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VANITY FAIR

July 2012

Suddenly That Summer

By Sheila Weller

It was billed as “the Summer of Love,” a blast of glamour, ecstasy, and Utopianism that drew some 75,000 young people to the San Francisco streets in 1967. Who were the true movers behind the Haight-Ashbury happening that turned America on to a whole new age?



Photograph by Jim Marshall/Digital colorization by Lorna Clark/Permission of Jim Marshall L.L.C.

FREE FOR ALL The Charlatans perform in Golden Gate Park.

In a 25-square-block area of San Francisco, in the summer of 1967, an ecstatic, Dionysian mini-world sprang up like a mushroom, dividing American culture into a Before and After unparalleled since World War II. If you were between 15 and 30 that year, it was almost impossible to resist the lure of that transcendent, peer-driven season of glamour, ecstasy, and Utopianism. It was billed as the Summer of

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Love, and its creators did not employ a single publicist or craft a media plan. Yet the phenomenon washed over America like a tidal wave, erasing the last dregs of the martini-sipping *Mad Men* era and ushering in a series of liberations and awakenings that irreversibly changed our way of life.

The Summer of Love also thrust a new kind of music—acid rock—across the airwaves, nearly put barbers out of business, traded clothes for costumes, turned psychedelic drugs into sacred door keys, and revived the outdoor gatherings of the Messianic Age, making everyone an acolyte *and* a priest. It turned sex with strangers into a mode of generosity, made “uptight” an epithet on a par with “racist,” refashioned the notion of earnest Peace Corps idealism into a bacchanalian rhapsody, and set that favorite American adjective, “free,” on a fresh altar.

“It was this magical moment ... this liberation movement, a time of sharing that was very special,” with “a lot of trust going around,” says Carolyn “Mountain Girl” Garcia, who had a baby with Ken Kesey, the man who helped kick off that season, and who then married Jerry Garcia, the man who epitomized its fruition. “The Summer of Love became the template: the Arab Spring is related to the Summer of Love; Occupy Wall Street is related to the Summer of Love,” says Joe McDonald, the creator and lead singer of Country Joe and the Fish and a boyfriend of one of that summer’s two queens, Janis Joplin. “And it became the new status quo,” he continues. “The Aquarian Age! They all want sex. They all want to have fun. Everyone wants hope. We opened the door, and everybody went through it, and everything changed after that. Sir Edward Cook, the biographer of Florence Nightingale, said that when the success of an idea of past generations is ingrained in the public and taken for granted the source is forgotten.”

Well, here is that source, according to the people who lived it.

“Old-Timey”

Certain places, for unknowable reasons, become socio-cultural petri dishes, and between 1960 and 1964 the area of Northern California extending from San Francisco to Palo Alto was one of them.

San Francisco’s official bohemia was North Beach, where the Beats hung out at Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s City Lights bookstore, and where espresso was sipped, jazz was worshipped, and hipsters did *not* dance. North Beach was not unique, however; it had strong counterparts, for example, in New York’s Greenwich Village, L.A.’s Venice Beach and Sunset Strip, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

What *was* unique was happening across town, where a group of young artists, musicians, and San Francisco State College students became besotted with the city’s past. “There was a huge romanticism around the idea of the Barbary Coast, about San Francisco as a lawless, vigilante, late-19th-century town,” says Rock Scully, one of those who rented cheap Victorian houses in a run-down neighborhood called Haight-Ashbury. They dressed, he says, “in old, stiff-collared shirts with pins, and riding coats and long jackets.”

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“Old-timey” became the shibboleth. Guys wore their hair long under Western-style hats, and young people decorated their apartments in old-fashioned castoffs. Scully recalls, “Michael Ferguson [an S.F. State art student] was wearing and living Victoriana in 1963”—a year before the Beatles came to America, and before costuming-as-rebellion existed in England. They were not aping the British. “We were *Americans!*,” insists musician Michael Wilhelm. Architecture student George Hunter was yet another in the crowd, and then there were the artists Wes Wilson and Alton Kelley, the latter an émigré from New England who frequently wore a top hat. “Kelley wanted to be freeze-dried and set on his Victorian couch behind glass,” says his friend Luria Castell (now Luria Dickson), a politically active S.F. State student and the daughter of a waitress. Castell and her friends wore long velvet gowns and lace-up boots—a far cry from the Beatnik outfits of the early 60s.

Chet Helms, a University of Texas at Austin dropout who had hitchhiked to San Francisco, also joined the group and dressed old-timey. He had come to San Francisco with a friend, a nice, middle-class girl who had been a member of her high school’s Slide Rule Club and who had also left the university, hoping to become a singer. Her name was Janis Joplin.

Helms, Castell, Scully, Kelley, and a few others lived semi-communally. “We were purists,” says Castell, “snooty” about their left-wing politics and esoteric aesthetic. All their houses had dogs, so they called themselves the Family Dog. As for Wilhelm, Hunter, Ferguson, and their friends Dan Hicks and Richie Olsen, they took up instruments that most of them could barely play and formed the Charlatans, which became the first San Francisco band of the era. Wes Wilson, distinct for keeping his hair short, became the eventual scene’s first poster artist, creating a style that would be epoch-defining.

Soon they came to share something else: LSD. It had been more than a decade since Sandoz Laboratories made the first batches of lysergic acid diethylamide, the high-octane synthetic version of two natural consciousness-altering compounds, psilocybin and mescaline, when, in 1961, the Harvard psychology professor Timothy Leary had his life-changing experience with psilocybin mushrooms, in Mexico. Leary, a charismatic womanizer, and Richard Alpert, a colleague at Harvard and a closeted bisexual, would invite friends and a few grad students to drop acid with them off campus, and they endeavored to apply scholarly methodology to the sense-enhancing, cosmic-love-stimulating, and sometimes psychosis-abetting properties of LSD.

While Leary and Alpert were raising consciousness in their way on the East Coast, Ken Kesey, a young Oregonian, was doing it on the peninsula south of San Francisco far more outrageously—by buying a school bus, painting it in jubilant graffiti, and driving around in it, stoned, with a group he called the Merry Pranksters. In 1959, Kesey had been a volunteer in a C.I.A.-sponsored LSD experiment at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Menlo Park. His 1962 novel, *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, was the result of his work there. In 1963 he assembled the Pranksters, including Stewart Brand, later famous as the author of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, and Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac’s best friend and the model for Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*.

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At the same time, the Peninsula was incubating a music scene. In 1962 a young guitarist named Jorma Kaukonen, the son of a State Department official from Washington, D.C., went to a hootenanny (a sing-along folk event) and met another young guitarist, a music teacher who had been named after the composer Jerome Kern. Open-faced with wild hair, Jerry Garcia led a jug band, and Kaukonen recalls him as “absolutely the big dog on the scene: he had a *huge* following, was very outgoing and articulate. People gravitated to him.”

The same weekend Kaukonen met Garcia, he says, he met Janis Joplin, “who was in her folky stage.” Later, after amphetamine addiction made her return to Texas to straighten out, “she would be R&B Janis, peerless as Bessie Smith and Memphis Minnie,” Kaukonen recalls. But that night she was singing her Texas heart out on folk classics.

Two years later, a flirtatious Neal Cassady picked up Carolyn Adams near her cabin in the hills above Palo Alto, and they drove to Kesey’s house. Adams, who came from a good Poughkeepsie family and had been kicked out of a private high school, would soon be known as Mountain Girl because she lived in the woods and rode a motorcycle. “I was frolicking about,” she says. That night, she recalls, “I saw the bus and fell in love.” She found Kesey to be “this Promethean figure, [who] saw psychedelics as a gift to mankind.”

Carolyn Adams became a Prankster, and she and Kesey, who was married, became lovers. Their group soon initiated the Acid Tests, “happenings around the Bay Area,” she says, where “we were creating a safe place for people to get high.” They’d put a “low dose” of acid “in a big picnic cooler or garbage can, something that would hold 10 or 12 gallons,” often diluted in “Kool-Aid or a big bucket of water.... It was a voyage,” she says, adding, “At a ‘graduation,’ [we] gave out diplomas to people who passed the test. Ken was wearing the silver lamé space suit I made for him.”

These were parties without alcohol. The drug engendered a hyper-reflective state of mind and languid, sensual body movement, both very new at the time. Even the usually gimlet-eyed Tom Wolfe, whose *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* was a dispatch from that front, recently admitted having “felt like I had been in on something very spiritual” during his “all-night sessions with Kesey and the Pranksters.”

Carolyn Adams and Jerry Garcia became a couple in the late 60s, had two daughters, and married in 1981. (They divorced in 1993.) Today she says of Garcia when they met, “He was brilliant. He read omnivorously. He was obsessed with music I think he had synesthesia, which is the professional word for when you [hear a sound and it causes you to] see color and sculpture.”

Soon Jerry Garcia ditched his jug band and formed the Warlocks, made up of young men who had mostly never left Northern California—Bob Weir, Phil Lesh, Ron “Pigpen” McKernan, and Bill Kreutzmann. The Warlocks became the Acid Tests’ resident band, and Rock Scully became the Warlocks’ manager. Scully and Garcia were brought together by Owsley Stanley, a young Berkeley chemist who was said to make the purest acid on earth. The scion of a prominent Kentucky political family, Owsley, as

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he was always called—as was his product—was a true believer. He once said, about the first time he took acid, “I walked outside and the cars were kissing the parking meters.”

Responding to a high whistle audible only to hidden soulmates, seekers in their 20s started moving to San Francisco. A random slew came from Brooklyn, including a schoolteacher turned poet named Allen Cohen, who eventually started *The San Francisco Oracle*, the newspaper that would define the new *Zeitgeist*, and two artists, Dave Getz and Victor Moscoso, both lured by the suddenly popular San Francisco Art Institute, which Jerry Garcia had briefly attended. Getz would become a drummer for Big Brother and the Holding Company (all the new acid bands had wildly esoteric names), and Moscoso would turn out to be one of the scene’s poster artists. Heading for the Bay Area “was like a *calling*; it was very strong,” says Stanley Mouse, a shy, rebellious painter of hot rods from Detroit. As he was crossing the Golden Gate Bridge, a friend with him asked, “How long you staying?” Mouse answered, “Forever.”

The Family Dog and the Charlatans spent the summer of 1965 in Virginia City, Nevada, an old mining town. The Charlatans played in the Red Dog Saloon, which was run by hipsters like them, who romanticized the days of the Gold Rush. Their acid-dosed friends moved and swayed to their music in improvised, communal, free-form dancing. Dancing to pop music until this time mostly meant doing prescribed steps, in male-female pairs, to three-minute Top 40 hits, which, whether they were very bad (“Woolly Bully”), very good (“[I Can’t Get No] Satisfaction”), or sublime (“My Girl”), still had a danceable arc. But the combination of this fantasy venue and the riffy, amateur music stoked abandon and in-group narcissism. And so psychedelic dancing, which would become *the* new dancing, was launched in an old-timey saloon, where one of the country’s first light shows threw liquid globs of color on the walls.

Once they were back in San Francisco, the Family Dog couldn’t wait to replicate the experience. As Luria Castell Dickson says, “With LSD, we experienced what it took Tibetan monks 20 years to obtain, yet we got there in 20 minutes.”

Nirvana

On October 16, 1965, the Family Dog rented the Longshoremen’s Hall, near Fisherman’s Wharf, for the first of their bacchanals. “About 400 or 500 people showed up—it was *such* a revelation,” Alton Kelley recalled a few years before his death, in 2008. “Everybody was walking around with their mouths open, going, ‘Where did all these freaks come from? I thought my friends were the only guys around!’ ” People were dressed in “kind of crazy Edwardian clothes,” says Stanley Mouse. But they were “also, now, getting more *ecstatically* dressed,” says composer Ramon Sender, who’d witnessed the scene grow more rapturous since the Acid Test he had participated in. The Family Dog then had *more* parties, each with a sly wink of a name. Victor Moscoso remembers seeing a poster, made by Kelley and Mouse, for “A Tribute to Ming the Merciless.” Moscoso says, “I thought, like Bob Dylan, Something is happening, but you don’t know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones?” Moscoso did know, though. They *all* knew.

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In January 1966, the Pranksters held the Trips Festival, also at the Longshoremen's Hall. Stewart Brand set up a tepee. Ramon Sender provided synthesizer music. LSD was in the ice cream that time, and it was not one but "three nights of craziness," Carolyn Garcia remembers. "That's the first time any of us met Bill Graham," she says. Graham was the manager of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a radical theater organization. Rescued, as a child, from the Nazis, Graham had later earned a Bronze Star in the Korean War. Watching this new scene, says Carolyn Garcia, "Graham decided that he could take everything he saw here and make a fortune."

From then on, two shuttered San Francisco halls—the Avalon Ballroom and the Fillmore Auditorium—sprang to life as venues for the ongoing music and dance parties. Chet Helms ran the Avalon; Bill Graham ran the Fillmore. A growing group of bands—Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Sopwith Camel—played both halls. The clothes on the dancers got so wild it was like "seven different centuries thrown together in one room," an insider noted. "They were only 'costumes' to the straight people," says Rock Scully. Richard Alpert, who had traveled to India that year and had been renamed Ram Dass, visited and announced that the acid sybaritism in San Francisco trumped anything on the East Coast.

The parties were advertised by posters on every lamppost and coffeehouse wall in the Bay Area. The artists included Mouse, Kelley, and Moscoso—who all say they felt like Toulouse-Lautrec in 1890s Montmartre—but Wes Wilson was the pioneer. He'd seen a gallery brochure for the Austrian Art Deco painter Alfred Roller and was taken by Roller's Viennese Secessionist typeface—thick, with heavy horizontals, lighter verticals, and rounded serif edges. Wilson filled every inch of his posters with the boxy typeface and sensuous illustrations. Moscoso says, "Wes freed us! It clicked: *Reverse everything I have ever learned!* A poster should transmit its message quickly and simply? No! *Our* posters were taking as long as they could to be read, and were hanging up the viewer!" All four (and the late Rick Griffin) churned out flyers for the Fillmore and Avalon that people had to work to comprehend. "You'd see crowds standing there, grooving on them," Mouse recalls.

The star band called itself Jefferson Airplane. Jorma Kaukonen and his D.C. friend Jack Casady joined folksinger Marty Balin, local boy Paul Kantner, and Spencer Dryden, a nephew of Charlie Chaplin's, and labeled their sound "fo-jazz," for folk-jazz. Signe Anderson, the wife of one of the Pranksters, was the Airplane's female vocalist.

Anderson was a folksinger, as most of the girls on the scene were. But the lead singer of another group, the Great Society, was notably different. Grace Slick "was not a Beatnik girl," says Kaukonen. "She washed her hair every day." The self-assured beauty with the thick black hair, piercing blue eyes, and fiercely enunciated alto had an air of high society about her. Slick had attended Finch, the now defunct college for debutantes in New York City, and had, at 20, married the son of friends of her parents' in a lavish wedding in San Francisco's Grace Cathedral. But she and her crowd were soon into smoking grass. As she says, "Forget that *Leave It to Beaver* shit—I wanted Paris in the 20s." She was modeling \$20,000 couture gowns at I. Magnin when she walked into the Matrix club—of which Marty Balin was part

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owner—one night and heard Jefferson Airplane. “I said to myself, This looks better than what I’m doing. Modeling was a pain in the ass.” But the blasé attitude masked real talent. “Grace had one of the great voices of all time,” says Kaukonen. Casady adds, “Very few women back then walked to the edge of the stage like a guy and sang right into the eyes of the audience.”

One night, listening to Miles Davis’s *Sketches of Spain* when she was stoned, Slick thought of the sly drug references in *Alice in Wonderland* and composed, of all things, a bolero. She took the song to Jefferson Airplane when she replaced Signe Anderson. Called “White Rabbit,” it began, “One pill makes you larger and one pill makes you small,” and it would become the anthem of the coming summer.

Needy Janis Joplin was the opposite of cool Grace Slick. Chet Helms lured Joplin back to the Bay Area in 1966 to audition for Big Brother and the Holding Company. “Janis was not attractive—she had bad skin and was wearing funky sandals and cutoffs,” Dave Getz recalls. But her singing, he continues, “knocked us out, *instantaneously*.” Getz perceived what audiences would love about Joplin: “Janis was one of the most vulnerable people I have ever met. She’d been voted Ugliest *Man* on Campus—not even Ugliest Woman!—by a bunch of fraternity boys, and that had really hurt.” She was a drinker, not a psychedelics user, though “there was really no place she wouldn’t go; she was gonna knock on every door.” Her bisexuality and her roiling emotions could be excruciating for her. One night she bolted out of a club because, as she wailed to Getz when he ran after her, “that black chick in there—she turns me on *too much*.” She soon became involved with Joe McDonald, from whose perspective (his parents were Communists) she was a “politically naïve, intelligent, hardworking” girl. She was always primed for rejection. “One day she went running down Haight Street, crying, ‘Joe stood me up!’ ” when he was only late, according to her eventual lover Peggy Caserta.

Joplin’s creative epiphany occurred after a friend of Getz’s gave her acid for the first time—slipping it into her cold duck—and they went to the Fillmore to hear Otis Redding. “Janis told me she invented the ‘buh-buh-buh-*ba-by* ...’ after seeing him,” says Joe McDonald. “She wanted to *be* Otis Redding.” Grace Slick salutes her 1967 co-queen (who died of a drug overdose in 1970), her soul sister in prodigious “swearing and drinking,” by saying, “She had the balls to do her thing by herself. A white girl from Texas, singing the blues? What gumption, what spirit! I don’t think I had that fearlessness.” Slick sadly regrets, “I was so Episcopalian that when I saw a certain sadness in Janis’s eyes I felt it was none of my business.” If she could turn back the clock, she says, she would have tried to help her.

Victor Moscoso says that 1966 was “when it worked. You’d walk down Haight and nod to another longhair and it *meant* something.” Rock Scully adds, “We painted our houses bright colors. We swept the streets.” The Grateful Dead all crammed into a house at 710 Ashbury; so did Carolyn Garcia, with Sunshine, her baby daughter with Kesey. Barely 20, Carolyn cooked every meal for that “boisterous, wonderful” band, and she saw how “competitive to a fault” Jerry was. “He would rehearse and rehearse and rehearse, and with these intricate fingerings—always wanting to excel, to be the best” at the acid-fueled improvisations he now played, which he described as “something like ordered chaos.” (Garcia died of heart failure in 1995.)

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Kelley and Mouse made their posters at 715 Ashbury, across the street; Janis Joplin was down the block, often calling out to the others from her window. The poet Allen Cohen and his live-in girlfriend, Laurie, hosted “soirées for everyone who was anything on the scene,” says Laurie Sarlat Coe today. “Drugs were a sacrament. Everything was spiritual. Everyone read *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.” The brothers Ron and Jay Thelin opened what was likely the country’s first head shop, the Psychedelic Shop, devoted so much more to peace than profit that they wound up giving everything away.

Allen Cohen’s psychedelic newspaper, *The San Francisco Oracle*, gave readers Eastern-religion-tinged illustrations and Founding-Fathers-on-acid declarations: “When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for people to cease [obeying] obsolete social patterns which have isolated man from his consciousness ... we the citizens of the earth declare our love and compassion for all hate-carrying men and women.” Peggy Caserta’s boutique, Mnasidika, was where “Wes and Mouse and Marty and Janis and Jerry and Bobby [Weir] and Phil [Lesh] hung out. We felt we’d achieved Nirvana, a Utopian society,” she says. “If you extended your hand, 10 hands would come back.” Herb Caen, the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s columnist, strolled into Mnasidika one day and was struck by these unique new bohemians. They needed a name, and Caen supplied it. He took a little-known slang term and launched it into perpetuity: “hippies.”

More and more young people were flooding the Haight, including four beautiful girls from Antioch College, in Ohio. A sexy anarchist movement, the Diggers, had sprung up, and the girls joined in. One day two of them, Cindy Read and Phyllis Wilner, “were walking down Haight Street,” Cindy recalls, “and Phyllis said, ‘Isn’t this how you thought the world would be, except it wasn’t? *But now, for us, it is!*’”

Inventing a Culture from Scratch

It was an extraordinary moment in history. The Vietnam War was raging, anti-war protests were surging, civil rights had morphed into Black Power, the Beatles and Bob Dylan were voicing a cultural revolution on FM airwaves. Second-tier Haight were soon popping up in every American city. In New York’s East Village, James Rado and Gerome Ragni were writing the musical that would limn the era: *Hair*. The somewhat startled media were using the word “youth” for the postwar baby-boomers, whose demographic bulge they’d just discovered, and whose females had reached maturity just as the Pill had become available. Newsweeklies added “youth beats.” Youth was leading the way.

This hubristic brio was rich soil for the Diggers. Taking their name in part from a group of 17th-century English anarchists, they aimed to “invent a new culture from scratch,” says Peter Coyote, who was born Cohon, the son of a New York investment banker. “I was interested in two things: overthrowing the government and fucking. They went together seamlessly.” He and the actor-director Peter Berg helped lead the San Francisco Mime Troupe: “doing street theater, touring the country, getting arrested, and pulling in girls like mad.”

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Berg and Coyote had just won an Off Broadway Obie Award for their play *Olive Pits* when into the Mime Troupe one day stormed “a guy you couldn’t take your eyes off of. He was dangerous, he was compelling, he was funny,” says Coyote. He was Emmett Grogan, a Brooklyn Catholic-school boy turned actor-anarchist. “Emmett would be in a room, on his knee, with all these strangers surrounding him, telling them things they’d never think of on their own,” says the most beautiful of the Antioch girls, Suzanne Carlton (now Siena Riffia), who became his girlfriend. Coyote recalls Grogan’s buddy, the far less flamboyant Billy Murcott, who made complex charts “of the relationship between persona, wealth, and status.” With Murcott as his brain, Grogan dared Coyote and Berg to take Berg’s concept of “life acting” into the streets: *Remake yourself as you want to be, now! Remake society as you want it to be, now! Assume freedom!* Putting “free” before any word—“food,” “store,” “love,” “human being”—changed *everything*, Berg argued. Coyote and Berg left the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and the Diggers—“Dig this!” Murcott would shout—were born. A burgeoning group, the Diggers were passionately leaderless. Every member, Coyote insists, was “a magical autonomous being. There were no followers.” Caen’s “hippies” now had not only their music, drugs, spirituality, and art but also a political philosophy.

The Diggers wore animal masks and held up traffic in down-with-money demonstrations. They drove a flatbed truck of belly dancers and conga drummers into the financial district and passed out joints to the crowd. They dispensed fake dollar bills printed with winged penises. They cadged day-old food from markets and fresh food from farmers and turned them into Digger Stew. (Joe McDonald was in a Digger kitchen one day, he says, “and the women were saying, ‘They’re out fighting the fucking revolution? And we’re making goddamn dinner again?’ ” Siena Riffia, who later became a lawyer and a single mother of twins fathered by blues singer Taj Mahal, concurs: “Yep, it was a man’s world.”) The Diggers ladled out their stew in Golden Gate Park while Joplin sang or the Grateful Dead played. The music was as free as the food. Stanley Mouse says, “With the Diggers, the Haight became a city within a city—a real community.”

Collecting everything from machinery to clothes, the Diggers opened the Free Store. All the merchandise was gratis, which frustrated shoplifters and made some neighboring merchants “quite nuts” and “pretty defensive,” Digger Judy Goldhaft once recalled. (Goldhaft and the late Peter Berg subsequently founded the ecological organization Planet Drum.) At one point, one of those merchants actually volunteered to pay the Free Store’s rent, probably out of admiration of the Diggers’ idealism and their nerve. Another of the Diggers’ patrons, the socialite Paula McCoy (“always naked under her mink coat,” Coyote recalls), opened her Haight apartment to them and laid out lines of cocaine for their pals the Hells Angels.

Coyote and Grogan once hitchhiked to L.A. and swaggered into the Bel Air homes of young producers, where their defiant eschewal of money actually made them seem *glamorous*. “I never made more than \$2,500 a year from 1966 to 1975,” brags Coyote, who today is a successful actor and a familiar voice on commercials. (Grogan died of a suspected overdose on a New York subway in 1978.) The Diggers created the poverty-is-sexy ideology for young panhandlers. They also purportedly coined the motto

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“Today is the first day of the rest of your life.” They tutored the then unknown Abbie Hoffman. “Abbie literally sat at our feet,” says David Simpson, who, like many ex-Diggers, has been for decades an ecology activist in Northern California. Digger ideas were later introduced to America under Hoffman’s Yippie movement. “The Diggers, in a way, were like a street gang,” says Simpson. “We really believed the socio-economic structure of America was completely unsustainable. We were trying to build a new, free society in the shell of the old.”

This “new, free society” required public celebrations—and its citizens lobbied the city to be able to hold them. In late September 1966, a Haight coalition that included the *Oracle* staff wrote letters to the city fathers about an October “love-pageant rally” for which they were seeking a permit. Then, after that gathering (which protested LSD’s becoming illegal), on January 12, 1967, a similar collection of activists issued a press release for a “Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In” to be held two days later. “[A] new nation has grown inside the robot flesh of the old,” it began. It ended, “Hang your fear at the door and join the future. If you do not believe, please wipe your eyes and see.”

The Human Be-In drew about 20,000 people to Golden Gate Park. Costumes, music, incense, and marijuana abounded. (“There was so much dope rising in the air,” Rock Scully recalls, “Jerry and I thought we’d walked into a geodesic dome.”) Allen Ginsberg was on hand, leading a massive *om* chant. Timothy Leary, then 46, premiered his mantra, “Turn on, tune in, drop out.” A consequential witness was the *Chronicle*’s revered jazz critic, Ralph J. Gleason. “No drunks,” a stunned Gleason wrote in his column. The event was “an affirmation, not a protest ... a promise of good, not evil This is truly something new.” He described it as “an asking for a new dimension to peace ... for the reality of love and a great Nest for all humans.”

As news of the Be-In trickled out, media coverage increased. In early spring, a group of Haight insiders held a homespun version of a press conference, welcoming the youth of America to San Francisco to experience the magic for themselves, as soon as school let out. The Diggers braced to house and feed the hordes. And hordes there would be, given the seductive name coined for the beckoning season. The proposed gathering would be called “the Summer of Love.”

“Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair”

They came even before school let out, by VW, by Greyhound bus, by thumb. Siena Riffia remembers that some charitable individuals rented cheap apartments and transferred the leases to the Diggers so that young visitors could flood into them. Jane Lapiner (another former Digger who is now an environmental activist) recalls that somehow those kids found them. “I started waking up every morning with 10 or 12 people I didn’t know sleeping on my floor.” In June, San Francisco’s public-health director, Dr. Ellis D. Sox (inevitably nicknamed LSD Sox), complained that there were already 10,000 hippies in the city and warned that by summer the cost of fighting hippie diseases would skyrocket.

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Lou Adler, the producer of the Mamas and the Papas, the premier hip L.A. group, brought out a song written by Papa John Phillips and recorded by Scott McKenzie: “San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Some Flowers in Your Hair).” Adler and Phillips saw the fetching anthem through their “commercial minds,” Adler admits, but it was also a flat-out exhortation for kids to come flocking in. It became an immediate hit, which pissed off the Grateful Dead. “We were the total opposite of Haight-Ashbury,” says Adler. “We were Bel Air, we were slick.” Rock Scully scoffs, “ ‘Put a flower in your hair.’ It didn’t say, ‘Bring a blanket and some money; tell your parents where you’re going.’ There were no redeeming features to that song.”

Spurred by that song, however, and by the success of Jefferson Airplane’s first album, as well as the swelling underground buzz about Janis Joplin, kids from all over the country flooded the Haight. One estimate put the summerlong number at 75,000. Digger happenings got bigger, with giant puppets, paper tunnels for people to tumble through, and girls in silver hot pants and tie-dyed tops reciting poems from Lenore Kandel’s *The Love Book*, which had been seized by the police and deemed obscene. The Dead stopped traffic when about 25,000 people jammed a mile of Haight Street to groove while they played. “Every day it was a parade, a procession,” says Stanley Mouse.

Harry Reasoner, of CBS, arrived with a camera crew. *Look* magazine rushed its youngest writer, William Hedgepeth, who was living with his wife and child in Westport, Connecticut, to go underground at the scene. “I hopped out of the cab and was shocked that people’s hair was longer than the Beatles’,” he recalls. He met some kids from the suburbs doing their best to be veteran hippies, shared their pad for weeks, jotted notes on the sly, and was sorely tempted by all the sex. Hedgepeth then flew back to New York and wrote his cover story. “I never wore a suit and tie again,” he says today. “Consciousness is irreversible. It changed my life.”

The Diggers broached the idea of a free clinic to two doctors, and Dr. David E. Smith, who had lived in the Haight for years, volunteered. He signed a \$300-a-month lease for a suite at Haight and Ashbury, rounded up volunteers who utilized all the samples of penicillin, tranquilizers, and other supplies from the hospitals at which they interned, and started a clinic to treat patients suffering from bad acid trips or venereal disease—all with no malpractice insurance, “which was totally insane,” says Smith today. On June 7, 1967, the Haight Ashbury Free Medical Clinic opened for business with “a line around the block,” according to Smith. After the doctor learned that the D.E.A. was doing surveillance—“They said, ‘David, your patients are dealing in your waiting room, and if you don’t stop it we’re going to close you down’”—he put up a sign on the door: no holding. no dealing. we love you. As the summer wore on, Smith served 250 young people a day, seven days a week. “We met a lot of people at the clinic,” says Rock Scully. “A joke I made, but it was true, was: You want to meet girls? Go down to the clinic.” He says that the Grateful Dead so disliked one arrogant national reporter, “who was always pushing us to fix him up with hippie chicks, that we fixed him up with a girl we knew had the clap. We never heard from him again.”

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Some of the older reporters were not amused. Nicholas von Hoffman, of *The Washington Post*, who covered the Haight in a suit and tie, was, he says now, “appalled” by what he saw. It wasn’t that he didn’t like a lot of the people—he was fond of Joplin, for one—or wasn’t impressed by the numbers. In fact, this was, he says, “the same tactic that Gandhi used; he had 100 million people with no money, no guns, no nothing—these were his troops.” The Haight troops were, likewise, “this mass of young people who had no political knowledge, were not particularly well educated, but the thing you could get them to do was sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll,” and that bait, von Hoffman felt, was enough to achieve “enormously political” ends.

The overnight change in the attitude toward drugs was what alarmed von Hoffman. “A generation and a half before, you could back a dump truck full of cocaine into a Jesuit schoolyard and none of those boys would get near it.” Now, suddenly, he continues, “middle- and working-class kids were doing ‘vice tours,’ like American businessmen in Thailand: coming to the Haight for a few weeks, then, when the dirt between their toes got too encrusted, going home. This was when American blue-collar and middle-class kids became drug users. This was the beginning of the Rust Belt rusting.”

When two Russian diplomats requested a personal tour of the Haight, von Hoffman obliged them. (They ran into his son, who’d grown his hair and joined in the merriment.) Then von Hoffman persuaded Ben Bradlee, the *Post*’s managing editor, to come to San Francisco and see “all the shit that’s happening” for himself. By that time, recalls Stanley Mouse, “if a tour bus’s air-conditioning broke down, the tourists would be afraid to get out, even in 95-degree heat.” Von Hoffman ended Bradlee’s tour by taking him to a drug lab. “Then Ben flew back in a state of shock,” says von Hoffman, who, soon after, fled back east himself.

Monterey Pop

The summer’s three-day crescendo started on June 16, and John Phillips and Lou Adler organized it. The idea was to produce a grand event that would give rock, pop, and soul music the respectable status of jazz. Soon the Monterey International Pop Festival’s board of governors (including Paul McCartney, Donovan, Mick Jagger, Paul Simon, and Smokey Robinson) was lining up acts, among them a black Seattle guitar wunderkind, formerly a 101st Airborne paratrooper, who had just become a sensation in Britain though no one in the U.S. had heard of him: Jimi Hendrix.

“But we needed the San Francisco groups,” says Adler. “Haight- Ashbury was becoming known all over the world.” The Airplane were willing, but Big Brother, Dave Getz says, was “infused with the Diggers’ mentality”—no stardom, no profit, everybody equal, “including Janis.” The Grateful Dead, whom Adler traveled north to see, were vehemently against it. Adler recalls his conversations with Rock Scully and co-manager Danny Rifkin as “heated. ‘Why are you guys here? What do you want? Why should we do it?’ *Heated!*” It was Ralph J. Gleason, whom the groups trusted, Adler says, whom they had to convince. “Gleason asked very tough questions: Where was the money going? [To various drug and music charities.] How is San Francisco going to be presented? And we had the right answers.”

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The Monterey Pop Festival—more than 30 acts, sublime weather, 90,000 attendees—was magical. “And, as hard as it is to believe now, most of these stars had never met one another,” says Adler. “I had never seen Jimi Hendrix live,” says Grace Slick. “I’d never seen the Mamas and the Papas [or] the Who live [or] Ravi Shankar. It was stunning for us.”

Director D. A. Pennebaker filmed the event, creating the movie *Monterey Pop*. The Grateful Dead refused to be filmed. (Their hardcore-hippie integrity would eventually help make them America’s most venerated and enduring rock group.) Big Brother refused, too, but Joplin’s delivery of “Ball and Chain” was such a showstopper that when she heard that it hadn’t been captured on film she was devastated. Albert Grossman, Dylan’s manager, talked Janis into persuading her group to be filmed. Adler had them perform a second time. The camera was only on Joplin, and a star was born. Thus the precious egalitarianism of the Haight bubble was pierced by the real world. Even Jerry Garcia had pedestrian ego issues. He and his band were, according to his wife, Carolyn, chagrined that, “after Otis Redding put on the show of a lifetime, they did not play a great show. Jerry was scowling horribly.... They felt like nobody even noticed them.”

That October, the Diggers and the Thelin brothers led a “Death of the Hippie” march, complete with coffin, down Haight Street. Then everyone moved away, the musicians and artists to Marin County, the Diggers to a series of communes stretching up to the Oregon border. The lessons of that summer—from the cautionary (you can’t build a social movement on drugs) to the positive (love and liberation should be core principles of life)—are still with us. Joe McDonald sums it up: “We discovered there was a 10 on the knob. Everybody else was saying, ‘Don’t turn it up to 10! It will blow up!’ ”

Well, the people who created the Summer of Love dared to turn the knob up to 10, and, miraculously—in that long-ago ecstatic *and* prosperous time—it did not blow up.