

## ((( BILL MONROE )))



RUTH BE TOLD, Bill Monroe was not much of a fan of rock & roll. Yet Monroe's own powerful music – the gospel, blues and old-timey string-band blend that he and his ecstatic mandolin transformed into bluegrass – helped to give birth to the rock & roll sound. "It was a Bill Monroe song that was the first-ever rockabilly song," Carl Perkins declared recently in his South by Southwest keynote address. Illustrating, he let fly from his guitar the notes to Monroe's signature "Blue Moon of Kentucky," first recorded with his Blue Grass Boys in 1945, and which Elvis covered on his

debut Sun single in 1954. Indeed, Monroe's unparalleled musical vision – displayed in his peerless mandolin playing, prolific songwriting and emotive tenor singing – kept him chasing the euphoria that comes with live performance for sixty years.

William Smith Monroe was born near Rosine, Kentucky, on September 13, 1911, the youngest of eight children. He took up the mandolin at age nine. Suffering from poor eyesight (exacerbated by strabismus), the fledgling musician found comfort in teaching himself the intricacies of his instrument. His mother's death, when he was ten, followed by the loss of his father five years later, infused his life with sorrow. Bill moved into his Uncle Pendleton Vandiver's cabin, and there his mother's fiddle-playing brother taught him, Monroe later said, everything he knew about music's "timing." (Monroe would pay tribute to him in the spirited classic "Uncle Pen.") About this time, Monroe met black blues guitarist-fiddler Arnold Schultz, who also figured prominently in the young mandolinist's musical education.

Bill began playing professionally for the first time in 1934 with brother Charlie on guitar and lead vocals and, briefly, brother Birch on fiddle and upright bass. Eventually, the Monroe Brothers landed a commercial sponsor that backed a tour of Southern radio stations, which led to their first recordings on the Bluebird label in 1936. Two years and sixty sides later, the brothers split; Bill formed the short-lived Kentuckians, followed by his Blue Grass Boys, the group he named in honor of his native state and which would later become the label for the musical genre he and his band were developing. In 1939, Monroe joined the Grand Ole Opry, and for the next fifty-plus years he toured and recorded virtually nonstop.

Among the 100 or so revolving members that formed the Blue Grass Boys over the years, virtuosity was key. His band's instrumentation varied, but included in different aggregations guitar, fiddle, banjo, accordion and upright bass; the one con-

stant, of course, was Monroe's exhilarating mandolin. The charging rhythms of "Bluegrass Breakdown," the deep emotion empowering such gospel songs as "Lord Protect My Soul," and the mournful heartbreak draping ballads like "I'm Blue, I'm Lonesome," won Monroe and his group legions of fans and garnered country chart hits. Banjo maestro Earl Scruggs and guitarist-singer Lester Flatt, who joined in 1946, were among the extraordinary players who went on to spread and expand the bluegrass gospel after parting company with Monroe.

Many of Monroe's estimated 500 compositions are staples of bluegrass festivals (originating in 1965 as a Monroe vehicle) and are found within every form of the music, from traditional to new grass, as well as among rock and country-rock repertoires.

In concert, Monroe was a fiery performer. Prior to a July 1994 show, a frail-looking, eighty-two-year-old Monroe used a cane to get around, yet when I met him aboard his bus for an interview, he boasted that hip replacement surgery, bouts with prostate cancer and a triple bypass had not stopped him. "I can write an instrumental in half a minute or a minute," he told me, adding, "Who else could do that?" When the subject turned to today's music, the feisty Father of Bluegrass barked, "These people in the music business, they'll say any filthy word they can, they don't care who is sitting there listening to it. Anybody that comes up with that kind of stuff ought to be slapped on down and run out of the country. It's all this rock & roll." Riled up, he grabbed his white Stetson and bid me adieu with a vise-like handshake, followed by a peck and a hug. Moments later, when he hit that stage, there was no cane in sight. Dancing a frisky buck-and-wing and performing a fired-up "Muleskinner Blues," Monroe projected as much energy as any rocker could.

Two years later, Bill Monroe passed away on September 9, 1996, leaving behind three generations of artists whose music reverberates with his influence.



WSM





(( ( SIXTIES CLUBLAND )) )







ROCK & ROLL SPREAD LIKE WILDFIRE IN THE SIXTIES VIA NIGHTCLUBS AND CAFES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THE WEST-COAST AND EAST-COAST CLUB SCENES WERE PARTICULARLY VIBRANT. DANNY FIELDS, PETER WOLF AND PAUL KANTNER REMINISCE, AND DOMENIC PRIORE WAXES NOSTALGIC.



**DANNY FIELDS** In the early Sixties, there were lots of little folkies running up and down Bleecker Street, playing in different Mugwumps and other such combinations. Gerde's Folk City was located at three different places in the Village. When Dylan first played there, it was east of where the Bottom Line is now. Cafe Wha? was on MacDougal Street. The Cafe Au Go Go was on Bleecker between Sullivan and Thompson. Roger McGuinn, Cass Elliott and John Sebastian would go up and down Bleecker. Jac Holzman had his finger on that whole scene; so did Maynard Solomon from Vanguard. The thing was to get discovered by Elektra or Vanguard when you were playing down there. The Lovin' Spoonful was the biggest band to come out of the Bleecker/MacDougal thing in the Sixties.

The Cafe Wha? was touristy because of the location. Jimmy James and the Blue Flames played there, and Chas Chandler saw him and brought him to England and changed him back to Jimi Hendrix.

Across the street was the Gaslight, which was folky. The Gaslight was where Dylan is supposed to have written "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall" in the upstairs dressing room while waiting to go on. I saw Richard Pryor there. Everyone played the Gaslight. The Gaslight was

## NEW YORK

hip. It was right next door to a bar called the Kettle of Fish, which was a hangout for musicians and artists and poets; it was an original kind of artistic bohemian bar. There was the San Remo; in the early Sixties it had turned from an old Italian family-owned bar into the alternative gay bar, which is where the



first, early Factory people were – Edward Albee, Ondine, Warhol, Terrence McNally – people who became famous artists.

Around the corner on Bleecker Street was the Bitter End. Joni Mitchell was playing around, trying to get a record deal. She was at the Bitter End probably around '67, '68. Other people were doing her songs.

The Night Owl was one of the first clubs in the Village to encourage original bands. This was really revolutionary in the mid-Sixties, a club that would exist and encourage electric bands to play their own music. Everything except the folk clubs was cover bands, though I don't even know what there was to cover back then. Joe Mara was owner of the Night Owl, and he deserves a gold star. The Strangers were my favorite band there,

Shakin' a tail feather  
at the Peppermint  
Lounge on West 45th  
Street, November '61

and the Lovin' Spoonful and Blues Magoos emerged around '65, '66. The club became the Night Owl Psychedelic Store or something, and now Bleecker Bob's is there.

The Salvation Club was at One Sheridan Square, where the Charles Ludlum Theater is now. It was the first place I ever saw Jimi Hendrix, and it was home base for the Chambers Brothers, who were widely beloved by the Warhol people, especially Barbara Rubin. She invented light shows, the East Coast version anyhow. When the Velvet Underground played at the Dom, she ran around with a movie projector on, flashing it at the stage. The Velvet Underground had started playing in the Village at the Cafe Bizarre, on Third Street just east of MacDougal. They were supposed to play cover songs. About the time they were getting fired, Gerard Malanga saw them and persuaded Andy that the Factory needed a rock & roll band and they should be it. So they moved from the Cafe Bizarre to the Dom on St. Mark's Place.

The Dom was originally a Polish hall. It was a good space, so Andy Warhol went in there with his whole sound and light show with Gerard doing the whip dances, and Eric Emerson dancing and spinning. Andy sat up in the projection booth and sort of watched over the whole thing from high up and far away. The Velvets played there, but the emphasis was still "This is Andy Warhol's music and light show." It was a trendy social event for that reason, not because of the Velvet Underground, which many of us believed in, but we'd just as soon hear them play up at the Factory during a rehearsal. The pictures on the back cover of the Velvets "Banana" album are from the Dom. There was also a downstairs bar where Nico played accompanied by Jackson Browne. Later, Jerry Brandt turned the Dom into the Electric Circus.

Ondine's was like a poor man's Arthur, for the in-crowd. Brad Pearce was booking Ondine's, and his gimmick was to book bands from the Sunset Strip, the Whisky. Ondine's was primarily a discotheque until then. Buffalo Springfield did their New York debut there. And of course the Doors made their New York debut there in late 1966.

I remember one night at Ondine's, this bunch of thuggy people smashed the place apart. They just picked up chairs and smashed mirrors and lighting and destroyed it. They all got up at once, like a pre-arranged signal. They sort of nodded at each other and started tearing the place apart. I just sat in the corner with someone, and we went, "Oooh!" It was so interesting, it was like watching a movie. They

obviously weren't after me; they were after someone who didn't pay protection or something. It was just fascinating. I'd never seen anything like that before or seen it since. That was better than any band that ever played there.

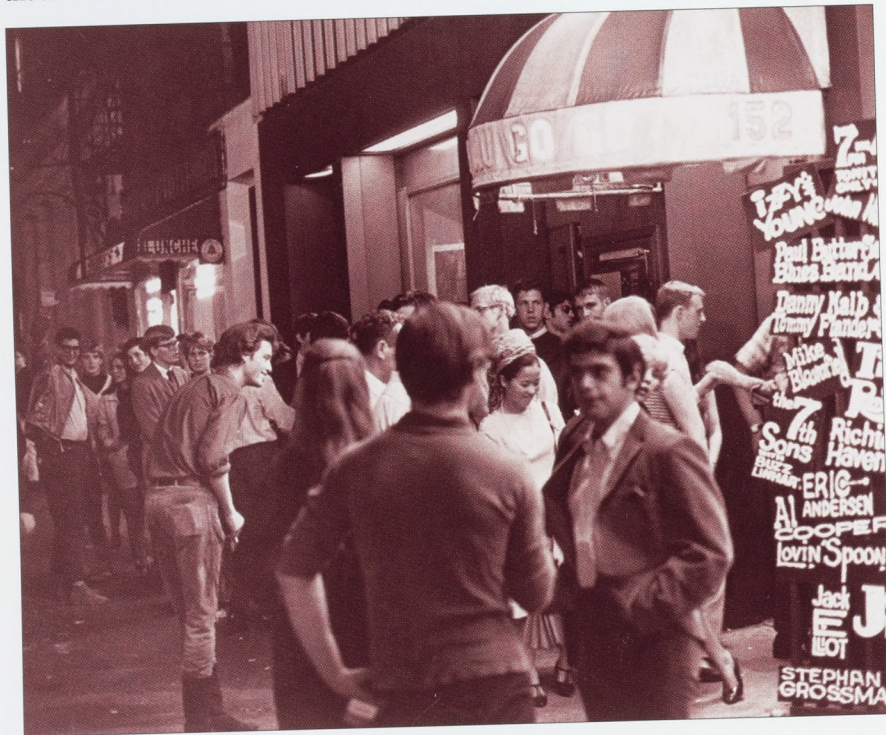
Trude Heller's was great too. She was the original dyke club owner before it was okay to be a dyke and be out. She was one of the first tough businesswoman dykes that you saw who made no bones about it. She didn't say LESBIAN FOREVER on her sweatshirt, but you know, she was hot. Trude Heller's was a hangout. Small rock bands played there. That was just one of the club's manifestations. I think Trude Heller tried to make it a disco, too. She would change the format of the place to keep up with the times. It went from a dyke bar to a rock & roll club. It was kind of touristy because of its location, Sixth Avenue at Ninth Street. But it had a long run.







Uptown, there was one important strip near Times Square: 45th Street. The Wagon Wheel is where Goldie and the Gingerbreads played. They were the first all-women rock & roll band that I'd ever seen, and they were tough. The Wagon Wheel was kind of like a Times Square bar where you were picked up by sailors. And the Hotel America across the street was where many of the sailors that performed in Warhol movies lived. It was a big sleazy sex hotel. It was wonderful, it added to the ambience. Down the street was the Peppermint Lounge.



Revelers and music fans mingling outside the Cafe Au Go Go, on Bleecker Street, in the Village

Steve Paul was a publicist for the Peppermint Lounge. He had much to do with getting the word out about it. Then he founded his own club, the Scene. It was on 46th Street, west of Eighth Avenue. It

was a big sprawling basement, as were so many clubs. The Scene was the best. It was glamorous, with glamorous musicians and glamorous groupies, like Hendrix's girlfriend Devon. The British bands came there. Linda Eastman and I would go and just hang out and see all the people who were stars. It was congenial – you didn't feel freaky, or like it was going to change into another kind of club, or like your crowd was just passing through there. It was the real thing. It was owned by a rock & roller. It wasn't owned by some faceless entity, it was owned by a person of and from the scene itself. Steve Paul was a world, a universe unto himself. He was really dedicated to rock & roll. He sat on the steps leading down to the club and said hello to everyone. The Scene was appropriately named – it was *the* ultimate rock & roll scene. Janis, Jim, everyone was there. Tiny Tim was the house "band" – he played in between bands.

There was also Ungano's on West 70th Street, an unlikely neighborhood. The owners were from Staten Island, and somehow they got into booking hip acts like Led Zeppelin – I believe they made their New York debut there. So did the Allman Brothers, and Iggy played there, the MC5. It was hip.

The rock & roll thing really took over. The Fillmore opened in '68, and that sort of changed everything. Its opening was a metaphor for the commercial explosion of rock & roll. It went

from clubs to a medium-sized theater: It was like rock & roll had a palace, it was really growing so fast that a few years later the Fillmore had to close because the groups were so big that they couldn't afford to pay what the groups were asking. Bands that were first seen there just couldn't go back.

But that was the end of the club era, except for what came in the Seventies upstairs at Max's or where the Dolls played at Broadway Central. Then came CB's, and that was a whole other world. The big rock & roll thing kind of culminated in the

Fillmore and the bands that they had there: the Doors, Buffalo Springfield, the Yardbirds. It was getting bigger all the time, but you don't notice it if you're living in it.

Most important of all, though, was the Peppermint Lounge on West 45th Street. The Twist was invented there. It should be a shrine: This is where people stopped dancing close together. They didn't want to touch each other, they just wanted to freak out. Asking someone to dance – what a horrible thing that was. So I think that was the greatest thing to emerge from [the Sixties club scene]. Certainly greater than all those bands was the fact you could dance by yourself; that's the most important thing, way more important than rock & roll or anything. The most important thing to come out of the Sixties, besides LSD, was dancing alone. That's the most important phenomenon to emerge from that

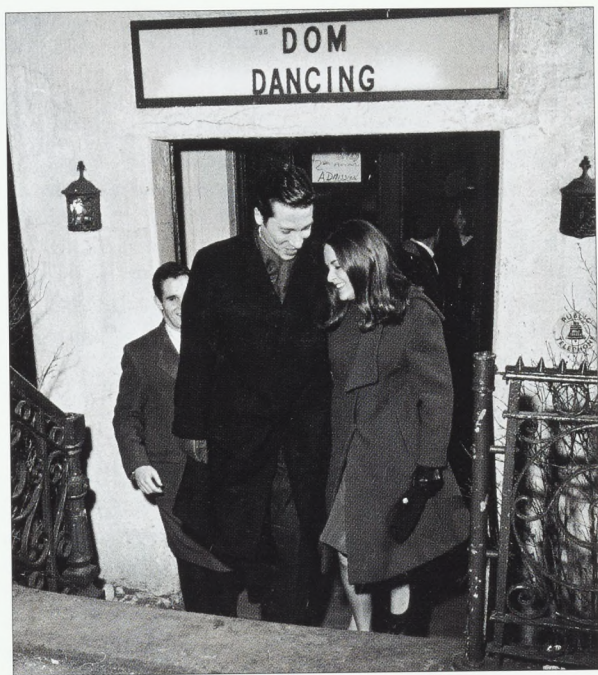
age, and that was at the Peppermint Lounge. The music didn't change my life, except for maybe the Velvet Underground and the Rolling Stones. But dancing alone changed your life. Who gives a shit about the fucking music? It's how you dance that counts.

**PETER WOLF** I first got into the folk scene down in the Village. I remember going to these jams at Gerde's, these hootenannies on Monday nights, and you'd see Dave Van Ronk, Jose Feliciano, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Tom and Jerry before they became Simon and Garfunkel, the Greenbriar Boys, John Hammond Jr., Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs – the list went on. I believe it would be a dollar, and you got a drink card that got you a free drink. You had to be eighteen to get in. I saw Dylan open up for John Lee Hooker at Gerde's. I'd come down on the subway from the Bronx and go to clubs like the Cafe Wha?, which had a lot of blues artists. I'd also go to the Cafe Au Go Go, on Bleecker Street, by the Village Gate. Frank Zappa and the Mothers played there. The Cafe Au Go Go was a little more upscale. Lenny Bruce would be there a lot and the Blues Project and other bands and comedians. Hendrix played there often, and I saw him when he was backing up John Hammond Jr.

There was a really good rock club called Ondine's. It was very *crème de la crème* of society, like Studio 54 later on. It was in the mid-fifties, right underneath the Queensboro Bridge. It was sort of like the hip, pre-Max's Kansas City crowd who eventually moved to Max's Kansas City. Hamptons chic start-

**NEW YORK  
& BOSTON**





The Velvets held court at the Dom on St. Mark's Place, today a 12-Step meeting place

ed at Ondine's. Mia Farrow would be dancing; it was that kind of place, where "society" would rub shoulders with these new rock & roll culture heroes. It didn't last very long, but the Doors played there, Dylan would go

by there. It was just tables, with a DJ, dance floor, and the band played on a kind of high stage by the bar. It was where a lot of new bands played and a lot of cool people and photographers hung out. It was the era of *Blow-Up* and that sort of very hip, tuned-in, mid-Sixties Rolling Stones, English boots, high fashion. Granny Takes a Trip was a clothing store where people would get dressed up in velvet jackets, all dandied up, looking cool, bizarre sunglasses, and it was long hair, Beatles-type jackets, Edwardian kind of thing.

Another place in New York that was important was Steve Paul's Scene. I remember one night seeing the Jeff Beck Group the first time the band got to New York with Rod Stewart. In the audience were Nico, Jim Morrison, the Young Rascals, the Velvet Underground, the Lovin' Spoonful, Johnny Winter and a host of others. The place was filled with musicians. It was a scene; everyone was checking out the new band, because Jeff Beck was just coming from the Yardbirds. It was like three o'clock in the morning. They closed the doors and it went all night. I remember Jimi Hendrix and Beck having this marathon all-night jam, with Rod Stewart singing and Ronnie Wood playing bass. This was about '67—pre-Fillmore. Steve Paul was always booking new, interesting acts.

And of course there was the Peppermint Lounge, which was real famous, where Joey Dee and a lot of rock & roll bands would play. You'd play four or five sets and there'd be forty minutes on, twenty off, forty on, twenty off, forty on, twenty off. That was union regulations. On weekends you'd do matinees. The Peppermint Lounge was the most famous one in the media; people knew about it because of "The Peppermint Twist" and Joey Dee and *Doin' the Twist at the Peppermint Lounge*. They had the cages for go-go girls in the white boots and the whole go-go thing. It was

popular, but it became more of a bridge-and-tunnel crowd.

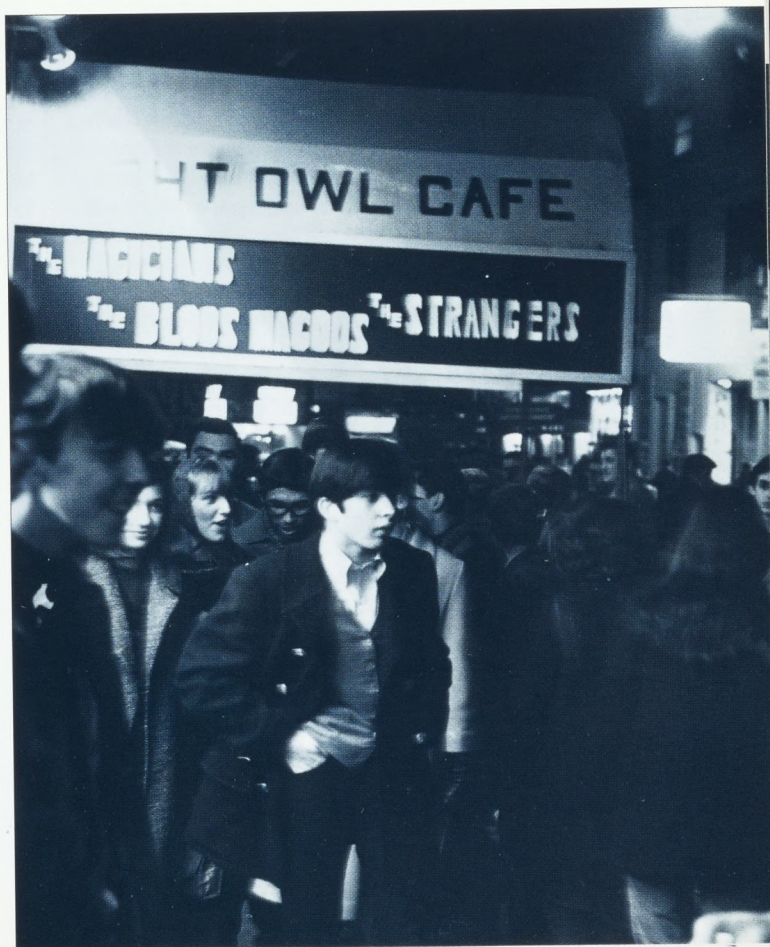
I ended up in Boston around '65. There was rock & roll at a club called the Rathskeller — which is still there — where I played with the Hallucinations. We did progressive avant-garde blues. I was the lead singer and harmonica player. The Rat had a lot of fraternity bands trying to be like the Kingsmen, doing "Louie Louie." It was all football players, big guys with crewcuts and gals with tight blouses and stuff. You had lots of big football types dancing on the dance floor, drinking big pitchers of beer and getting violently drunk. When we started playing there, people would scream out, "Play 'Louie Louie,'" and we'd go, "No, man, we don't do that, we do our own thing."

The premier folk club was called Club 47, in Cambridge. It was like Gerde's, and Joan Baez got her start there. This was a little before the Boston Tea Party, which was sort of like the Electric Circus — the big rock club. It was an old synagogue turned into a club. That was where the Who and Jeff Beck and Traffic played, and Led Zeppelin played there during their first American tour. I played with the Velvet Underground there about ten to twelve times because when they came to Boston we always opened up for them. Most people ended up going to the Tea Party. It was more of a scene. The J. Geils Band mainly played the Tea Party and Club 47.

Then there were places like the Banjo Room, which would have minstrel-type bands and rock & roll bands. And there was this place called the Unicorn, a folk club. There were a lot of coffeehouses and folk clubs in Beacon Hill on Charles Street.

The Surf and the Ebb Tide were clubs right on the ocean by the amusement park, so you got that whole honky-tonk feel. It was sort of like Rockaway or the Jersey Shore. A lot of your rockers would play there. Bo Diddley would come there, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis. That scene had been there since the early Sixties. Every generation has its own scene — it's a cyclical thing.

Bands playing originals rocked the Night Owl nightly







Paul Kantner trips the light fantastic in his hometown

## SAN FRANCISCO

Greetings, People of Earth  
 San Francisco calling . . .  
 Club scene . . . '60s you ask . . . ???

"If you remember the '60s,  
 You weren't really there."

The Windows of Heaven  
 Alternate Quantum to what had been before  
 Especially for a young Catholic boy, altar boy and all  
 Just escaped from the Jesuits running in the hall

The Golden Age of Fucking  
 The relatively Innocent Age of Sex, Drugs & Rock & Roll  
 A Reckoning with the Universe  
 A Balance  
 The Fillmore and Avalon ballrooms 1965-67  
 Transcending

Rock & Roll should be Dangerous  
 At any given moment you have 10 minutes to live

And the Future is About Nerve  
 Who has it  
 Who does not

And the 21st century starts here

As in any exploration . . . expedition  
 Some lived  
 Some died

Escape from Gravity Vortex Physics  
 At the Speed of Imagination  
 Plotting the overthrow of Reality

As the man who died and went to heaven said:  
 "It ain't bad, but it ain't San Francisco!"

S.F. . . . Science fiction  
 49 square miles surrounded entirely by reality  
 Forbidden Zones

A gateway to the edge  
 The very edge of Western Civilization  
 in a savage, indifferent universe  
 then . . . and now

Crumb's Space-Time Motherfucking continuum  
 And it's a fresh wind that Blows Against the Empire

Not just a club scene not like it was before  
 New ways of thinking  
 as if it was you that had the first thought  
 ever

Neal Cassady to Jack Casady  
 That smirk of amused knowledge  
 Suggesting that he/she was capable  
 of knowing things about you  
 That you didn't know yourself

Zappa to Butterfield Airplane Dead Quicksilver  
 Big Brother Santana Lenny Bruce and Russian Poets  
 Miles Davis to B.B. King Who Zeppelin Hendrix Byrds  
 and miles to go before I sleep  
 Light shows and demented women and boys

There was death in the air  
 The death, we hoped, of current Reality  
 and much of what we were taught was true

A fog-cloaked dream  
 The end of the usual  
 A semi-eternal force-engine of the Universe  
 That which makes the tides

We were there to break the laws  
 All the rules  
 Sh'man, we even broke the Laws of Physics

Our generation had no "test" no WWII, no Auschwitz,  
 didn't fall for Vietnam  
 We had to "test" ourselves so we did  
 In a world of chaos  
 Let there be Light

And they'll never take me alive . . .

Paul Kantner  
 San Francisco  
 at the end of the 20th century

**DOMENIC PRIORE** San Francisco in the Sixties had more than psychedelic ballrooms, light shows and improvisation: The Bay Area was loaded with teenage nightclubs and thrilling bands beyond the Fillmore regulars.

The most overlooked combo had to be San Jose's Chocolate Watch Band, whose *Inner Mystique* is a psychedelic masterwork. The Count V recorded the definitive Sixties punk single "Psychotic Reaction," and the Syndicate of Sound unleashed the nugget "Little Girl." All three bands made the scene at two clubs in Sunnyvale: the Brass Rail and the Bold Knight. Losers South, in San Jose, was a popular nightspot, taking in punkers such as Millbrae's Banshees and Burlingame's Gentrys. San Carlos clubs the Cinnamon Tree



and the Swiss Chalet featured these bands along with the E-Types ("Put the Clock Back on the Wall") and the Mourning Reign ("Satisfaction Guaranteed"). The San Carlos pop-art group Powder – displaced Mods with a sound akin to the Who's – began at the Bold Knight as the Art Collection.

At Santa Clara's Continental Ballroom, the Golliwogs honed their skills enroute to becoming Creedence Clearwater Revival. As CCR, the band first made its mark at the New Monk in Berkeley and Dino Carlo's in North Beach.

Over in San Mateo, disc jockey Tom Donahue's favorite hang-out, the Morocco Room, was where the Beau Brummels emerged to become the first successful San Francisco-area band. Shortly thereafter, the Mojo Men

## SAN FRANCISCO

broke from the Morocco with a couple of hits, and the Vejtables also played there regularly. One of the very first Warlocks gigs was at Big Al's Gas House in Belmont, which was really just a pizza parlor with a stage and a dance floor. Among the regulars were the Knight Riders; their punk classic "I" for years has left people wondering "who?" Sly and the Family Stone made it down to Redwood City for gigs at Winchester Cathedral, where they honed their unique R&B approach. Garage rockers the Other Side found the club equally cozy for bashing out their frustrations. Down in Santa Cruz, the Tikis were holding forth from the Coconut Grove, a rather large venue on the Boardwalk. After cutting a few cool sides, the boys split for L.A. to become Harper's Bizarre.

San Francisco benefited from North Beach's bordello atmosphere, with topless go-go goddess Carol Doda shaking to the R&B sounds of George and Teddy, house band at the Condor. Bobby Freeman played there and at El Cid, solidifying rock & roll with killers like "Do

Below: Doing the frug  
San Francisco-style  
at the Fillmore West  
Right: Impresario  
Bill Graham

You Wanna Dance" and "C'mon and Swim." The slick El Cid featured the Beau Brummels for six months until they hit; next on board were garage bands like the Vandals, the Ethix and the Sharps. Among the club's regulars were William Penn Fyve ("Swami"), the Opposite Six ("I'll Be Gone") and the Rear Exit ("Excitation"). The Brogues, whose 1965 anguished theme "I Ain't No Miracle Worker" stands among San Francisco's best recordings, played a memorable stint at the Coffee Gallery on Grant Street. Brogues Gary Duncan and Greg Elmore went on to form Quicksilver Messenger Service. Also on Grant, the Peppermint Tree hosted a residency by the Byrds during the summer of '65, as "Mr. Tambourine Man" was breaking on KYA.

The Charlatans drew fans to Virginia City, Nevada (several hours away), in '65 for some wild shows at the Red Dog Saloon, but they also found the right atmosphere for their Barbary dandy style at the Roaring Twenties in North Beach during the Summer of Love. Tom Donahue and Bobby Mitchell made the first attempt at a psychedelic club in late 1965 at Mothers (previously DJ's) on Broadway in North Beach, where they featured the Great Society, Dino Valenti and several others. The scene took off at the Longshoremen's Hall with the first Family Dog show (featuring the Jefferson Airplane, the Great Society, the Charlatans and the Marbles) and the Trips Festival. Big Brother and the Holding Company played the California Hall on Polk (as did the other psychedelic bands), and the Tenderloin rumbled at the Western Front with the Grateful Dead and Furious Bandersnatch. Once the Summer of Love hit, the Straight Theater and Haight Levels opened in Haight-Ashbury and featured the Santana Blues Band and the Final Solution. The Mystery Trend played the Matrix on Fillmore Street, home base for Jefferson Airplane. Over in Chinatown, the Dragon a Go Go and Wentworth Alley kept rockin' with groups like the Outfit and the Shillings.

There was plenty of action in the East Bay. Sly and the Family Stone and the Ashes (who later became the Peanut Butter Conspiracy) worked their acts at Frenchy's in the suburb of Hayward. The Rollerena in San Leandro booked the Yardbirds, Them and the 13th Floor Elevators. Peter Wheat and the Breadmen ("Baby What's New") and the Harbinger Complex ("I Think I'm Down") were local to the area and played the Rollerena often. Oakland's Leamington Hotel was a regular spot for the Baytovens ("Waiting for You") and Wildflower ("Baby Dear"). Berkeley's Jabberwock and New Orleans Fish House were adult folk clubs turned rock & roll, featuring Country Joe and the Fish, Mad River and the Second Coming. The Purple Earthquake played the Catacombs, a converted church basement that was Berkeley's other teen hangout. San Pablo's Maple Hall featured Big Brother, the 13th Floor Elevators and Quicksilver. Marin County bands like Moby Grape and Sons of Champlin holed up at the Ark in Sausalito.

Though only a handful of Bay Area bands hit the big time, the rock & roll landscape there proved to be a fertile stomping ground. (Thanks to Alec Palao of 'Cream Puff War' magazine.)





**DOMENIC PRIORE** A few years before the Dodgers split from Brooklyn, my parents moved from the Bronx to Los Angeles, where Pop wound up delivering mail to Joltin' Joe, his wife Marilyn and, somewhere on the route, Groucho Marx. In the early Sixties, our relatives visited often, necessitating plenty of trips to Hollywood. With these and the rare cruise with my baby-sittin' sister and her pals, I became fascinated by the twinkling nightlife I saw on the Sunset Strip. Tiny Naylor's. The Hollywood Palladium. Dean Martin's face in neon. Wow! . . . and *teenagers* everywhere. The nightclubs' music reached me directly – not only through radio, but visually as beamed to our Monterey Park house by teenage dance programs proliferating on local TV stations. *Shebang, 9th Street West, Lloyd Thaxton's Hop, Boss City, Groovy* and *Hollywood A Go Go* captured the action, as did the networks' *Shindig*, *Where the Action Is* and *American Bandstand*, all based in town. More

## LOS ANGELES

bands arriving all the time! The Hollywood nightlife remained a spectacular wonderland in my understanding of where the music *came from*.

There was a decided swinger atmosphere on the Sunset Strip, a holdover from 1938, when gambling rackets were forced to split and create a new "Strip" in the southern Nevada desert. The Whisky-a-Go-Go sat alongside striptease joints the Largo and the Classic Cat. The Twist craze turned the go-go girl into a pop icon, opening the door for harder-edged Chicano R&B combos to shake it up in places like Jack Martin's A.M.-P.M. Rock & roll was virtually smuggled into Hollywood establishments via the Premiers ("Farmer John"), The Midnighters ("Whittier Blvd.") and Cannibal and the Headhunters ("Land of a Thousand Dances"). Johnny Rivers led a house band at the Whisky-a-Go-Go, and when Trini Lopez helped the Standells land a steady gig at P.J.'s, all hell broke loose. Before long, the Seeds took off at the Sea Witch (a teenage nightclub adjacent to Dino's Lodge), pulling their unearthly electric piano and snarling fuzztone sound out of thin ether. Hollywood quickly was becoming Mecca for what Lenny Kaye defined as "punk rock" on the LP *Nuggets*.

The fab Whisky-a-Go-Go, where the Buffalo Springfield roamed, 1967



Nightclubs with that "wild teenage sound" began to swarm about Sunset in the aftermath of the British Invasion, making Hollywood America's answer to Swinging London. Texas transplants DeWayne Quirico and Randy Fuller of the Bobby Fuller Four staked the claim, "We play West Texas rock & roll, the same thing the Beatles have been trying to play and can't." Indeed, their outpost was the Red Velvet, a haven for rockers like the



Knickerbockers, the Righteous Brothers, the Music Machine and the Leaves, whose folk-punk version of "Hey Joe" became one of two Sunset Strip anthems.

G-L-O-R-I-A!: Van Morrison and Them rock the Whisky-a-Go-Go, 1966

As more clubs opened, so arrived diverse patrons and talent to fill them up. The Ash Grove on Melrose featured John Lee Hooker, Ravi Shankar, Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, John Coltrane and Taj Mahal and Ry Cooder's Rising Sons. The Troubadour provided an environment where future members of the Byrds could escape their jobs in "nice" folk aggregations and plot something subversive. By their residency at Ciro's (which had opened during Hollywood's glamorous Art Deco days), the Byrds were busy fusing important elements of the folk scene and turning rock & roll into a sociopolitical force. Bob Dylan sat in with the band at Ciro's. Regulars included sculptor Vito Paulekas and his harem, often described as a "hairy band of dancers" but better known to insiders as "freaks."

The freedom inherent in such an "anything goes" scene allowed both Arthur Lee and Frank Zappa to emerge with their respective bands. Love managed to cross-pollinate jazz and folk rock with rhythm & blues, and somehow welded it with a garagey feel in a dank cave known as Bido Lito's, on Cosmo Street. The Mothers of Invention achieved a





similar echoey mix, reeling in classical, parody and jazz, with a hint of pachuco soul. This worked at the Action on Santa Monica and made the jump to the Trip on Sunset (where the Velvet Underground's Exploding Plastic Inevitable met with its only warm response on the West Coast). The Strip's early house bands ranged from the Iron Butterfly at Club Galaxy to the Doors at the London Fog (a year before the band set fire to the airwaves).

The person standing next to you inside a club might be a musical sage, a cutting-edge thespian or a Downey resident out for kicks. The separation between audience and artist was nil. Quality records were being made by such garage bands as the Merry Go Round, the Dearly Beloved, the Sons of Adam, Limey and the Yanks, the Grains of Sand, the Colony, the Dovers, the Hysterics, the Puddin' Heads, the U.F.O., the Chymes, the Satans, and the Lyrics. The Avengers' "Be a Cave Man" and the Syndicate's "The Egyptian Thing" defined primal fun, an elusive quality when rock grew too serious a year or so later. It's no surprise that Captain Beefheart was a favorite on this scene. Newcomers were welcome at the Purple Onion, Gazzari's, Stratford on Sunset, Brave New World and the Haunted House, a psycho-cheezy horror-film-set-as-nightclub on Hollywood Boulevard. The W.C. Fields Memorial Electric String Band rocked the house with the original version of "(I'm Not Your) Steppin' Stone," and we can still learn a thing or two from even more aggressive records by the Humane Society ("Knock Knock"), the Bees ("Voices Green and Purple") and the Sloths ("Makin' Love"). It was a bit easier for the Turtles, the Grass Roots, the Association, Sonny and Cher, the Mamas and the Papas and the Stone Poneys to hit the charts with their slabs of three-minute glory.

**Eight miles high:**  
Byrds fans go for a stroll after checking out the band at the Trip, on the Strip

Out-of-town bands constantly made the scene. In 1965, Them's "Gloria" became the other Strip anthem when, despite a national ban, it reached Number One on KRLA. The Yardbirds' raveup style had a big effect on L.A. garage bands, and it's fitting that the Rolling Stones' fuzz-guitar youthquake "Satisfaction" was recorded in '65 at the Strip's RCA Studios (fuzz was pioneered in L.A. studios by Phil Spector and Jan Berry).



**Secret Agent Man:**  
Whisky house band Johnny Rivers, 1965

San Jose's Chocolate Watch Band, Count V and Syndicate of Sound thrived at the Hullabaloo Club, It's Boss (Ciro's revamped with Pop Art for '66) and Pandora's Box. The Grateful Dead moved to Los Angeles during this period and, with the Merry Pranksters, threw Acid Tests and Happenings. Paul Revere and the Raiders emigrated from the Pacific Northwest, leaving behind the Sonics and Kingsmen.

The Sunset Strip was irresistible. Hipsters walking the boulevard between espresso bars, mod boutiques, underground movie houses and rock & roll nightclubs represented the new order, irking reactionary "old Hollywood" types. The LAPD jumped into action, enforcing a 10:00 p.m. curfew, which led to three separate demonstrations, between November 1966 and January 1967, in front of Pandora's Box. Kids were carried off in paddy wagons, and when the smoke cleared, most of the nightclubs were gone and the focus shifted northward to San Francisco. Whisky-a-Go-Go regulars Buffalo Springfield recorded "For What It's Worth," documenting the end of the Strip's glory days.

**For What It's Worth:** Teen rebels wreak havoc on the Sunset Strip

