



The period up to 1966 is not only the least documented part of The Grateful Dead's history, but is in many ways the most interesting since it was during this time that the musical foundations of the band were laid. With hindsight from this time on the musical progressions seem natural and almost inevitable. Certainly, material from this time is always of interest.

The following interview with Jerry Garcia, conducted by the late Ralph Gleason throws some revealing light on these early days. The interview was broadcast on the "Maze" T.V. special (KPIX) during 1966, soon after The Warlocks became The Grateful Dead. The programme also featured Quicksilver Messenger Service and Wildflowers.

It is worth noting the naivete of Gleason's questions which now seem much more dated than Garcia's self-confident responses.

R.G. In the last year and a half, San Francisco was literally exploded with music. The rock bands are some of the most interesting bands in the country, and one of the most exciting and interesting bands in San Francisco these days is The Grateful Dead. We're talking to Jerry Garcia, the lead guitarist.

Jerry, what kind of music does The Grateful Dead play?

- J.G. (laughs) Loud. Loud music, for dances.
- R.G. Where does it all come from, do you write it all yourselves?
- J.G. No, we write some of it. And we steal it from a lot of places and re-arrange it. From as many as we can find as a matter of fact. We're clever thieves.
- R.G. Do you have any particular bank vaults of music that you raid periodically?
- J.G. Old Blues, new blues and jug band music. We've been getting into stealing classical licks and jazz. Anything that we hear.
- R.G. You don't sound like other bands, why is this?
- J.G. Well, because we're not other bands! We're The Grateful Dead! - And we've been together long enough to be used enough to each other to be able to play together.
- R.G. Even when you take old tunes, or tunes that have old influences in them, you still don't sound like the originals.
- J.G. No, 'cause that's not who we

are. We're not trying to re-create anything...

- R.G. Do you change them around, do different things with them?
- J.G. Oh, freely, freely. Like I say, any one song could have lots of stuff in it from lots of different sources, but it always comes out nothing like the original and nothing like anything else.
- R.G. Do you work at things electronically "for different sounds and devices?"
- J.G. We're getting into it more than we have been. We've been mostly just working on getting better at our instruments and the electronic stuff is stuff that you discover playing at enormous volumes in the big auditoriums.

Pretty soon your guitar is feeding back and there's this insane sound coming out of it and you find that by fiddling around the right way you can control it to a certain extent and that becomes part of the way you play.

- R.G. You use this in the way you play?
- J.G. Oh, sure. You can't not. If you ignore it, it just gets louder and louder and takes over the entire thing.
- R.G. Do you write things out in arrangements you're gonna do?
- J.G. Sometimes we do and sometimes we don't. Sometimes the record company insists.
- R.G. Do you play the same way time after time when you play them?
- J.G. I don't think so. There are a few that are more or less the same most of the time, but the events inside of 'em aren't always the same and the thing that we like is when it's not. You know, when something new happens and we're suddenly playing differently than we used to. It's just this evolutionary stuff that goes on.
- R.G. What kind of thing can kick that off when playing a tune?
- J.G. Playing it long enough and a good situation. A lot of feedback from the audience and dancing....playing in the big auditoriums is conducive to that.
- R.G. Will things that you have done yourself in music suggest themselves to you at various points in playing a tune in an individual performance?
- J.G. Yeah, that's kind of what



happens. It's just all of a sudden another possibility presents itself to our wandering eyes and ears. Or somebody will play something and it suggests another place to go.

- R.G. Change the whole tune?
- J.G. Right, like to let it go as far as it will go.
- R.G. What song are you going to play for us?
- J.G. A song called "Cream Puff War".
- R.G. Did you write this?
- J.G. Yeah, I wrote this particular song. It's the only song I've ever written completely all the way - it's my song.
- R.G. And it steals from all those places?
- J.G. Oh yeah, not the melody and the words, but the rest of it is, to the extent that all of us in our own playing steal from everywhere.
- R.G. Let's hear it.
- J.G. O.K.

There you have it then. The Dead played "Cream Puff War" and later in the same programme were featured with a chunk of "Walking Blues". The limitations of the printing press become all too apparent.



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