easiest and most logical way to begin is with Jerry Garcia. So . . . . In 1957 at the age of 15 he got his first guitar, and '57 being a great year for rock'n'roll he was one of many whose imagination was captured by that whole rock'n'roll explosion that occurred throughout the mid-fifties. He used to studiously listen to Chuck Berry and learn all the riffs, and while proceeding later on to assimilate other musical forms he has never lost his love for rock'n'roll. Even as early as this he had a friend named Ron McKernan whose old man was a rhythm & blues DJ, but more of him in a minute. In 1959 Garcia joined the Army but lasted only the nine

months that it took him to realise what he'd let himself in for. When he got out he met a guy named Robert Hunter who was in similar circumstances—just left the Army, nowhere in particular to go and nothing to do. They both hung around together, and attended the same college for a while (San Mateo Jnr College—the same place that provided the first formal musical education for a certain Phil Lesh, whom they met but never really had a great deal to do with until later on). At this time (1959-60) there began a great booming interest in folk music around the San Francisco Bay Area. People like Jim McGuinn and Country Joe McDonald began to emerge as important figures, and Garcia himself started taking an interest which resulted in him getting deeply involved in more traditional country music. In time he played the coffee-house circuit regularly while giving guitar lessons and repairing guitars



at a music store called Dana Morgan's. With his whole life now involved with music Garcia soon became more than proficient. His gigs at the coffee-houses used to attract a multitude of friends and admirers, two of whom were a very young, fresh-faced drop-out named Bob Weir, and Jerry's old friend Ron McKernan, from now on to be known as Pigpen.

Pigpen used to watch Garcia intently and then go home and practice. He played guitar for a while but ended up concentrating on harp and piano. His father being one of the early R&B DJs, Pigpen's introduction to music was naturally enough through the spade scene where he sat in at parties and did his impersonation of his big hero and major influence Lightnin' Hopkins which he practiced to perfection. In 1962 he went off on his own to Boston but came back home after a few months and did a series of gigs at the Off-Stage club in San Jose with Paul Foster (a Merry Prankster), and Paul Kantner (later to become one of the Jefferson Airplane). At this time Pigpen also got to know and became a great drinking partner with Janis Joplin, and both of them played together at a club called The Tangent. Later on towards the end of 1962 he got a part-time job at Swain's Music Store in Palo Alto, and it was there more than anywhere else that the Grateful Dead seed began to grow.

But first, another link in the chain of events. Around 1961-62 Jerry Garcia bought a banjo from this rock'n'roll drummer who lived in Palo Alto. His name was Bill Kreutzmann and he had been playing drums since his high-school days, smashing the hell out of them in a style that was ideally suited to loud, crude rock'n'roll and R&B. In 1963 Bill got a job as a stock clerk at Stanford University Research Institute and at the same time gave drum lessons at Dana Morgan's. Consequently he got to know Garcia a lot better as they were both working there at the same time.

Now Swain's Music Store, where Pigpen was working, was run by a guy named Troy Weidenheimer who had ideas about forming his own rock'n'roll band. He of course knew Pigpen, Pigpen knew Garcia, Garcia knew Kreutzmann, so . . . a short-lived band called the Zodiacs were formed. Troy played lead guitar, Pigpen was on harp, they used a wide selection of drummers but most of the time it was Bill Kreutzmann, and Garcia would sometimes join in on bass guitar when he wasn't involved with his own bluegrass groups. Garcia was of course not strictly into rock'n'roll at all around this time. Through continual practice and a scholarly interest he had become a highly proficient bluegrass banjo player and something of an authority on country and folk music. He was still hanging around with Robert Hunter who was himself playing guitar and writing, as well as participating in the LSD tests that were being conducted at Stanford University. In 1962 and '63 Hunter and

Garcia organised a succession of bluegrass groups and jug bands. First there were The Wildwood Boys with Garcia, Hunter, a guitarist named David Nelson (who was a friend of Garcia's, has subsequently played on a number of Dead albums, was an original member of Big Brother & The Holding Company, and now plays guitar for The New Riders Of The Purple Sage), plus a guy called Pete Albin who also helped start Big Brother. The Wildwood Boys became The Black Mountain Boys who in turn evolved into The Thunder Mountain Tub Thumpers and then by 1963 into The Hart Valley Drifters with Garcia (banjo), Hunter (string bass), Nelson (guitar), and a guy named Ken Frankel on mandolin. They entered the 1963 Monterey Folk Festival in the amateur bluegrass category and won. The Hart Valley Drifters then spluttered to an end and in their place rose the definite but heavily-disguised beginnings of the Grateful Dead in the form of Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions (also known as the Asphalt Jungle Boys at one stage). According to legend, almost everybody who was in Palo Alto at the time played in the Jug Champions, but the basic working unit consisted of Jerry Garcia (guitar, banjo & vocals), Pigpen (harmonica, piano, vocals), John (Marmaduke) Dawson (now with the New Riders) on rhythm guitar and vocals, Bob Matthews who is now head of Alembic Studios & Electronics Corp (responsible for the Dead's recordings and



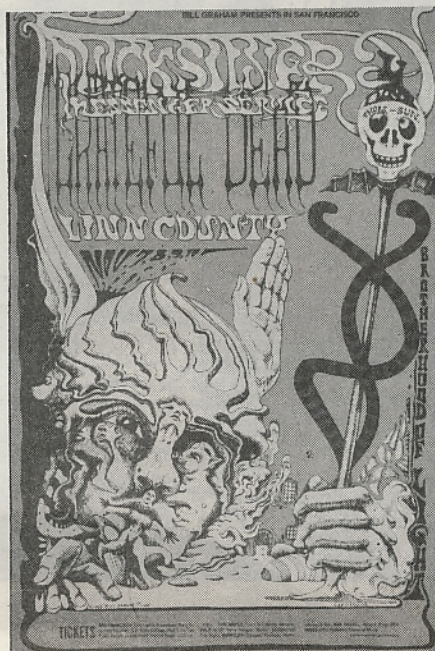
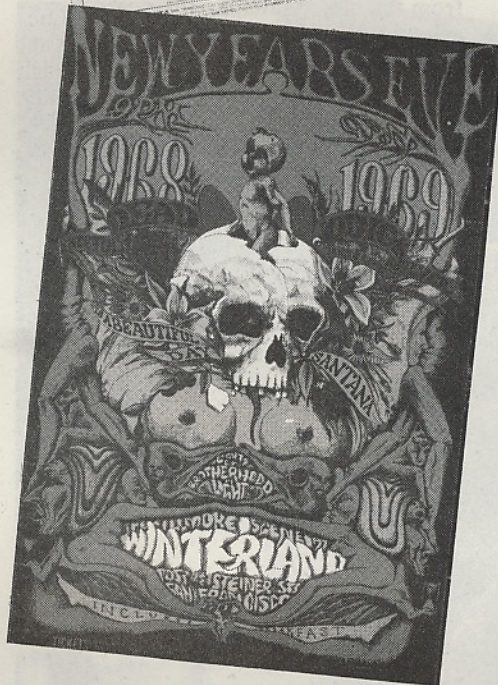


equipment) on guitar and vocals, and lastly Bob Weir (jug and kazoo) whose own early career we shall now take a look at.

Bob Weir, like the other members of the Dead, was a social and cultural misfit. He comes from Atherton, a very well-to-do district, and his background was distinctly upper-class, in marked comparison with the rest of the band. But much to his parents' dismay he took a very early interest in music and the guitar. He travelled around restlessly from one boarding school to another, getting thrown out and flunking exams until he finally 'dropped out' and started hanging around the coffee-houses. He used to frequent the music store that Garcia worked at and he'd always be at the coffee-houses whenever there was something happening, playing and learning all the time. Besides being a guitarist, Weir could play the jug really well, and what's more he was the only one around who could, so he was the natural choice for the Jug Champions. Later on he was to develop of course into a very fine rhythm guitarist under the influence and guidance of the Airplane's Jorma Kaukonen who was his 'musical leader'.

Well Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions started to look around for work, but without much luck. Nobody, it seemed, wanted a jug band anymore, and just as they were reaching the point of despair and when it looked like the end of another abortive musical venture, they made a decision that, with the aid of a stroke of good fortune, literally changed the course of their career completely. Piggpen had been going on about how they should become an electric blues band and it was his insistence that finally forced the decision, plus the fact that Dana Morgan, who you'll remember owned the music store that Garcia and Kreutzmann worked in, offered to provide them with the necessary equipment. A change of name was obviously needed so they chose the Warlocks, and they spent the next couple of months looking around for new members. John Dawson had left and so had Bob Matthews which meant they needed a bassist and a drummer. The bass spot provided no trouble, being filled by Dana Morgan himself, who although not very enthusiastic and only just about adequate, was okay to start with. As far as the drummer was concerned Bill Kreutzmann was the obvious choice. He had a lot of experience with both R&B and rock'n'roll bands, and he was fast and heavy. Incidentally he was known as Bill Summers at the time which for reasons unknown to me complied with his fake ID card! However it wasn't all as simple as that. Because of indecision, caution, and general lack of know-how, it was nearly two years before the Warlocks played their first gig at a pizza parlour called Magoo's in July 1965. They were doing all the standard R&B and rock'n'roll stuff . . . things like 'King Bee', 'Red Rooster', 'Johnny B. Goode', plus an old Texas ragtime song that was to become their first single . . . 'Don't Ease Me In'.

Now at this point the Warlocks recruit



the services of a musician who in my opinion is second to none anywhere . . . an astonishing bass player with a knowledge of music and its possibilities that are staggering to comprehend. His name is Phil Lesh and I have no hesitation in stating that he is a bona fide genius. His musical history is unlike any of the other members and is worth recording because I think it covers a scope and intellect that is extremely rare among rock musicians, and will I hope go some way to explaining why I regard him so highly.

At the age of eight Lesh took up the violin and most of his early childhood musical education consisted of listening to Brahms and other classical composers. He played the violin for six years becoming gradually more involved with the technicalities of music, switching high schools from El Cerrito to Berkeley simply because Berkeley did harmony classes. By the time he was sixteen he was playing trumpet and writing jazz compositions, and he then got to San Mateo Jr College where he wrote three atonal charts (atonal music having no specific reference to any fixed scale), two of which were performed. He continued playing trumpet until he was about twenty under the guidance of a guy called Bob Hanson, developing into an extremely accomplished Kenton-style jazz trumpeter and arranger. While at San Mateo Lesh met a character named Gladstone Odduck with whom he shared an apartment and conspired with in a succession of shady activities in order that they might not starve to death. (They used to frequently rip-off the local grocery store.) Lesh also got to meet Mike Lamb who had connections with a group of crazy people who lived up at Perry Lane, one of them being Ken Kesey, but the meeting that immediately concerns us took place around this time (1960) at a party. Jerry Garcia, you'll recall, had not long left the Army and was becoming interested in folk music, playing at all the parties and coffee-houses that he could get to. Lesh, on the other hand, had taken a job as engineer and program coordinator for a late night hootenanny show called 'Midnight Special' on KPFA—a subscriber-owned radio station. Now they both happened to be at this party, and at some stage Lesh wandered out into the kitchen and found Garcia sitting there playing guitar and singing. Immediately impressed, Phil decided that it would be a good idea to make a tape and try and get it played on 'Midnight Special'. So the two of them and a friend of Phil's called Tom Constanten, travelled over to Tom's house that night to pick up his Webcor tape recorder, brought it back to Palo Alto and recorded Jerry. The next day Lesh took the tape to Gert Chiarito (or Bert Corena as some people would have him known) who ran the hootenanny show. Gert was ecstatic when he heard it and in no time at all Garcia was heard on the radio all over the Bay area. That night at the party Jerry and Phil became good friends although they didn't get together again musically until about five years later.

Right, before we go further, you heard



the name Tom Constanten? Well Phil and Tom were always good friends simply because Tom was the person who came anywhere remotely near to being Phil's intellectual and musical equivalent. Hailing from Las Vegas, Constanten had written his first symphony by the time he was about 13 and he had it performed when he was 16. He'd also mastered astronomy, supposedly has a 170 IQ!?! , and like Phil Lesh he's got perfect pitch. They ran into each other in the music department at Cal-Berkeley college when Tom overheard Phil talking about atonal music. They naturally got into long discussions and eventually became very close friends. By 1962 they were both at Mills College attending Luciano Berio's symposium, and Phil had taken up composing seriously, also working at KPFA part-time, and cruising over to Palo Alto for all the parties and get-togethers. He went to live with Tom in Las Vegas but Tom's mother couldn't stand the sight of him and kicked him out. Tom subsequently went to Europe with Berio for a summer tour and Phil went back to Palo Alto.

By spring 1963 Tom was back from Europe and he and Phil decided to get an apartment and start composing seriously again. In the meantime they both got jobs at the Post Office and became involved with the San Francisco Mime Troupe with whom they had a chance to perform their compositions. Later on Tom joined the Air Force and started taking an interest in scientology, and Phil quit the Post Office because of increasing intimidation over the length of his Beatle-styled hair. By now Phil was composing formal electronic stuff and huge orchestral works which not surprisingly he found very difficult to get performed. For instance, he wrote an enormous orchestral piece called 'Foci' which called for four orchestras, 123 players, and 4 conductors. Unfortunately, or fortunately if like me you regard him as the true musical inspiration behind the Dead, nobody wanted to know.

Which just about brings us up in time as far as the Warlocks. Phil came down to see them play one night at Magoo's and was re-acquainted with Jerry. It so happened that Dana Morgan, the Warlocks' bassist, was proving to be unsuitable and not too keen, so as the story goes, Jerry went up to Phil and said: 'Guess what, you're gonna be our bass player!' Amazingly, although he'd never picked up a bass before in his life,

he learned to play in roughly two weeks.

So now the scene was set . . . the first prototype Grateful Dead was ready . . . Jerry Garcia (guitar/vocals), Bob Weir (rhythm guitar/vocals), Pigpen (keyboards/vocals), Bill Sommers (drums), and Phil Lesh (bass/vocals).

For about six months the Warlocks remained a very run-of-the-mill rock'n'roll band, being managed by Lesh's old friend Odduck. Odduck got them their first club gig at the Fireside Club on El Camino Real in San Mateo and later on a regular job at a Belmont club. In between time they made a demo for Autumn Records: 'Fire In The City'/'Your Sons And Daughters'. It was at the club in Belmont that their music, with a little help from the then new wonderdrug LSD, began to take on a shape and form that was, shall we say, a little weird for the time (and remember it was 1965).

Their songs started to get much longer and louder until in the end it all got a bit too much for the regular customers who would apparently run screaming from the place clutching their ears. Inevitably the Warlocks got the boot and at that point dropped completely and permanently out of the straight music scene.

They weren't without admirers though, because everybody up at Ken Kesey's place in La Honda (Pranksters, heads, drop-outs, acid-freaks, etc), really dug them. So much so that the Warlocks became their house-band and played at the Acid Tests during 1965 and the Trips Festival, San Francisco, Muir Beach, then L.A. in 1966. Around about the end of the Acid Tests they changed their name again when, as Garcia recalls in 'Rolling Stone' 40: 'we were looking for a name. We'd abandoned the Warlocks, it didn't fit anymore. One day we were all over at Phil's house smoking DMT. He had a big Oxford dictionary, opened it,

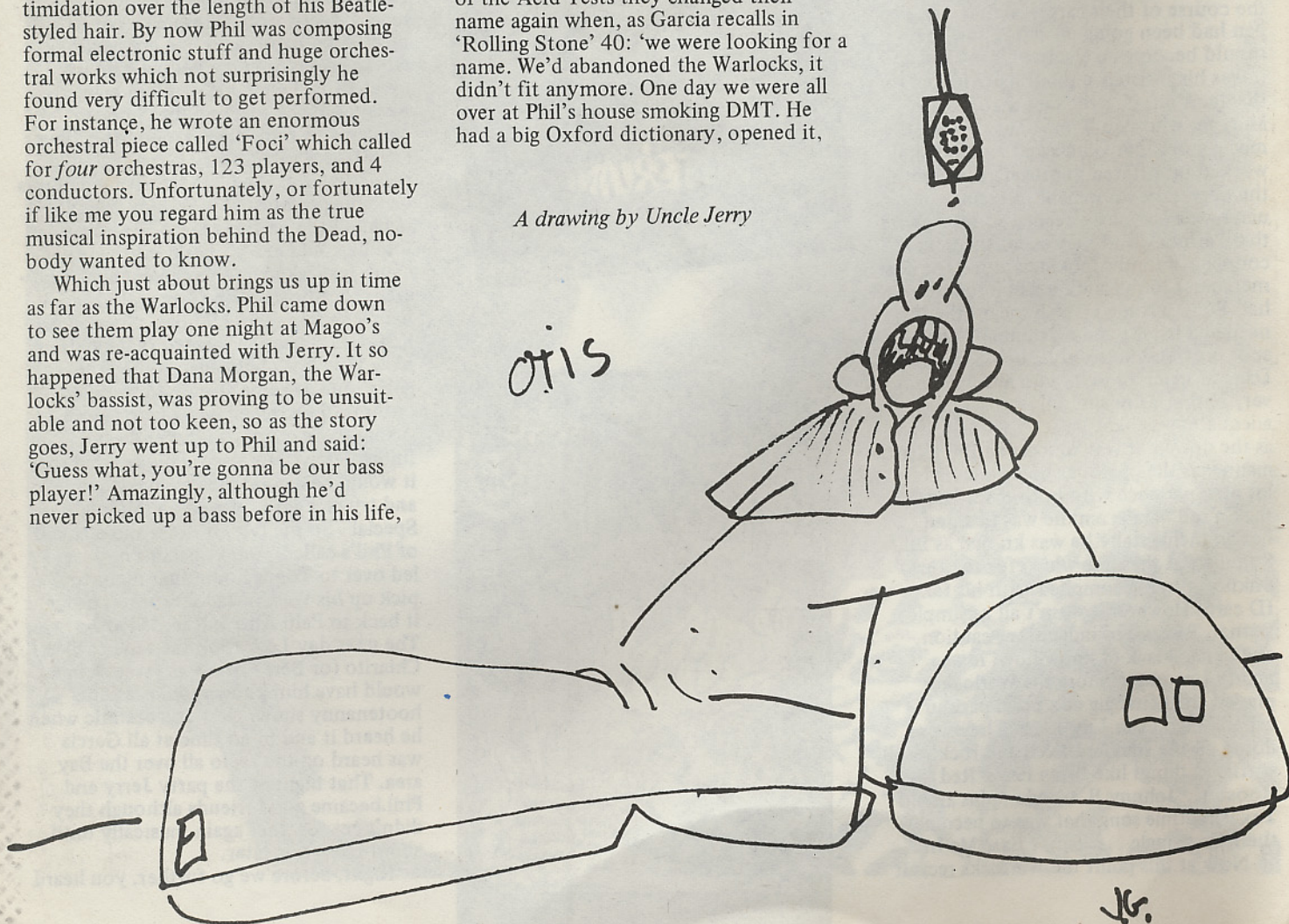
and there was Grateful Dead, those words juxtaposed. It was one of those moments, y'know, like everything else on the page went blank, diffuse, just sorta oozed away, and there was GRATEFUL DEAD, big black letters edged all around in gold, man, blasting out at me, such a stunning combination. So I said, "How about Grateful Dead?" and that was it.'

'Grateful Dead is an ethnological term; it has to do with a guy named Francis Childs who went around and catalogued a lot of folk ballads from Northern Ireland and Scotland back before the turn of the century. There was a whole section that he did on what were the Grateful Dead ballads; the Grateful Dead ballads being visitations and stuff like that, generally having to do with people that had died and come back and been kind of glad.'—Bob Weir.

'Let's see, the classic story is the one where somebody dies, but there's some dishonour connected with the death, so they can't really rest until this matter is settled, and then when it's settled that puts them in the category of being Grateful Dead. It's just what it sounds like . . . Grateful Dead.'—Garcia.

It might be a good time to comment on the Dead's reputation as a bunch of drug-fiends, a reputation I may add that is founded as much on rumour and speculation as on facts. But as the facts are bizarre enough themselves, the rumours aren't really that important at all. Apart from the odd joint at school every now and then, I think Lesh was the first to dabble in chemical drugs. In February

A drawing by Uncle Jerry





1963 he moved from Berkeley to Fulton St to live with a girl he knew named Ruth and an insane character called Dennis Crank (that's the truth, honest!), who Hank Harrison describes in his book as a 'psychotic pseudo chemist' who tried out all his new drugs and evil concoctions on Phil and Ruth. Garcia was probably the first to experiment with acid which up until October 6th 1966 remained legal in California, but once they all got together, it didn't take them long to try out all kinds of weird stuff. Their association with Kesey, and their subsequent musical developments and life-style are almost entirely acid-based, and their involvement with this hitherto outrageous phenomenon reached some sort of peak with the arrival of a slightly crazy gentleman with the imposing name of Augustus Owsley Stanley III. Owsley (variously known as Merlin and 'The Acid King') was a friend of Ken Kesey's who arrived in Berkeley from L.A. in 1962. Amongst many other things he was a chemist, and in 1965 he started making methedrine, and then in 1966 developed the purest and most potent LSD that anybody has ever made. Owsley acid became a standard against which everything else was judged, and despite his unnerving personality and strange ways, Owsley was tolerated in Kesey's community simply because of his talent as a chemist,

As well as this, he was an electronics genius and after a while took the Dead under his wing and supervised their sound system. The equipment that he bought them was unbelievable . . . every new gadget on the market . . . 'tuners, amplifiers, receivers, loudspeakers, microphones, cartridges, theatre horns, booms, lights, turntables, instruments, mixers, service mesochroics' etc ('Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test'). The trouble was that while the equipment was certainly dependable and consistent, Owsley was not. Most Dead gigs used to see them all arrive wiped out of their skulls, Owsley as well, so more often than not the instruments weren't balanced or synchronised and the whole thing came out as a terrible mess. But on the occasions that Owsley managed to get everything together in time, their sound system was reported to be the loudest, clearest and most complex ever heard.

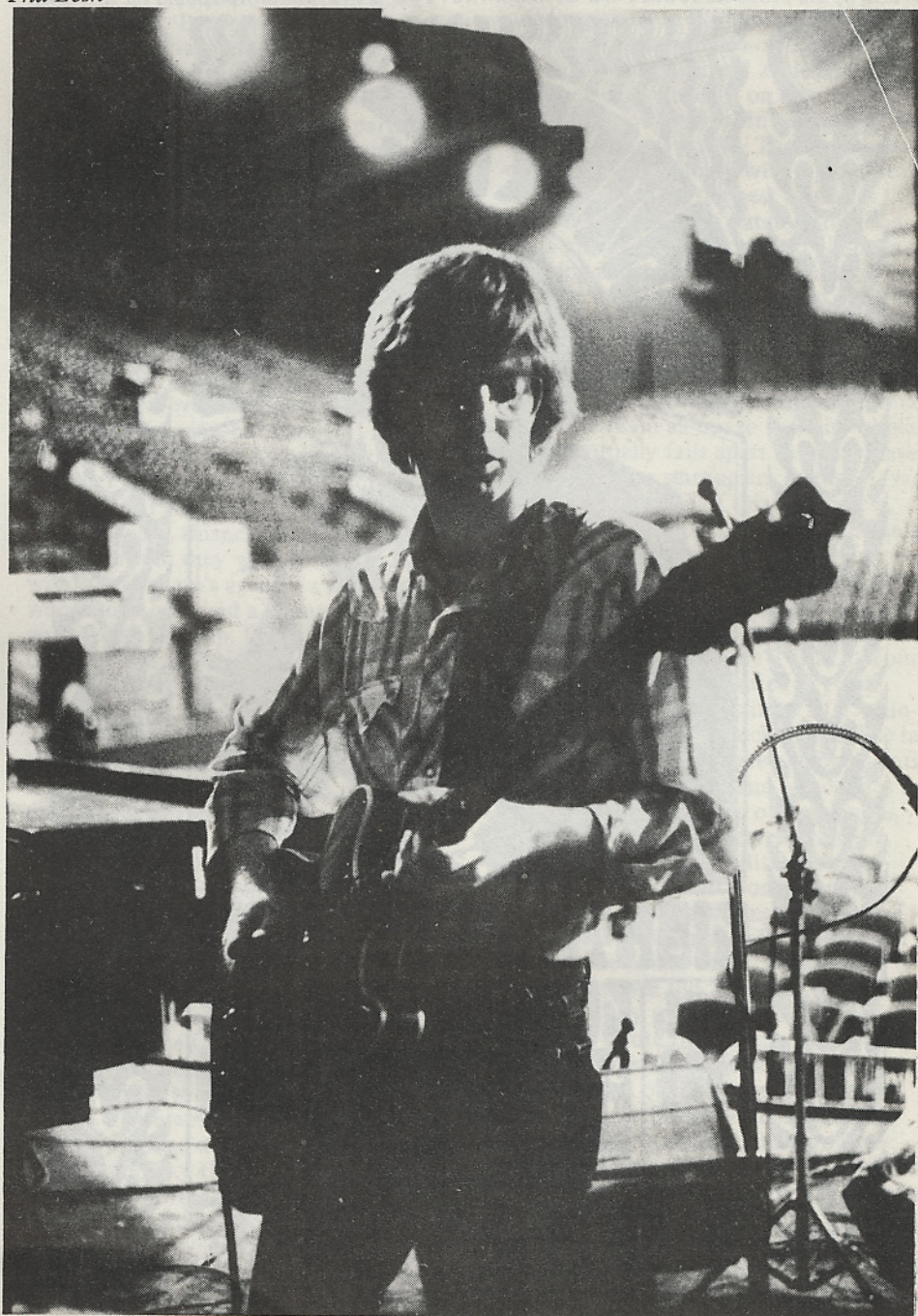
But before we pass over the Dead/Kesey association which ended with the State legislation banning LSD, mention must be made of the Acid Tests held during 1965. Despite claims to the contrary by the New York avant-garde, the Acid Tests represented the first successful attempt at multimedia electronic entertainment. With a never-ending supply of acid, the Grateful Dead, a light show on every wall, and every conceivable piece of electronic equipment hooked up all over the place, there was an amazing kind of ordered chaos. As Jerry tries to explain ('Rolling Stone' 100): 'They had film and endless kind of weird tape recorder hook ups and mystery speaker trips and all . . . just all sorts of really strange . . . it always seemed as though the equipment was able to respond in its own way, I mean it . . .

there were always magical things happening. Voices coming out of things that weren't plugged in and, God . . . it was just totally mind boggling to wander around this maze of wires and stuff like that. Sometimes they were like writhing and squirming. Truly amazing.' The Acid Tests were essentially formless, there was no planned show, just a gathering of people doing lots of different things all at once, and the whole set-up was very unstable and unpredictable. As far as the Dead were concerned they were no exception. Sometimes they'd get up and play for two or three hours non-stop, while other times it was quite possible that they'd give up after ten minutes. But it was here that their music began to develop a unique style, a delicate, complicated fusion of a multitude of musical idioms . . . electronic music of all sorts, accidental music, classical music, Indian music, jazz, folk, country & western, blues, and rock . . . a lumbering, stoned volcano of noise and excitement.

*Phil Lesh*

The Acid Tests culminated in the Trips Festival in January 1966, and later that year acid was declared illegal and Kesey split to Mexico. The Pranksters dispersed out of harm's way, and the Dead went to live with Owsley on the northern edge of Watts in L.A. Life with the 'Acid King' was however a little disconcerting to say the least. Notwithstanding the benefits of a new mammoth sound system, they didn't always see eye to eye on certain matters and in June 1966, after a few months together, the Dead moved back to San Francisco and into 710 Ashbury.

Now a so far unmentioned but influential aspect of the Dead's career is their ever-precarious financial situation. While most groups were after more recognition and bigger gigs, the Dead played mostly for free. Their way of life didn't include any precautions involving money or business matters, and coupled with a succession of intelligent managers, they were nearly always in debt to the extent





that Phippen once had his Hammond organ repossessed right in the middle of a set.

Financial pressures and promises of total artistic control persuaded the band to sign for Warner Brothers record company, and their first single (not counting a single they made for Scorpio Records in 1965—'Don't Ease Me In'), and LP appeared in 1967. The single, 'Golden Road To Unlimited Devotion', also on the album, was a snappy little number probably designed to make them as appealing as possible to an unsuspecting public. Michael Lydon in 'Rolling Stone' describes their sound at the time as: 'hard rock/white R&B slightly freaked—not very different from Steppenwolf's, Creedence Clearwater's or the Sir Douglas Quintet's'. Their album, simply titled 'The Grateful Dead' (WS 1689) was released in March 1967 but was recorded the previous year. Having no idea of how to work in a recording studio, the band apparently just went in and played as they normally did at a gig. Not surpris-

ingly this attempt to re-create a 'live' sound on record was largely a failure, especially for those who had seen them play. Produced by Dave Hassinger, who the band had insisted on because of his work as engineer on some of the Stones records, the album was recorded in three nights and mixed in one day on a 3-track machine in L.A. To be honest it doesn't stand up too well today but the signs were quite clearly there for all to hear... immaculate rhythm changes, powerful melodic bass lines, and of course Garcia's guitar work. A good deal of the material on the record is blues-based, eg, 'Good Morning Little School Girl' and 'Cold Rain And Snow', but it also features what Richard Meltzer describes as 'the first example of definitive instrumental acid-rock'—'Viola Lee Blues'. Except for the inhabitants of San Francisco and the surrounding country, hardly anybody bought the album, and of course it wasn't made widely available over here.

Later on that year they got involved

in a project called the Great North-western Tour with Quicksilver Messenger Service and Jerry Abram's Headlights which was designed to present a series of concerts in Washington and Oregon without using middle-men, promoters, printers, or anybody like that. The groups and their management handled everything themselves, and it worked so well that the idea came to lease a permanent dance hall in San Francisco. So early in 1968 the Dead and the Airplane took over an old hall on Market Street called the Carousel, and turned it into a spacious comfortable Ballroom perfect for dances. That they finally had to hand over to Bill Graham was certainly not due to lack of support, but more likely a combination of mismanagement leading to economic difficulties, and police pressure. Anyway, crafty old Bill Graham swooped down and took over the Carousel, later renaming it the Fillmore West.

By now though, the Grateful Dead had acquired two new members. The first to join was Mickey Hart... horse trainer, amateur hypnotist, drug fiend, drop-out and percussionist. He'd met Bill and after jamming with him a couple of times sat in on a set at the Straight Theatre. Hart says (in 'Rolling Stone' 40): 'We played "Alligator" for two hours, man, and my mind was blown. When we finished and the crowd went wild, Jerry came over and embraced me, and I embraced him, and it's been like that ever since.' That was summer 1967. The other new member, Tom Constanten was of course associated with the band right from the beginning but he only just got out of the Air Force in time to join them in late '67.

In September 1967 they started work on their second album, and much to the annoyance of Warner Brothers they didn't finish recording it until March 1968. After that came the editing and mixing, and the LP called 'Anthem Of The Sun' (WS 1749) wasn't released here until August 1968.

Altogether, the album contains excerpts from four studio recordings and eighteen 'live' performances, blended into each other so well that with the exception of a couple of shaky transitional patches, it could well be one continuous live set.

Disappointed with the results of their first recording venture, the band decided to spend more time on this one and make it sound really good. They started out by recording experimentally for a couple of months in L.A. where nothing was accomplished, and then they went to New York where they parted with producer Dave Hassinger because he found it impossible to work with them. So it was down to Jerry and Phil to assemble an album from live tapes and studio material. A lot of the work was done in San Francisco with engineer Dan Healy and when everything was put together the whole lot was mixed down on an 8-track machine which gives a slightly crowded and cluttered effect... all 8 tracks being used continually with loads of stuff going on all the time. However, having said that, I think it's the Dead album that I play the most, and is perhaps my favour-

PRESENTED IN SAN FRANCISCO BY BILL GRAHAM



**LIGHTNING HOPKINS**

<b>FRI.</b>	<b>LOADING ZONE</b>	<b>SAT.</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>SUNDAY AFTERNOON</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>OCT.</b>	<b>OCT. 23</b>	<b>OCT.</b>
<b>\$2.50</b>	<b>2:7PM YARDBIRDS \$3.00</b>	<b>\$2.50</b>
	<b>COUNTRY JOE AND THE FISH</b>	

**FILLMORE**  
AUDITORIUM



ite of them all. It's a toss up between that and 'Live/Dead'. The whole of side one is bloody brilliant . . . it starts with a 3-part medley—'That's It For The Other One'—an attractive easy-paced song ('Cryptical Envelopment') that ends with an astounding change of rhythm and a drum solo ('Quadlibet For Tenderfeet') and then 'The Faster We Go The Rounder We Get' which is pure Grateful Dead magic . . . Garcia and Lesh soloing away, crossing over and playing off each other, Weir and Pigpen adding layer upon layer of sound, and the two drummers lashing out landslide rhythms that explode on the top of your head. It all glides perfectly into 'New Potatoe Caboose' and 'Born Cross-Eyed' and the whole side is just one unbelievable thing after another. Superb stuff. Side two features 'Alligator', the mainstay of Dead concerts in their early days, and closes with 'Caution (Do Not Stop On Tracks)' which is the only thing that sounds contrived, with an assortment of Pigpen's growling vocals and lots of electronics. The rest is nothing less than a masterpiece however, and is certainly one of the best rock albums ever to come out of San Francisco. As a matter of interest it cost between \$50-60,000 to make and was finished a good six months behind schedule. One last thing concerning 'Anthem Of The Sun'; Phil Lesh has since re-mixed the album and Warner Bros are apparently sitting on it without any plans for its release. C'mon you guys in sunny Burbank, how about it?

By now they had all moved out of 710 Ashbury following a bust in the fall of 1967 and at present they all live in separate houses in San Francisco and Marin County. But despite a growing reputation as an exhilarating performing band, and a critically successful album to their credit, the Dead remained strictly an 'underground' group, as much a fault of the news media as of their own apathetic approach towards promoting themselves.

By early 1968 it became fashionable for magazines and newspapers to feature pop individuals, rather than bands, as mass media article sellers. Grace Slick became the 'star' of Jefferson Airplane and not Marty Balin who was the real leader. People like Janis Joplin and Jim Morrison also received the same treatment, and gradually the initial concept of the community band was forgotten. So bands like the Dead, with no glamorous potential superstar, suffered through lack of publicity and eventually a lack of work. The 'invasion' of English heavy blues-rock bands like Cream also did a lot to dim the spotlight on San Francisco as well as prompting a lot of West Coast bands to make an effort to keep up with the rest, and by the end of 1968, the results were evident. The famous 'San Francisco Sound' had been lost, to be replaced by a more studio-oriented approach to work. Instead of playing for hours on end in the park for free, bands were now concentrating on producing technically perfect records, and found, like their neighbours in L.A. (Doors and

Mamas & Papas) had already done, that they could become famous without making many 'live' appearances.

By the time the Dead's third album, 'Aoxomoxoa' (WS 1790) was released in June 1969 they had changed quite considerably in the space of two years. Garcia describes 'Aoxomoxoa' as a continuation of the 'Anthem Of The Sun' trip—the style of having a complex record. It started off being an 8-track job but in the middle of recording, the studio was fitted with a 16-track machine and they indulged in the temptation to try and use all 16 tracks. Everything was down on tape quite satisfactorily but it seemed that everyone in the band took part in the mixing as well as being blocked on some drug like STP, and they blew it. Garcia's re-mixed version has since been released and is a much simpler and clearer album. Songs like 'Mountains Of The Moon', 'China Cat Sunflower', and 'Cosmic Charlie' are now more easily recognisable as very fine songs indeed, and if you're aware of an electronic free-form track called 'What's Become Of The Baby' you'll know that simply by re-mixing, it takes on an almost completely new form, and is perhaps an indication of what some of the more spontaneous parts of the re-mixed 'Anthem Of The Sun' could sound like. Additional pieces of information: the title 'Aoxomoxoa' is a palindrome of album sleeve designer Rick Griffin's invention—the band were originally debating on whether to call it 'Earthquake Country', and by the time it was made, the Dead were in debt to Warner Bros to the tune of around \$93,000. Oh, and in case it's not obvious, I think it's a lovely album, not their best by any means, but for me it has an endearing charm and warmth that no other band can manage to radiate.

Early in 1969, during the recording of 'Aoxomoxoa', financial disaster loomed over them and they were forced to sign with Bill Graham's agency, a man with whom they have had a strange, often volatile relationship. But Graham was only one of many managers who tried their luck (and money) with the Dead. Others included Danny Rifkin, Rock Scully, Ron Racow, Brian Rohan, Lenny Hart (Micky's dad who burned them of something like \$70,000 and is now being sued) plus their present manager John McIntyre.

Unfortunately things weren't so harmonious within the band either. Pigpen and Bob Weir were on the verge of leaving on many occasions, and these were only a few of the many personal crises that affected the group. The problem was considerably eased later on when several members formed their own splinter groups, giving them other interests and a further outlet to burn off their manic energy. There were the New Riders Of The Purple Sage with Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, and Micky Hart (the latter two only temporarily), a one-night band formed for a scientology benefit called Bobby Ace And The Cards Off The Bottom with Bob Weir and Phil Lesh, and Micky Hart & The Heartbeats. The whole arrange-

ment was a very loose and informal one, and it eased the tensions within the band quite considerably.

It wasn't long though before Warner Brothers were on their backs again demanding another album. After already giving the Dead something like \$120,000 they wanted three albums. They'd got two, 'Anthem Of The Sun' and 'Aoxomoxoa', and so work began on a 'live' double album to be called simply 'Live/Dead' (WS 1830, Jan 1970). That they'd finally decided to put out a true 'live' album came as no real surprise, but what must have turned most people's heads was the astonishing maturity of it . . . a rock LP of subtlety, power and sheer beauty. As an attempt to capture the magic that they generate on stage it was a success beyond all expectations. The all too apparent inconsistency of Grateful Dead sets necessitated the making of miles of tape recordings and from this they selected the best tapes recorded at the Avalon and pieced the whole thing together. The first three sides are in effect one long track as the band start off with 23 magnificent minutes of 'Dark Star' which is a truly colossal achievement, and they carry straight on into 'Saint Stephen' and 'The Eleven', with fluid ease and tremendous power. The tapes have obviously been chosen with a great deal of care as even on the best of nights the band tend to be a bit patchy, the good parts mingled with the not so good. In working from one piece of music to another they have to keep hold of all the threads, searching around for new phrases and rhythms until it all slides gently into place. On an average night they can keep all the loose ends together but never manage to tie them all up, so that the whole idea eventually falls apart and they have to give it up or start again. But on 'Live/Dead' there's none of this unsureness. Everything is so superbly integrated and smooth that it's downright annoying when one side ends, the momentum of the music is broken, and you have to get up and turn the record over. Side three is Pigpen's tour de force, 'Turn On Your Lovelight' . . . 15½ minutes of gutsy, soulful vocals and the climax of 55 minutes of truly amazing rock music. The last side is generally considered to be an anticlimax in comparison, and although it's by no means as exciting or engaging as the other tracks, it deserves a hearing. There is a very slow traditional blues number called 'Death Don't Have No Mercy' . . . a very sad song, nearly nine minutes of nerve-grating feed-back, and to close the whole thing, a 30 second finale, 'And We Bid You Goodnight'. I won't say any more about the record except to quote from Lenny Kaye who wrote: "'Live/Dead' explains why the Dead are one of the best performing bands in America, why their music touches on ground that most other groups don't even know exists . . . if you'd like to visit a place where rock is likely to be in about 5 years, you might think of giving "Live/Dead" a listen or two.'

Andy Childs  
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