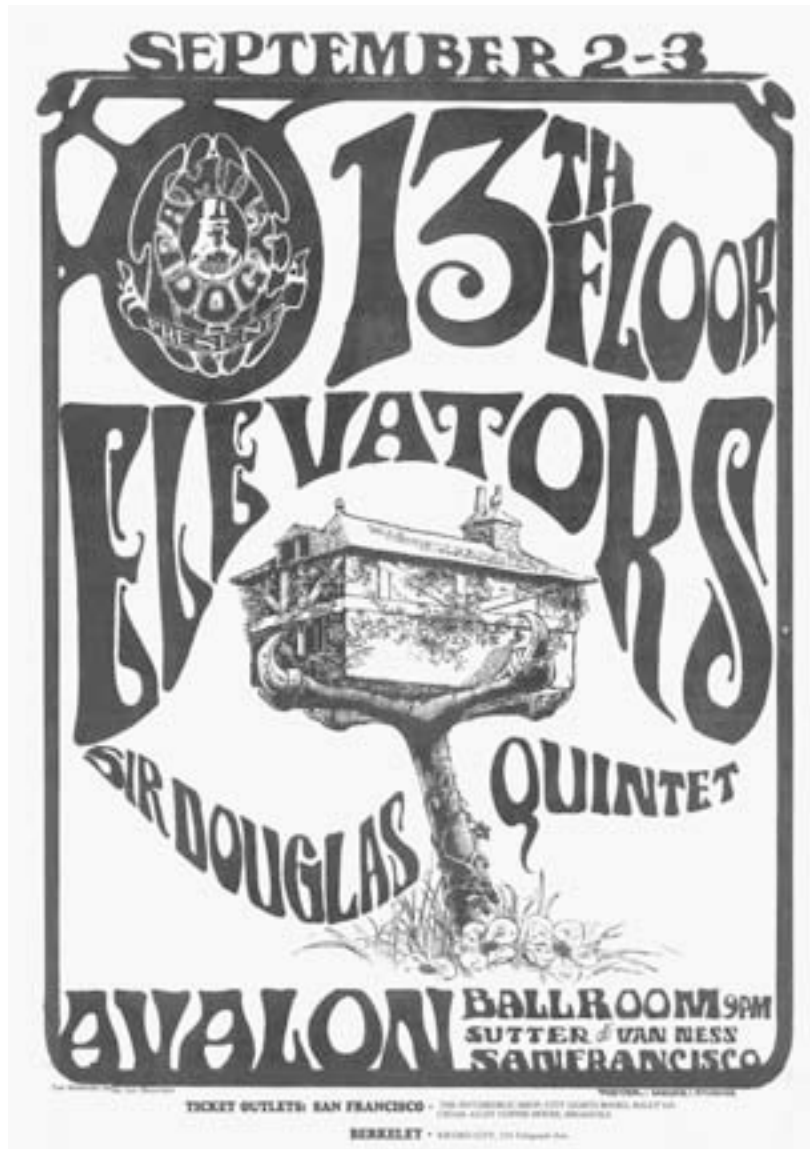


9. HAMBURGERS AND ACID



(1966) HANDBILL DESIGNED BY MOUSE FOR AVALON BALLROOM, SEPTEMBER 2-3.

On August 8, 1966, the Beatles released their new album, *Revolver*, in the United States. Their previous “proper” studio album, *Rubber Soul*, had hinted at their new direction and that of popular music. *Rubber Soul* incorporated a wider scope of influence from folk, Eastern and soul music. The title itself was a bastardization of “plastic soul,” a phrase black musicians leveled at Mick Jagger’s take on their music. If *Rubber Soul*, reinforced by Dylan’s contribution, had opened the eyes and ears of the world to “pop” as an art form, then *Revolver* opened its mind to higher ideals, and is now considered to be the height of the Beatles’ creativity.

Whereas *Rubber Soul* had proven a huge influence on the Elevators, the release of *Revolver* passed them by—they were in court the day of its release. The Elevators then hit the road for California at the same time as the Beatles’ last-ever tour kicked off in Chicago. The Beatles had incorporated the workings of the recording studio into their sound to such an extent that it had become an integral part of their sound. New material, such as “Tomorrow Never Knows,” simply couldn’t be replicated live on stage. Although they did attempt live versions of new songs like “Paperback Writer,” their disdain for their live performances showed as they stuck to performing half-hearted versions of earlier material. Regardless of the Beatles’ stage resignation, the Elevators were preparing to take on the West Coast with their fiery brand of psychedelic music, armed with tabs of LSD and a jug with a microphone in it. It seems ironic that the Beatles gave their final live public performance in the home of the newly emerging music culture of San Francisco. From Wes Wilson’s poster design, you would easily have been mistaken that the show was an underground happening at one of the psychedelic ballrooms, and not the world’s favorite band performing at the gigantic Candlestick Park stadium.

Following their haphazard arrival in San Francisco, the Elevators arrived at the Avalon Ballroom. With part-time Texan Chet Helms running the venue with a mainly Texan staff, they were finally home. Chet had

found Tommy and Clementine accommodations with his business partner, Jim Arnold, right in the center of operations.

Chet Helms: I never saw them perform [in Texas]. I heard through other friends out there, I was pretty tight with the Stopher brothers, Janis and Powell. When they came out, they thought they were coming to play for me, and when they arrived here and learned they were not playing for me, they refused to play for Graham and he was mad at them and never booked them again, and they always played for me after that.

The Avalon Ballroom was located at 1268 Sutter Street, built in 1913 for the Puckett Academy of Dance, and was one of the smaller ballrooms in the area backing onto the far grander and ornate ballrooms of Van Ness Avenue. The Avalon was situated up a flight of stairs above a furniture store and, with its red flock wallpaper, balconies and fireplace, was a trip back in time. In the Sixties, the area was better known for its car dealerships than for its live music venues.

Word of mouth had already spread about the Elevators, and their first appearance at the Avalon attracted many of San Francisco's hip musicians and music fans. The Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia, interviewed by *Mojo Navigator*, name-checked the band, likening their style to the "San Francisco Sound," and interestingly commented that they sounded a little like Big Brother, whose singer Janis Joplin had now found her full powerhouse voice, care of Roky. The Elevators themselves felt at home in the Avalon, all agreeing that they had settled into playing better shows.

Sharing the bill was fellow Texan Doug Sahm and the Sir Douglas Quintet. He had already left Texas in March 1966 due to a minor marijuana bust at San Antonio airport. He too found the transition to Californian audiences bumpy, receiving mixed reviews in *Mojo Navigator*, but he had no doubts that the Elevators should be on the West Coast; his only criticism was that they left. In 1999, he was still reticent and regaled John Ike, in full earshot of a Texan cop, "Those cops were rabid, you should have got out of Texas and stayed out! Never gone back!"

Q: Did you take acid for the first Avalon performance?

Ronnie: Oh yeah, Tommy didn't let us go on without taking it... I always took a little; he always took a lot (laughs). I usually took a half or a quarter, I wasn't quite ready for the whole thing yet... those first few days I was pretty new at it. The show (Avalon) I thought was great, I thought went real well, I mean it was a big place... and it was full all the way to the back.

John Ike: The Fillmore was a dump. The Avalon was a palace. We loved to play there. They gave away free acid at the door; it was a heaven for us! There were some black policemen out there, and they were cool. There really was no backstage area, there was one sofa and two chairs and there was this little place where you open up the doors and you go out (on to a ledge). We went up there before we

did our show and people saw us and thought, "Ha, they're smoking a joint in there." Everybody was crowding in there to get a toke off the joint, so there's about thirty-five people in a nine-foot area sucking on a joint, about to fall off the roof of the building. We went out there and did our stuff and yes they [the audience] did dance, they were blown away.

Many people interviewed who saw the Elevators' first Avalon performance were amazed by the band and the sheer volume compared to what the local acts were cranking out. Yet no matter how successful the band had been at filling the ballroom that night, fellow Texan Jack Jackson was disappointed by the audience reaction.

Jack Jackson: The Elevators knew they had a way into the West Coast through the fellow Texans on the music scene and that was going to be their big shot. I think they knew about Van Morrison and Them coming in and making it in the ballroom scene, and then you get a contract. I saw them right alongside what Them was doing with "Gloria." Van Morrison used to like throw back his head and let out the screams but Roky had the scream that would knock your socks off. At that time I thought they had the songs, the good looks, the talent, they could have made it big. Janis Joplin had done it from Texas. Here I am, loving their music, sitting back in the Ballroom and checking out the reaction of everybody... and they were a bit put off by it. The Californians didn't know exactly what to make of it. I remember when John Clay, this crazy banjo player, tall, skinny guy, he would honk and spit in a handkerchief, and stick it back in his pocket and continue. He came on before they did, and that horrified the hippies because here's this hick. The jug is very frenetic, and these people were trying to be sooo cool and soooo laid back, but it was a little too much for them. So that intimidated them. If you go in there stoned on acid and his jug is playing and it's so relentless, some people couldn't stand it... and ahh so I could see right away we had a problem, they weren't as enthusiastic as I thought they were going to be. It wasn't the same reception as you got with Quicksilver... or Big Brother, house band kind of thing.

How the Elevators were perceived in San Francisco is a hard question to answer. Although they were undeniably psychedelic in their outlook, they remained outsiders in every meaning of the word. While Janis became a poster child for the hippie-chick look, the Elevators hadn't yet made any concessions to adopting hippie attire, and with the stress of the recent bust they retained much of their standoffish paranoia and didn't hang around to socialize after performances. Somehow the band failed to evolve with the San Francisco musical culture in the same way that the local bands did. Instead, they locked together and took an extreme amount of acid.

The Elevators still played an eclectic mix of rock 'n' roll and original material, which had appeased their audience back home. Unlike the San Fran bands they didn't play long, improvised jams or meandering guitar solos. The jug was either a unique invention or an unwelcome intrusion

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(1966) HANDBILL FOR SANTA ROSA VETERANS CLUB, SEPTEMBER 10,
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in the music. However, even if you argue that the jug was an unnecessary appendage on a rock 'n'roll cover, in an original song it would be a perfectly fused, integral part. The Elevators were conceived as an electric band delivering a psychedelic mantra from the outset. While this was Tommy's chosen medium and message, many of the Californian bands had evolved from more traditional acoustic roots to electric instruments. In contrast the Grateful Dead, despite their reputation as accomplished musicians, hadn't been conceived as an amplified, electric band, and their long semi-improvised jams betrayed their bluegrass roots. John Ike, with his kit chained to his drum stool, hit the drums harder and more aggressively than any other drummer on the West Coast. If the leather strap on his custom-made size-thirteen drum pedal broke, he simply kicked the drum instead. Stacy and Ronnie barely moved and instead menacingly flanked Roky, who twisted and screamed until his slight frame shook. They didn't speak between songs, they didn't exactly dance or put on a show; instead they delivered a loud and uncompromising barrage of music, saturated with intense lyrics and information.

To Texan ears, many of the San Francisco bands sounded sloppy and under-rehearsed—in particular, their old friend Janis' new band Big Brother and the Holding Company. Even the Dead's Jerry Garcia, when questioned about Big Brother's musical ability in September 1966, acknowledged that "those guys are pretty new at electric instruments... and they still have to get used to what comes out and what doesn't come out."

Stacy (K): I really and truly don't feel like anybody was in the place—out there, at that time—that we were in. I really don't believe so at all. I'm not saying we were necessarily wise in what we'd been doing, but we'd been taking acid constantly, I mean for long periods of time. And Tommy was really a genius, he knew so much about religion and philosophy that he'd lecture to us, and write, and read, and write, and read. It was just constant. And those bands out there, they didn't really take acid 'til later. They didn't affect me spiritually, like most of my favorite musicians, but they were a bunch of kids too. Those ballrooms out there had the best sound of any place I'd ever played... it's the way they're built, and the acoustics and everything are really incredible... They'd be passing 'round gallon jugs of acid through the audience... and you'd walk around and there was just smiling faces. It was in the days when the actual innocence... the flowers and love, and of course it got rank, man.

Houston White: Those motherfuckers couldn't play, not the Elevators but everybody else, you know, the Grateful Dead were really awful and Jefferson Airplane were grim... I mean they got real good later on. They just weren't happening, and that was the thing, the Elevators were so obviously in command of their instruments and they had it together. Big Brother and the Holding Company were awful... if it hadn't been for Janis they'd have never gotten across the street.

Even the hippie publication *The Oracle* was prone to mocking the local musical endeavors, stating "the music played by groups such as the

Grateful Dead, the Great Society, Big Brother and the Holding Company and the like... is a rhythmic music played by people who are essentially musically illiterate." This was part of the wider problem in California in 1966—there was little to no music press to attract. *The Oracle* didn't concentrate on music reviews, neither did the *Berkeley Barb*, and the *Mojo Navigator* was little more than a two-page fanzine, largely interested in homegrown gossip and talent. Even in Texas, the Elevators had managed to get regular coverage in the mainstream press.

San Francisco was also changing at an incredible rate. As news spread throughout the States of the emerging alternative culture, San Francisco became swamped in an avalanche of musicians, observers, runaways and draft dodgers. The sheer number of new arrivals threatened the fragile structure of an alternative society that was beginning to evolve, and then the world's media descended to chew it all up and regurgitate through mainstream media. There were even hippie sight-seeing bus tours for curious and bewildered grannies. In 1966, everything was cheap—accommodation, food, grass—but by the end of the decade, the core emphasis of giving and helping had changed drastically as everything inevitably became a commodity that could be profited from. Even by 1966, some of the locals were obviously feeling the weight of change, often becoming resentful of outsiders. But the Texans had the Avalon, and soon everyone said "Howdy."

Jack Jackson: The Elevators weren't loaded down with beads and bangles and they didn't have the hippie attire. And I'm telling you, the hippies out there were vain, show-off people, and more than once I heard cutting remarks, even when I was in working for the Family Dog, from some of the women—"Oh, you only just got here..." A real 'we're the crème de la crème and we got the beads'... and the Elevators weren't into that at all. They were wearing their scruffy clothes, old boots and whatever; they were not into the paraphernalia kind of thing, so that intimidated them.

Despite the Avalon being a perfect home away from home, it was largely the venue and not the band that attracted the crowds; John Ike realized this when he found out what they could get paid elsewhere. Unlike today, where a promoter has to promise the band a fee related to their level of success, if John Ike is correct, the Avalon paid a flat \$100 per man per show.

Following the Avalon booking, the band was due to return to Texas, their tour of duty complete, unless they could find themselves further bookings. Luckily, a keen young promoter had spotted them when they were in Sacramento en route to San Francisco. He was absolutely blown away by their live performance (and their hit single), and saw his first opportunity to promote a band on the brink of national success. Although John Ike had given him the brush-off when they met, he did tell Tolin of their future bookings. Following their Avalon success, Steve got straight back in touch with the band having negotiated twice the fee John Ike had been offered for these future bookings. For once they made the right deci-

sion and hired Steve on the basis that he would double whatever they were offered. Their only problem with him was when he offered suggestions for their image. Says Ronnie, "Steve was just a goofy guy. Being called the Elevators, he suggested we should dress up like elevator operators!"

Steve Tolin: No, I don't recall that. My role was to get them work and never discuss their clothing or image. I was not their manager, I was simply getting them jobs and giving them input about the San Francisco marketplace and assisting them in staying alive. I did not get to know them. I enjoyed them, but they were a group from Texas, I didn't have a lot of interplay... I watched the Elevators playing and I saw the reaction in the crowd and the Elevators tore up the evening. The kids loved them; they were a phenomenal, phenomenal group. They were getting a lot of airplay, and I was delighted to pick up a national group. And I wasn't exposed as to whether they were on LSD or not on LSD, which was not my world. I didn't hang with them afterwards, I just got them jobs.

Despite what the hippie elite made of the Elevators, the mainstream had a keen eye on their movements, and within days of their headline billing at the Avalon, Tolin was approached by Dick Clark's production company, who wanted the band to appear on Clark's national TV show, *Where the Action Is*. In terms of a pop career, this was a major step forward, and the band signed AFTRA contracts (American Federation of Television and Radio) on September 9.

Tolin had done a Monkees promotion with KFRC radio's general manager Tom Rowland, and with no regard for the underground culture, they set about booking the band as a pop act throughout the Bay Area, at every dance, memorial hall, bandstand, armory and club that would hire them. Although there are no exact details of their bookings in mid-September, from the band's accounts they played everything physically possible. Often they drove to tiny towns, to play obscure venues such as "Our Lady" at Mount Carmel Church teen club in Redwood City (with the Venus Flytrap) and then drive to another gig miles away, often playing two, maybe three shows a night. The combination of John Ike's work ethic and Tommy's desire to spread the message meant that Tolin had no problem getting the band to agree to a grueling schedule.

Clementine: There was one marathon tour that they took of California where they played three different shows in one night in very far apart, out of the way places. They sweated while they're out there, and then travel through cold weather to the next show and get up there—in damp clothes, and perform outdoors and do it again—three nights in a row. And all of them held up. Roky had all the words right and the musicianship was perfect, I don't know how they had the stamina to do all that and be high at the same time on LSD, but they did. At a country-type place they tried to bust us but Roky saved us... and they seemed to know who we were, they were treating us like heavy drug people. I sat in the back seat with Roky and a policeman and he turned to Roky and said "I've been questioning

you now for about twenty minutes—I bet you’re ready for a shot!” and Roky was all innocence, looked at him and said, “No thank you, I don’t drink.” And the guy left us. Roky could get away with murder, he was so genuine.

During September, the band worked probably harder than any other month in their career, and added to their haphazard schedule they dropped acid nearly every day. But the problem with Tommy’s mission was that LSD takes a minimum of three to four days to clear the system before another hit can be taken and its full effects experienced properly. This put a real pressure on the band to decide when and where they would drop acid for best effect. From Tommy’s point of view, multiple bookings were a bonus because it meant that two or three shows could be played on a hit of LSD. Later on in their stay on the West Coast, Ronnie remembers they developed a pattern of playing once every four days. Fueled by LSD and youthful energy, the band hit the road on a chaotic tour of the Bay Area and, as usual, the police wanted to bust them at every opportunity. Roky was proving something of a teen idol with Californian girls; at one gig in Modesto he was nearly pulled off the stage by screaming fans, their first real experience of groupies. After the show the band received a hot check from a promoter who had made a practice of closing accounts after shows and ripping bands off. However, the District Attorney was brought in and the band recovered their \$800 from the show.

It wasn’t until their old friend Janis returned from Chicago in mid-September that they started to mix with San Francisco’s musical elite. Janis had left town on August 23, almost as soon as the Elevators had arrived, and had been playing a string of poorly-received gigs at Mother Blues in Chicago with Big Brother and the Holding Company. Although Tommy knew Janis from the Ghetto era, it was Clementine who was the real point of contact, and she was pleased to see her old friends out in San Francisco playing their “freak rock.”

Although the Avalon is remembered for pioneering new psychedelic bands, it also played host to several performers who were more synonymous with the previous decade. Bo Diddley, Howlin’ Wolf, Chuck Berry, Muddy Waters, Big Mama Thornton and Bill Haley and the Comets all played shows at the Avalon. Bo Diddley had headlined four consecutive Avalon bills from late July to mid-August, and remained involved in the scene. Upon Janis’ return, while Roky, Tommy, Clementine were still staying with Jim Arnold on Fell Street, they went to dinner with Chet.

Clementine: Janis was so thrilled. The phone rang and she answered; she says, “Who is this, I’ll tell him who this is, he’s not here right now, but you can’t be who you say you are—oh man, you’re putting me on. Okay, sing something.” And she goes, “Oh my God, you are! You’re Bo Diddley!—My name is Janis Joplin, you probably haven’t heard of me”—and do you know what he said to her? She almost fainted—he said, “Haven’t heard of you? You’re the best white blues singer in the nation!” Oh! She couldn’t believe that. She could not believe it; she said, “Pinch me Clementine! Pinch me! I can’t believe Bo Diddley said that to me!” And Chet says, “Oh, he

just wants to come here because he can play the slot machine.” Chet had a rigged slot machine that would let his guests win. So they loved playing that slot machine—Bo Diddley was crazy about that slot machine.

Most of the members of the Grateful Dead had attended the Elevators’ first Avalon shows, and John Ike recalls being approached as he left the stage with an invitation from one of their hangers-on to join “The Dead.” At the time he hadn’t a clue what she was talking about. Although Tommy recalls meeting the members of the Dead after the Avalon show and being invited out to Muir Woods, the band didn’t visit until Janis, who was the Dead’s neighbor, took them for a visit.

Clementine: One of my favorite things that we did was we went out and stayed with the Grateful Dead, they had an old girls’ camp, and it’s magnificent country with giant redwood trees. And up in the top of these redwood trees, they had built a deck to get high in. The safest I’ve ever felt in my whole life was up at the top of these redwood trees turning on with the Grateful Dead, because we knew there was no way police could bust in on us in a big hurry. Janis took us out there. So there was also her band, and there was the Elevators, and then there was the Grateful Dead and all of their old ladies, and all of our hangers-on, and everybody all up there getting very, very high together. And the thing that I liked so much, because I knew this was true in Austin, and the musicians at that time were very generous with each other, and very hospitable, and not in the least bit competitive or spiteful or anything like that—it was a very loving time. Well, we were thrilled to find out that that also existed in San Francisco. Here these guys were established—the Grateful Dead were established, and so was Janis. We’re not, and because we have a number one hit we’re suspect. And because we had short hair we’re suspect. We had come from the trial and we all looked like what later would have been described as punk rockers. Having two strikes against us—having short hair and having a number one hit single. I expected them to look down on us and hold us off in some way, and they didn’t.

Back in Houston, International Artists felt pretty pleased with themselves. They’d managed to crack the pop market with their first concerted effort, and following the HBR fiasco they ran a full-page advertisement in *Billboard* [August 6, 1966], declaring “An Explosion From Houston Texas—A National Hit—You’re Gonna Miss Me—owned and distributed by International Artists Records.” There was reason to celebrate, as their new protégés were playing headline shows, booked to appear on national television and each week their single went a few places further up the national charts. While Lelan dealt with the Elevators’ bookings in California, he searched through the band’s recordings for a follow-up single. On August 18, Lelan booked listening time at Jones’ studio for the “Gordon Bynum Tapes,” and on September 13 he requested that Andrus Studios make dubs from the masters and demos. The record company was

preparing a cash-in album of old demos and a follow-up single without any consultation with the band.

While Lelan had given the band sound advice to leave Texas and to capitalize on the success of their single on the West Coast, his choice of second single led to an ensuing struggle that would seal the fate of the band. He went with Bynum's choice of a cover of Buddy Holly's "I'm Gonna Love You Too" backed with the sedate "Splash One," and test pressings were ordered from Nashville Recording Company in Los Angeles. Although Roky sounded great as Buddy Holly on acid, this was not the direction Tommy wanted them to pursue. The rest of the band agreed because the old recordings were crude (with Benny on bass) compared to the new line's refinement of the material. They were also furious that IA had access to material they had recorded with Bynum, which compounded the myth that Bynum "sold them to IA." If they'd honored their deal with him in the first place, they could have controlled the material themselves.

Despite Dillard's calls, the band resisted returning to Texas to complete an album's worth of material. They were deliberately prolonging their stay in order to hang out for major label interest. According to Stacy's friend Jerry Lightfoot, Stacy later confessed that they took the IA contract about as seriously as they had Bynum's.

The deal with IA had been made out of desperation to distribute "You're Gonna Miss Me" and attract major label attention in the hope that they would buy out IA's contract.

Jerry Lightfoot: Well, Stacy told me they [IA] threatened to come out there and take all his equipment, and the record company said we want you to come back and make another record. They could have done anything at that point, they were wide open... it snapped it; it took them from a point where everything was possible and put them into a place where only certain things were possible. Because the idea was to play the ballrooms out there and get a deal... and what I'm telling you is the bare bones of something that was going on. Sandy Lockett can probably tell you exactly... that's what Stacy told me, and he believed it. He told me that's what happened. He said, "They took our shit so we had to go back and record, only way we could get out of the deal." The idea was to go back, straighten up, make this great record, and it just didn't work out.

Sandy Lockett: It was a very confusing period. And by that time International Artists' plot had thickened to the point where... well, I'm the son of many generations of lawyers so I ended up being their kind of frontman in dealing with those crazy fellows. That was an interesting time. That was a strange bunch of people, Nobel who... you know was just a rich guy, who didn't quite know what to do and, as a matter of fact, Nobel Ginther and I had grown up together in River Oaks. Of course Lelan Rogers, who is a strange kettle of fish if there ever was one! And then there's this unusually crew-cut, carrot-top, Bill Dillard, who was kind of a strange fringe lawyer type. And they were... in the recording business for something besides the record business, I don't know what.

John Ike: Oh, let me tell you this, man. Our manager [Steve Tolin], he told us, "I've been contacted by Capitol and Columbia Records and they want you guys to sign with them." We said, "Oh no. We can't sign with them. We're happy with our record company." Happy with our record company? We were, at the time. They'd got us out of town, we had a number one hit all over California, we had all the dope we could smoke, we had girls and we had rock 'n' roll. [Laughs.] What else is there? We had it all and we owed it to Lelan Rogers.

In order to appease the record label's thirst for follow-up hits, and to prevent them from releasing an album of old material, Tommy negotiated the band more time by brokering a compromise—the band would return to record a second single, while they prepared an album's worth of new material. While most of the songs that appeared on the Elevators' first album, *Psychedelic Sounds of...*, were written in Texas prior to the trip to California, they hadn't been filtered through Tommy's psychedelic agenda and formulated into a solid body of work. Ronnie, John Ike and Cecil all rolled into the Houston Holiday Inn on September 18, with the others joining them the following day. Although IA brought in Bynum to help supervise the session, he didn't produce it, and was dispatched to Evans Music to rent Stacy and Ronnie Gibson amps. Meanwhile, Bob Sullivan was flown in from Dallas to engineer "Reverberation," which they had previously demoed with him in Dallas. As Ronnie recalls, "We did 'Reverberation' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' in Jones' studio... only two songs." In the absence of acid, the session was fueled by DMT.

After mixing the following day, the band flew back out to California on the 22nd and commenced the most grueling day of their short pop career.

September 23 is an extreme example of the band's schedule, and one of the only days documented during this period. Instead of relaxing and arriving in L.A. cool and collected for their first national TV appearance, the band stayed aboard their insane rollercoaster of a schedule. The day's activities began at six a.m. on board a ferry circling Alcatraz prison in San Francisco Bay. The event, hosted by KFRC radio (known as K-Freak) was the prize for their competition winners, and the band performed at seven a.m. They then headed straight to the airport and flew down to Los Angeles to film by the swimming pool at Dick Clark's house in Encino. As friend and fan Liz Henry recalls they had little idea of what to expect—"they did one of these bandstand-type shows and they made them lip-sync it and pretend to play... it totally freaked them out, they had no earthly idea what to do."

This was the heart of the music industry establishment. The ultra clean-cut and smiling Clark had taken over *Bob Horn's Bandstand* at the age of twenty-six in 1956. It had been a weekly music show on local Philadelphia Television since October 7, 1952 until it was broadcast nationally in August 1957 and renamed *American Bandstand*. Production was moved to Los Angeles in 1964, and the show aired weekly on a Saturday afternoon. The show established Clark as a major force within the shaping of the American Top 40 charts. Clark capitalized on his success by piloting another music show, *Where the Action Is*, for CBS.

The show was the staple of bands like Paul Revere and the Raiders, who scored national success with hits such as “Just Like Me” while at the same time demeaning themselves by dressing up in ridiculous period military uniforms and goofing around in front of the camera. Given the poolside setting and bikini-clad audience, the band is hilariously overdressed. Tommy was firmly buttoned up in his trademark pea coat while Stacy was heavily buttoned into his coat and avoided any camera interaction. John Ike passed as more relaxed in jeans and jacket, while brief glimpses of Ronnie revealed him to look like a Sixties pop star with a violin bass and round sunglasses (which Tommy insisted he also wore all the time). Roky, meanwhile, sported his usual attire of checked work shirt and jeans. The Elevators lip-synced a performance and camerawork was severely limited due to the swimming pool which facilitated mainly wide shots interspersed by the occasional close-up; nevertheless it’s one of only two surviving celluloid snapshots of the band together.

Stacy (K): He (Dick Clark) was a pretty sharp character, stern businessman I thought in real life, but as soon as that camera came on, it was all young, healthy, vibrant, American... That smile is all show, you can believe that. We did “Where the Action Is,” it was as nuts for him as us...

Ronnie: We took Dick Clark this soda made in Fredericksburg called Iron Boy, but it didn’t have a label, it had a cap with this guy doing a muscle. We gave him a six-pack... he never wanted any of it, everybody thought we had acid in it and they thought we were trying to give them acid. He probably pitched that!!!

The two further gigs that evening, both miles apart, were at the Rollarena in San Leandro at Bill Quarry’s “Teens ‘n’ Twenties,” and the other in San Rafael. They hit the road immediately after filming their contribution, leaving their manager Steve Tolin to wrap things up with Dick Clark’s production company, who instead offered him a job as his PR man.

Where the Action Is, featuring Lee Dorsey and the 13th Floor Elevators, was broadcast at 3:30 p.m. (in Texas, transmission times vary from state to state) on September 26, marking their first national TV appearance.

With Tolin no longer at the helm, bookings slowed to maybe two shows a week. Following the return to San Francisco and the remainder of their stay on the West Coast, the band’s solidarity changed as they spread out over three different bases in the Bay Area. The model they had established in Texas was overlaid on the Californian landscape. John Ike, Ronnie and Cecil found a “new Kerrville” in the small town of Larkspur across the Golden Gate Bridge in the San Pablo Bay Area. Roky, Tommy and Clementine decided it was time to move on from Chet Helms’ partner’s house and set up camp at a cheaper apartment in the Haight area [on Fillmore with McAllister]. Stacy, as before, led a semi-nomadic existence between the two.

Meanwhile, back in Texas, the band was sorely missed. Stories trickled back about their achievements and their newfound status as pop stars and darlings of the underground. Stacy was homesick as always and, preferring to ignore his new pop star status, made the occasional trip back to see Laurie.

Toward the end of September, the vacuum left by the Elevators’ absence was too much for super fans Pam Bailey, 20, and Liz Henry, 18, who decided to skip school and head out west. They found a ride with Stacy’s friend Wayne Walker, the same person the FBI had tracked to Stacy and John Ike’s room at the Lamar Hotel in Austin in ‘65. Wayne’s father disagreed with the war in Vietnam and, when his son was drafted, broke him out of the military base in the trunk of his car. He’d been on the run ever since. Wayne’s father, aware of the growing community of draft dodgers in San Francisco, said he’d pay the girls’ way if they helped him reach the city safely.

Liz Henry: So we drove out there with Wayne, which was a trip in itself, and then we got to L.A. and we’re heading north to San Francisco and Pam turns the radio on and hears this “guddumbab dubah” (jug impression) and it’s number four on whatever radio station that was, and we’re going “Golly!” And we meet them at their gig and they said come back to the apartment with us... and we said okay, and somehow I ended up sleeping with John Ike—and I told him I wasn’t going to ball him, so he gets down on the end of the bed and starts doing this [makes squeaking bed sound], and I said, “What are you doing?!” and he says, “Well, I’ve got to make it sound like I’m getting something.” [Laughs.] That kinda set the tone for the proceedings right there, indeed.

Despite being secretly amazed that the band were headlining shows over nationally successful bands that they’d heard of back home, they weren’t going to give the boys an easy time. Liz Henry commented, “They were such hicks, these goat-ropers from Kerrville... Well, they hadn’t been anywhere before, they were just awestruck, you know they all went around like... [jaw open].”

Q: Tommy Hall?

Pam Bailey: Weird!

Liz Henry: Weird!

Pam Bailey: Weird.

Liz Henry: Weird... I bet I never said ten sentences to Tommy.

While John Ike, Ronnie and Stacy were happy to entertain, the others remained largely aloof and unapproachable. Tommy didn’t have much time for their antics, and had retreated into his new abode with Clementine and Roky under his charge. The others, meanwhile, were fair game,

and appreciated the new Texan blood. First off, the girls decided that it was about time the band should at least try and look like rock stars. So far the band had made no concessions to the San Francisco fashions, and only made brief shopping trips for gifts to take home. Stacy had bought a bag for his high school sweetie, Laurie Jones, which was made out of an elephant's scrotum. John Ike was singled out for victimization and voted most in need of attention.

Liz Henry: John Ike decided he had to get himself some boots, the soft leather Indian kind that come all the way up to the knee with fringing, and he came rolling back in the next day... "Oh, cool boots, John Ike, where'd you...?" "Oh, I had a sandal-maker make them for me, and I got a discount on 'em." [Singing] "John Ike, John Ike, don't lie to me, where did you get the boots so fine? I fucked the sandal-maker, got a discount of 2.89!" He got mad as hell because we'd insinuated she'd only given him a discount of \$2.89... John Ike just looked so dorky, everybody else you could let slide... John Ike you just really couldn't.

The girls soon became a recognized part of the band's entourage, and they continued to be amazed at how revered they were by other musicians and fans alike. After hanging out in the new Kerrville, the girls spent time with Stacy, who was living in a Texan-run house in the Tenderloin just down the street from the Avalon. Stacy refused to buy new clothes but agreed to some restyling.

Pam Bailey: Stacy decided he didn't look evil enough, because his goatee grew in red and his hair was black, black, black... so we dyed it black... so he would look evil (hahhahah).

Cecil, the "band boy," was set for further ridicule. His hair had grown out and was starting to curl under his cowboy hat which he complained looked "fruity," so the girls set it in pink foam rollers. Amongst those living there were Texans Jack Jackson and Wayne Walker. Within a month of being out there Wayne had taken enough "purple acid" to earn himself the nickname Goofy Grape. In Texas they had been "one big ol' family," and now everyone was spread across the Bay Area. The girls decided it was time to go find their old friend Roky.

The apartment Tommy, Clementine, Roky and Roland lived in was in the Haight area, on Fillmore and McAllister. The local black youth didn't take kindly to the influx of white hippie kids who were taking over because of the cheap rents, and leaving the apartment was like running the gauntlet. Roky was usually dispatched to get supplies since he could charm his way out of almost any situation; however, Stacy hated visiting and demanded an armed guard. One night Tommy was slammed against a wall with a baseball bat held to his head, and when the assailant demanded money, Tommy replied, "Jesus, do you think I'd be living in that rat-hole if I had any bread?" The final straw came when his beloved record collection of blues 78s was stolen after a demonstration spilled into a series of street disturbances. Although trouble on the streets never reached the



(1966) MARATHON DAY SHOW #3, BILL QUARRY'S TEENS 'N' TWENTIES ROLLARENA, SAN LEANDRO

scale of the Berkeley riots in '68, minor disturbances continued and the National Guardsmen patrolled the streets for several weeks in anticipation of further trouble. Eventually it got so bad that they moved into a house in Oakland with Tary Owens and his wife Madeline.

Allegedly Pam and Liz eventually tracked Roky down at Janis' one night. He was babbling so madly that she'd given him an injection of heroin to calm him down. By the end of September it was becoming undeniable that Roky was starting to become unhinged. On top of the daily dosage of LSD, the pressure of the band's schedule was proving an enormous physical and mental drain. While physical stamina could be enhanced artificially, the mental stamina required to perform the increasingly complex lyrics to the new songs was proving to be too much. Roky was under constant pressure from Tommy not only to be word-perfect but also convey the true meaning of his lyrics in his delivery. Although Roky had an excellent memory for hundreds of songs, he was being saturated with difficult lyrics, which was hard for someone who primarily communicated through his actions. Putting on a good rock 'n' roll show and providing entertainment had become secondary to using the medium for spreading the word. Soon Roky started blanking on stage and would turn to the band and indicate that they should jam until he could continue. Other times he'd simply freeze, and on occasion Tommy even had to pull him off the stage.

John Ike: In California he walked out on the stage on a bummer, forgot all of the words to all the songs and says, "I can't play, man." He went and drew a blank on the stage. I said, "Don't worry about it Roky. Stacy and Tommy and Ronnie and I'll play."

Ronnie: Well, he did that at more than one time; he just kind of spaced out and would just turn around and start playing.

While recollections of this period are extremely mixed, it's certain that while the band stood on the razor's edge of fulfilling their potential and becoming one of the first underground bands to break through to the mainstream market, two of the band's key members were effectively shut away in hiding. Tommy and Clementine cloistered Roky away in order to let him recuperate. This led to confusion and weirdness amongst some of their closest friends, as they found a protective veil denying them access to Roky.

Jack Jackson: So I went along with my old buddy "Magrew"; we were both hardcore Elevators fans, and so we made a point of going over to the house where they were living. And this was the stage where Tommy and Clementine were being very, ah, "Roky's not doing too well today, I don't think it would be good for you to see him." We were basically run off by Clementine and Tommy. And they were both getting into the voodoo wizard trip. Tommy got worse as time went on, with gowns and staffs with magical da de da... I'd seen a lot of Texans go out and not be able to deal with the situation... I've got to be honest, I blame Tommy for the whole troubles of the band

out there. They were so intent on orchestrating the whole thing, instead of letting Roky see people that he knew who could have had a reality link, instead of cloistering him away from the world. It was very frustrating, but I got the impression that at that point they had taken main control of the whole concept of the group.

Somehow, Roky had changed—combined with any faint tinges of mental problems, he was living an acid-fueled lifestyle, with the added stress of the draft board, who had caught up with him. Although San Francisco had a much-publicized reputation for draft card burnings, this didn't prevent the terror of them pursuing you, and refusal to cooperate with the Selective Service Bureau was a crime. As Wayne Walker experienced, they were impossible to shake. He left San Francisco for Mexico, but the FBI tracked him down. He had hidden up the chimney when they raided the house he was staying at, but lost his grip and fell down and had to give himself up. Ironically, Tommy and Stacy were automatically exempt because they were on probation for a felony; clearly it was better to be a criminal. Despite being a pacifist (Roky, unlike many of his fellow Texans, never went hunting or fishing), he had no history as an objector and couldn't build a case based on political grounds. Many American citizens felt the war was unjust. At the time of Kennedy's assassination in November '63, there were only 15,000 American troops in Vietnam; the civilian draft started in August 1964, under Johnson, and continued until February 1973. Roky had just turned nineteen years old in July 1966, and was now the average recruitment age for the civilian draft. The draft targeted every fit male in the country—even English actor Davy Jones, who was working on the *Monkees* TV series, was deemed recruitable.

Tommy and Clementine had always taken on a parental role in their relationship with Roky and decided to guide Roky through beating the draft board. Between them they constructed a plan that would require Roky to employ all of his skills as an actor while Tommy concocted an almost Gurdjieffian form of method acting for him. In his teaching, Gurdjieff set his pupils physical hurdles in order to overcome mental barriers. The idea was for Roky to complain of back pains while presenting a suitably disoriented and disheveled appearance to support his suffering. Tommy used Asthmador as part of Roky's draft avoidance regimen. This was an asthma relief preparation that contained the active ingredient Atropine, a psychoactive compound present in both mandrake root and belladonna. Asthmador either came in powdered form, which was supposed to be lit and inhaled to clear bronchia, but could be misused by placing it in gelatin caps and swallowed. It also came in cigarette form in an unintentionally psychedelic red and green packet.

Belladonna has had magical powers attributed to it since the Dark Ages, and its use as a poison is well known, but it had also been "discovered" as a drugstore high in the Sixties. Leary is reported to have stated that he'd never heard of a good belladonna trip. Atropine is the same substance present in Mandrax (from the mandrake root), which was heavily abused by Pink Floyd's madcap leader Syd Barrett and has often been attributed to the final crack in his sanity. While people became suspicious,

a few friends were aware of the situation, like John Kearney, who was also out on the West Coast.

John Kearney: Okay, there's the draft board thing and the strangeness concerning it, which I never really understood. But I had the impression Tommy was in the driver's seat, and Roky was going wherever. I think Tommy's method was to beat Roky as well as to beat the draft... Roky's draft board should have been in Austin but it turned out to be in Frisco; the word on the street was that Texas officers liked you to leave the area you had been busted in.

Q: He was using Asthmador?

John Kearney: It was over-the-counter belladonna... I believe it's related to the Datura root, which the Indians used in Mexico, for their visions and things. It has a nasty reputation. Why Tommy would have had him smoking that, ahh... Roky was not crazy when he came back from Frisco; Roky started to play up the crazy routine and me and the ol' boys still argue this one, I still maintain it's an act, but one of my old friends said when it started it was an act but now it's the only way he knows. But he wasn't that way then.

Roky attended his first draft hearing at the beginning of September, shirt half-untucked, hair disheveled, eyes dilated, and mumbled his way through to a postponement. This was merely avoiding the issue, and he was soon called back and required to prove medical evidence. Tommy and Clementine dropped him off at the hospital for a spinal tap, thinking this would be an end to the matter; however, he was required to return for further tests and the pressure, added to his other excesses, tipped Roky over the edge, and he was supposedly hospitalized.

Roky: Well, I had to go to do some tests. And then I had to have a spinal tap done so I could tell them I was sick, and didn't want to join.

Q: Was there actually anything wrong with you?

Roky: No.

Q: You faked it.

Roky: Yep, right... I told them I was having pains in my back so I couldn't work in the army.

Q: Pretty frightening?

Roky: Yep.

The situation got worse, as Roky recalls: "I was walking along the street and the cops picked me up and wanted to see my identification. Apparently I didn't have the right ID, I was from Texas. If you weren't from San Francisco you were a risk to them. So they took me to a mental hos-

pital and checked me in and luckily it was a nice place, for the bigwigs."

Sandy Lockett: Roky was pretty much nuts when he started out on this trip, and he was really nuts by that time. What happened to him was that he'd taken too many strange things, and what probably kicked him over the edge this time was that in order to present a suitably messy appearance for the draft board he had been smoking a lot of Asthmador cigarettes. They imitated a lot of the symptoms of various respiratory afflictions, and they also put you into an opium haze. And so, because he was getting called on by the draft board all the time, he'd toked up on these and showed up in a complete mess—and that, together with the various things he'd take for gigs, just finally kicked him over. He definitely made all the attempts to seem as fucked up as he could for that purpose and this was kind of an engineered thing, but it soon became clear that they had serious plans for that boy. We had to ply him out of San Francisco State Hospital. Tommy and I had to sneak up there in the middle of the night and zip him out the back stairs. They were going to try both electro and insulin shock therapy and all sorts of things, so we knew we had to get him out of there. And so we made sure we knew where he was and brought him some clothes and commando-raided him out of there.

This wouldn't be the last time Tommy had to smuggle Roky out the back door of a mental institution, and later on all these instances would transpire as evidence against him.

John Ike: Yeah, it was hard, really. But the main thing that was hard was watching Roky; it was depressing what was happening to him. And then somehow Tommy got him back to a situation where he could go in and do the first album. Stacy lived in San Francisco; Ronnie, Cecil and I lived in San Pablo, and the only time we had any contact with those people was at the gigs. We didn't know what they were up to or what they were doing. They were late. They were always late. If I didn't go get them and get them in the car, they were always late. Tommy left California and went to Texas to visit and came back, and that goddamn Rambler broke down and I had to pay for the goddamn flight he took from Arizona to California, had to charter a flight to get to the gig; I was pissed because he went back to Texas. Tommy, he was constantly going back and forth.

Q: Why?

John Ike: Well, we can't talk about that.

Q: Dealing?

John Ike: I suppose, I'm not sure, definitely maybe. [Laughs.] I mean, Stacy would ride a cab out to our house in San Pablo, and he'd be broke. And this happened every weekend. I'd say, "Stacy, why are you broke, man? I just gave you three hundred bucks!" We played the Avalon Ballroom and we were getting two hundred there and we

were going little places with all these little Longshoremen's halls. We were playing all around the Bay Area, and doin' real well. And makin' good money. I said, "Where's your money, man?" I tell you what, man... Tommy really got a lot of money from Roky and Stacy over the time they were together, and didn't provide them with anything but hamburgers and acid. And they were broke, always. Coming to me for money. I was the manager. I handled the money in the band and I wouldn't let Tommy do it.

Strikingly, none of the Elevators, during any of the interviews conducted for this book, ever had a bad word for each other, beyond the obvious Hall/Walton rift. However, in 1985 Roky (KUT) did say, "I didn't have much money, because Tommy Hall hogged all our money. I didn't enjoy that all that much, that Tommy Hall had all the money and I didn't... but I still had a good time."

From Tommy's perspective, informed by the hippie ethics of the day, the band wasn't about personal financial gain, it was for personal education. While now he would be seen simply as a drug dealer, by being able to supply good LSD to others, he was helping them travel through inner space and discover themselves from the inside. But the effect it was having on the band members was beginning to show.

Stacy (K): John Ike and Ronnie were staying in a little town, I can't remember, seems like it was Larkspur, outside San Francisco. Already there was a bunch of clashes going on. We just got together for gigs, that's about all the group was really doing at that point... a lot of the first negative waves started coming into the group when we were in San Francisco... all kinds of things, all kinds of delusions started to develop. Like religious delusions, like one time we felt like we were delivering a message... it was really, I can't explain it; it felt like we were obligated. That's what I was trying to explain about Roky, when he kept turning on after he started flipping out, it was an obligation that he felt, because of what he BELIEVED to be true. And we were all really into that place at that moment, and we were starting to get heavy kickbacks.

Stacy's way of "spreading enlightenment," as his brother Beau recalls, was to pay for his friends to fly out to San Francisco so they could experience what he was experiencing. As Wayne Walker later explained to Beau, "One day Stacy got him and they drove down to the coast. They drove to an isolated area, parked the car and got out. They were walking along the beach. It was a really pretty day in California. Instead of the usual fog rolling in, there was bright sunshine and the water was clear and blue and everything. Stacy told me, 'I don't understand why people spend so many hours in churches. This is the only time in my life I feel really close to God.'"

10. PSYCHEDELIC SOUNDS OF...

At the end of September, the band was back at the Longshoremen's Hall in San Francisco, where the cops were still frisking the audience for weapons following the recent street trouble. As usual, Pam and Liz were in attendance and were once again amazed that the Elevators were headlining over Sopwith Camel, a band with a national hit. They also witnessed less well-received shows such as one in Fresno, full of squares who had no idea what to make of the band. Following the early evening teen show on September 30, at the National Guard Armory in San Bruno with two little-known bands, the Westminster Five and the Inmates, they headlined the Avalon for the second time supported by local heroes Quicksilver Messenger Service. The girls arranged to meet the band at Fosters, a late-night cafeteria where they were intimidated by "three huge, humongous biker, bull dykes" until John Ike rolled in clutching a case of Iron Boy, "Here girls, try this, just a sip?" Like everyone else they thought it was the special potion that got the Elevators high...

Liz Henry: They had top bill over everybody we'd heard of. We were going "They're getting top billing over Quicksilver Messenger Service!" And everybody, all the other bands were going, "You're with THE 13th FLOOR ELEVATORS?" I mean bands like Big Brother!

In October 1966 Dillard decided to end the Elevators' delaying tactics and summoned them back to Texas with the threat of releasing the old recordings and freezing payments for their equipment. Even if Tolin had received inquiries from other record labels, no serious offers were forthcoming until 1967 when Elektra supposedly offered to buy the band's contract from IA. The band took Dillard seriously and began a disjointed return to Sumet Studios in Dallas.