

RON JACOBS



THE 60s
COUNTERCULTURE
IN THE 70s



Praise for *Daydream Sunset*

and Ron Jacobs

“The ‘Sixties’ is mostly myth and symbol now, a commodity sold in the marketplace as both cautionary tale and unattainable romance, but Ron Jacobs isn’t buying it. In

Daydream Sunset

, part memoir, part lament, part impressionistic social history, he dives headfirst into the wreckage in order to paint an intimate portrait of a revolution that almost was—the widespread sense of possibility, the accelerating drive and energy, the certainty that everything old must be put on trial and anything new was worth a try, and the intoxicating soundtrack beating out the contradictory rhythms of individualism and collectivity, narcissism and social purpose.”

Bill Ayers

, author of

Fugitive Days

and

Public Enemy

“This is a freak’s history of the 1960s and ‘70s told by a street active, cannabinoided participant who leaves no turn unstoned and no reactionary unscathed. Jacobs captures the era when both individual imagination and communal cooperation flourished. It’s not only a glimpse into the past, but a three-dimensional map of future possibilities.”

Michael Simmons

,

High Times

and

Mojo

“For those who lived this life, the book will be an eye opener. We were in extraordinary times still, a cresting wave that changed our lives. And we rode the wave down. For the young radical, or betrayed Obama canvasser or Occupy soldier, this is crucial reading. Every page presents information for today’s movements, and dazzling tales of creative dissent.”

Paul Lacques

, *I See Hawks in LA*

“Ron Jacobs is a master storyteller in the tradition of Don DeLillo, unafraid to create bold and radical characters.”

Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz

, author of

An Indigenous People’s History of the United States

“Ron Jacobs is a master who’s been there, done that, and lived to tell a tale or two.”

Ramsey Kanaan

, Publisher

PM Press

“Jacobs’s

The Way the Wind Blew

...is an accessible, readable and compelling history of their (the Weather Underground’s) activities” □

—

Alexander Bloom

,

Journal of American History

“

Tripping Through the American Night

...is informative and, well, fun This is Jacobs’ gift--his ability to describe world-historic events swirling around him in the simplest, most open-minded and most unfiltered way. “

—

Keith Rosenthal

,

Socialist Worker

“Ron Jacobs is one of my favorite writers. “□

—

Dave Zirin

,

The Nation

Daydream Sunset

Daydream Sunset

The Sixties Counterculture in the Seventies

By Ron Jacobs

To the freaks—they know who they are

COUNTERPUNCH BOOKS

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Foreword

You can go to the Weathermen or you can go to Vermont

By Paul Lacques

Ron Jacobs' riveting new book on 1970s counterculture will stir to life the memories of the generation that hit young adulthood as the fabled 60s waned, painfully aware that we had missed the big party.

But the 70s were vibrant and wild, an advance of the hippie/eco ethos, even as America turned indifferent and hostile to tie dye and patchouli. The Revolution didn't happen. But the deeper work began.

Jacobs' lays out the events and relationships of the decade with clarity and insight; but he slips effortlessly into the wildly optimistic, semi-crazed voice of his youth in gripping personal anecdotes.

Ron was there, and now so are you.

Made visceral are festivals and street demonstrations and riots, when sheer numbers of the young, free, and high created their own temporary community and environment, immune by sheer size to the fears of the straight world and their attempts to shut it down. There were some dangerous moments for the ruling class.

For those who lived this life, the book will be an eye opener. We were in extraordinary times still, cresting of the wave that changed our lives. And we rode the wave down.

For the young radical, or betrayed Obama canvasser or Occupy soldier, this is crucial reading. Every page presents information for today's movements, and dazzling tales of creative dissent.

Delicate tendrils and vines have survived, yea, thrived: yippie, punk, anti-nuke, autonomous squatter, anarchist, Green, ecofeminist, commune farmer, Metropolitan Indian, LGBT activist, comic artist, NORML, psychedelic warriors, Deadheads, underground music and art. Thrived enough to pass on their DNA.

If there is hope under these darkening skies, it is in the maturing wisdom of the counterculture living on in the young. This book lays out that wisdom so well I felt like I was understanding things about my own decade for the first time.

And so one hopes.

Paul Lacques is a songwriter and guitarist for the band "I See Hawks in LA".

Introduction

In early summer 1969 I was in a car with some friends on my way to Columbia, Maryland. The plan was to go swimming in the new indoor pool that had just opened in this model city. Our car headed out of the suburban town of Laurel, Maryland on Route 198. When we reached the spot where Route 198 intersected with US 29 we were met by a huge traffic jam. Every single car was full of young people just a couple years older than our thirteen to fifteen-year-old selves. We asked some guy hanging out of his car window what was going on.

“The Who, man!” he shouted. “They’re playing at Merriweather.” Merriweather Post Pavilion is an outdoor amphitheater where music of all kinds is performed. Our car joined the line and I attended my first rock concert. The venue had opened the gates, although I never got closer than several thousand feet from the stage and never actually physically saw either band. The opening group was one I had never heard of: Led Zeppelin. Less than three months later they co-headlined a rock festival with Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention at the racetrack in my hometown. Their music would become synonymous with the upcoming decade, the 1970s. As for The Who, their rock opera *Tommy* would become one of the biggest selling albums of the year and place the band firmly in the same rock and roll stratosphere already occupied by the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and The Beatles.

A year later the Beatles were no more and the Rolling Stones were in the studio attempting to make sense of their free concert the previous December in Altamont, California. Bob Dylan had just released an album of standards that would be almost universally panned. Dylan didn’t give a shit what the critics thought. His backup band called simply “The Band” was on the road, reaping the benefits of their first hit single “Up On Cripple Creek.” I was living in Frankfurt am Main, West Germany and hung out with the hippies and hippie GIs in one of the local parks whenever I could. The US high school for military dependents featured a rock festival one weekend in April. On May Day, protests against the US invasion of Cambodia erupted at the Goethe Universität in Frankfurt. Over 20,000 protesters marched on the US base. Naturally, the counterculture was well represented, just as it was back in the US. The protests seethed for days.

This book talks about music a lot. This is because the culture it is discussing--the counterculture--identified itself largely through the music it performed, danced and listened to, referenced and consumed. Journalist Andrew Kopkind put it concisely when he wrote in 1973, “The rock revolution may be less cataclysmic than its partisans claim, but if rock music has not detonated the social explosions of the last ten years, it has certainly transmitted them more clearly than any other media artifact.”¹ More than background, the music of the 1970s counterculture was often front and center defining the emotions, thoughts and even the actions of the adherents of that culture. The long hair of the hippie/freak culture that was dominant at the beginning of the decade to the mohawks, shaved heads and other styles that dominated the punk culture of the West’s cities by the decade’s end implied the preferred music of the wearer. Music not only defined style, it defined a listener’s political drug use, and approach to life. More importantly, however, were the diminished numbers of individuals defining themselves in opposition to mainstream politics and culture of the rest of the United States. The dawning of the socially conservative New Right was at hand. Their hero was Ronald Reagan, a 1950s huckster for General Electric and a union actor who turned in his fellow union members because they were leftist. Reagan had already made a political career in California by attacking virtually every aspect of the New Left and counterculture. But he and his henchmen were just getting started.

The 1960s continue to exist as one of America's most storied and contested periods. Romanticized by young and old longing for a more innocent or revolutionary era, the period we call the Sixties is as much myth as it is truth; as much maligned as it is championed. The social and political conservatism in media and academia blame the period for everything that is wrong with today's world, despite the fact that the movement from which they sprang had its genesis during the same period as the New Left and counterculture. Indeed, today's Right is informed by the libertarian elements of the counterculture as much as today's neo-psychedelic bands are informed by their psychedelic forerunners. Neither phenomenon does its forerunner justice.

I came of age during the period discussed in this book. I turned fifteen in 1970 and twenty-five in 1980. I missed the draft by a few months, but had many friends who got caught in that snare, with a few of them actually ending up in Vietnam. My father spent 1969 and part of 1970 in Da Nang. I hated the war and the culture it represented. Of course, I wasn't alone.

This is a short impressionistic history of the Sixties counter-culture's existence in the 1970s. Most of what is written here regards the United States, primarily because that is where the counterculture originated and flourished. The time covered is approximately 1970-1980, give or take a few months either way.

Gonzo writer and counterculture scribe Hunter S. Thompson once described the 1960s as a time when, "There was a fantastic universal sense that whatever we were doing was right, that we were winning...And that, I think, was the handle — that sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Order and Evil. Not in any mean or military sense; we didn't need that. Our energy would simply PREVAIL. There was no point in fighting — on our side or theirs. We had all the momentum; we were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave..." Unfortunately, lamented Thompson, "...now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high water mark — that place where the wave finally broke, and rolled back. Songwriter Jackson Browne had a similar understanding of the disintegration of the counterculture. His, too, was both apocalyptic and lyrical. Browne's three song cycle of "For Everyman," "Before the Deluge," and "The Pretender," appears on three successive discs and is the story of a generation and culture trying to change the world while facing an apocalypse of war and environmental devastation and, ultimately, acceding to the hegemony of the world and the system it tried so hard to change. "The Pretender," which is the final song of the cycle is a depressing admission that the system of corporate television, war, and nine to five jobs was more powerful than the world the counterculture hoped to forge, if only because it had a more developed foundation. The song itself is a tale of surrendering to that world and numbing oneself to its reality via sex, drugs and rock and roll.

Of course, the system that the cultural and political revolutionaries wanted to change was more developed, more powerful and more insidious. Besides history and years of experience, it also had the guns, the money and the law on its side. Jim Morrison's rock and roll claim that "they got the guns but we got the numbers"ⁱⁱⁱ would prove to be nothing but a hopeful boast. It was a boast many believed but it was just that, a boast. The hegemon would not be shoved aside. As far as the counterculture was concerned, it proved its intractability in the 1969 battle over Berkeley's People's Park when police killed James Rector and wounded dozens more with their buckshot and clubs. It proved it again many more times in street battles between antiestablishment youth and police across the United States. The

most infamous of these incidents were the murders of students at Kent State and Jackson State in May 1970. In the face of the those lethal guns, the despair, and the energy required to maintain the struggle, the exuberance of youth was overcome by a weariness beyond their years.

In a 1976 article for *New York* magazine, author Tom Wolfe called the 1970s the “me decade.” John Lennon seemed to foretell Wolfe’s description in at least a general way when he sang “I just believe in me, Yoko and me” in the song “God” that appeared on his first solo album. Despite the apparently egocentric lyrics of this song, Lennon continued to engage politically and culturally, playing at a concert raising funds to free cultural revolutionary John Sinclair from a ten-year prison stint for marijuana possession. In addition, Lennon and Yoko were meeting with Yippies planning protests at the 1972 Republican Convention, originally scheduled to take place in San Diego. The latter conversations provided what might have been the final impetus for the Nixon administration to intensify its efforts aimed to deport Lennon. In light of the dual pursuits of self and political change, Lennon’s uncertainty is representative of the counterculture’s overall argument over which direction the movement would or should go. Lennon’s uncertainty wasn’t new. In 1968, he and British New Leftist John Hoyland had held an open debate in the pages of *Black Dwarf*, one of Britain’s underground newspapers. The debate centered on Lennon’s lyrics in the Beatles’ song “Revolution No. 1” that asked listeners to “free their mind instead” and wavered on whether or not he wanted to be in or out of the revolution. Hoyland countered, arguing that one could both free their mind and the society one lived in. The two men did not resolve the question but the debate enunciated a need for some kind of synthesis between the two. It would be this struggle that would obsess the people in the maelstrom that was the counterculture.^v

Chapter 1

Them Changes...

“Happy New Year’s, man...” Jimi Hendrix was playing with his new band at the east coast’s rock church, the Fillmore East. It was New Year’s Eve 1969-1970, one night in a four-night engagement. There was an ugliness in the air and the counterculture was not immune. From Charlie Manson to the December murder at the Altamont rock festival and from the Justice Department to Vietnam, the sh... was hitting the fan. A group of eight counterculture guerrillas, antiwar activists, pacifists and even a Black Panther were on trial for conspiracy to riot during the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Black Panther Fred Hampton was murdered in his bed by a government hit squad and the Weatherman unit had thrown a few Molotov cocktails they would characterize as ineffectual. The Chicago Conspiracy verdict was less than two months away. The Beatles album *Abbey Road* was a great listen but the cohesion of the group was rotting at the core.

The Rolling Stones had pegged the entire emotion of the time with their song “Gimme Shelter” on the new album *Let It Bleed*. War and Killing was just a shot away and it was coming to white people’s hometowns. A bad moon really was rising...Reefer was in short supply, thanks to a lockdown at the Mexican border. Alcohol and harder stuff was filling in the blanks in people’s brains. Thank god for the Brotherhood of Eternal Love and their orange sunshine acid. At least something was still psychedelic. Hendrix and his Band of Gypsys played a handful of tunes in two separate sets that night. The Buddy Miles song “Them Changes” expressed a certain current underlying the decennial dissonance. “My mind is going through them changes/I keep going out of my mind...” Changes were certainly coming and lots of them weren’t going to be so great. The Fillmore was sold out that night. Filled with a wide assortment of counterculture freaks, wannabes and has-beens, it was rocking. Promoter Bill Graham was reportedly disappointed with the first show and inspired Hendrix to kick ass during the second one. He did. The first show wasn’t too shabby either.

The band was pretty new. Personality conflicts and other differences had finally broken up the Experience and Jimi’s new group was now all black. Supposedly, the racial makeup was intentional. Hendrix had been under fire from some black nationalists concerning his white band members and had been searching for suitable musicians to form a new band with. Billy Cox and Buddy Miles fit the bill nicely. Indeed, Hendrix and Cox had played together when both were in the US Army. An album was released a few months later that featured excerpts from those New Year’s Eve shows. As it turned out, the ensemble would last less than a month more. Four months later, Hendrix and another band that featured Cox and Experience drummer Mitch Mitchell would play one of Hendrix’s last concerts in the United States.

This concert would be memorialized in the film *Jimi Plays Berkeley*. Barely a month after the US invasion of Cambodia, Hendrix performed at the Berkeley Community Theater as thousands rioted and marched in the streets outside. This being Berkeley, the level of political rage had sustained the anger at both the invasion and the subsequent murder of at least six students in the protests that followed long after demonstrations in other cities and towns around the country had died down. In addition, the fact that there were many who did not get into the Hendrix show and felt they should have added to the sense of outrage. Hendrix and the band had little or no knowledge of the latter aspect of the riots outside, however.

The Grateful Dead, a band that served as a sometimes willing and more recently, unwilling spiritual leader and lyrical commentator on the infant counterculture, was hard at work recording two albums

that would define not only much of their 1970s outlook, but also the mixed messages that had been coming down the psychedelic pike since that fateful and dramatic year 1968. If there was one message that had become clear during that traumatic annum, it was that the defenders of the status quo—wars, its wars, racial hatred and just plain unhipness—were not going to give up their rule without a major fight. The growing awareness of this truth was the reason for a good deal of debate amongst those attempting to change that world, culturally, politically or both. One result was a trend toward self-reflection. The politicians would call it self-criticism. Sometimes this phenomenon was nothing more than navel-gazing while at other times it seemed a genuine attempt to truly figure out how to move ahead.

An example of the latter can be found in Ed McClanahan's essay on the Altamont concert. McClanahan, who was a friend and colleague of Ken Kesey, Robert Stone and a number of other writers who came together under the auspices of Stanford University's Wallace Stegner Fellowship and had gone on to help create the San Francisco psychedelic scene from their bohemian Palo Alto neighborhood called Perry Lane, used the Grateful Dead song "New Speedway Boogie" for his essay. This song, with lyrics written by the Dead songwriter Robert Hunter, discussed the Altamont event in terms of the growing pains of a new culture. McClanahan's take on the song and the events described can be summed up in this excerpt from the essay:

"Robert Hunter (Grateful Dead lyricist).....does not agree that the quest after salvation—the voyage that began in the Haight Ashbury and carried us all the way to Woodstock—has dead-ended in the molten yellow hills of California just twenty miles east of where it started, impaled on the point of a Hells Angels rusty blade...Rather, the poet suggests, the journey has only just begun, and the way is long and arduous and fraught with peril."^{vi}

As the 1968 Chicago riots, the May 1968 French Rebellion and the 1968 Olympics were to politicize the December 1969 Altamont concert that featured the Rolling Stones as a headliner and resulted in the death of a black concertgoer by a few drunk and wasted Hell's Angels was a bellwether event for the counterculture. The killing and general darkness surrounding the concert forced many in the counterculture to question where their Aquarian movement was truly heading. The Grateful Dead, fulfilling their role as both chronicles and philosophers of the culture, wrote not one but two songs about the events of that day.

But what was the counterculture? To the casual observer it might be described thusly. It was primarily white, originally middle-class, and relatively well-educated phenomenon that grew out of the "Beat movement." Not nearly as dark as certain elements of the Beat culture, it could be figuratively stated that the counterculture's naiveté was reflected in the bright colors worn by many of its adherents. Instead of speed and alcohol as drugs of choice like the Beats, the new psychedelic compound LSD served as the Eucharist. Both groups shared a fondness for marijuana. The desire to reject what the Beats called square remained, yet there seemed to be no intentional plan to replace it by anything "hip." Instead, what transpired was a frustrated attempt to create a community while allowing plenty of avenues for individual expression. As it turned out, the community element diminished while the individualist aspect grew more assertive. In the hyper-capitalist society that the US was becoming, this should be no surprise. Capitalism encourages individualism. The more atomized a society becomes, the more the market expands. For example, when US families were large and extended, with many members living on the same property, many of the consumer goods that existed could be shared; when the nuclear family became the standard, more households meant more sales. Finally, in the world of the early twenty-first century, each individual has their own phone, their own device to watch video and listen to music, their own automobile, and so on. Furthermore, the way things turned out in this regard exemplifies the hegemony of that system. In other words, the

determined to establish and maintain oppositional communities were up against a societal context that denied the importance of those types of community in favor of the aforementioned hyper-individualism.

By the early 1970s, elements of the counterculture could be detected in nearly every US community and in many places overseas. Its class nature had transcended its origins in the nation's middle class and was becoming part of a new working class understanding that propelled the culture out of the universities and into workplaces, bars, shopping centers and other places young people gathered. Racially, the counterculture remained an essentially white phenomenon, despite the fact it had always drawn a fair amount of its inspiration from the culture of the US black community. This was especially true in regards to the music. The peace and love ethos, while still the expressed philosophy, was up against a system that detested much of what the counterculture was perceived to be about. Long hair, drugs, an opposition to work, free sex and no morals; this was how the adult establishment saw the culture of too many of their children. And by and large adult America recoiled at what they saw. Although the right wing of the Democratic Party had done its part to express this generation's disgust, especially in the streets of Chicago during their 1968 convention, Richard Nixon and the Republican Party identified and were identified with the conservative backlash against the counterculture. By 1972, the Democrats would be completely identified with the backlash's opposite.

In the late 1960s, mainstream politicians weren't the only politically-minded folks who were building campaigns around the young people running wild in the streets. So were leftist political activists like Abbie Hoffman and the leadership of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS.) After years of police harassment over their lifestyle and the ever-looming threat of the military draft, the hippies--and those fingered by the police as such--were fighting back. The hippies were identifying themselves as "freaks,"^{vii} while the political members of their generation debated about how to engage those freaks in their campaigns against the war and racism. Simultaneously, the relatively straitlaced culture of the leftist politicians had discovered marijuana and psychedelic rock music. This course of events had helped create a countercultural sensibility in SDS and also inspired some of the more anarchistic comrades to create the Yippies. By spring 1970, SDS was split into at least three different and considerably smaller groupings that included an underground faction calling themselves Weathermen (who blended counterculture practice and revolutionary politics into an angry struggle against imperialism and racism), a culturally conservative faction known as Progressive Labor, and another faction or two that were focusing their efforts on working class youth. This latter group, known originally as Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM), had broken into smaller organizations and many represented various cultural variations on the counterculture. None were as culturally extreme as the Yippies, who placed the freak culture front and center, and none were as culturally conservative as Progressive Labor, who looked like Mormon missionaries with their short hair, jackets and ties.

Founded at a party on New Year's Eve 1967-1968 by a half dozen political activists in New York City, by 1970 the Yippies were something quite different from what they had started out as. A few of the group's founders had moved on to other things: some had moved to Vermont where they helped organize a politically charged countercultural commune movement; others were dealing drugs. Abbie Hoffman was still identified with the group but the true activists in the organization were other men and women who spent their days on New York's Lower East Side and in other urban youth ghettos around the United States. While they remained vocal in their opposition to the war, much of the Yippies' time was spent working on issues affecting the youth in their communities. In addition, a newer leadership was forming. Ultimately, members of the White Panthers and the Yippies would join

together to form the Youth International Party (YIP). This party organized around housing, marijuana and drug laws, police harassment and survival. In an economy quickly transitioning from a post-scarcity economy to one based on austerity, the issue of survival was certain to become tantamount. Surviving outside of the world of regular work and rent would become even more difficult. As far as the Yippies were concerned, not having to work a regular job was essential to their existence, and therefore, so was figuring out how to do that.

Until 1971, the United States and, by default, the world economy, was dependent on the US promise to redeem dollars for gold. This was a key element of the post-World War Two Bretton Woods Agreement, and was also part of the reason gold prices were fixed at thirty-five dollars an ounce. After the economy began to contract in the early 1970s, Nixon and his cabinet decreed an end to this policy and embarked on a plan to devalue the dollar. This act alone rebalanced some of the debt that the US had accrued, mostly because of the war in Vietnam. However, the economy continued to underperform. In 1972, the Libyan government of Muammar Gaddafi nationalized its oil reserves. This caused the price of oil to increase by nearly 70 percent, an action that caused inflation for US consumers to skyrocket. In 1973, Washington ended the fixed value of gold. This caused an immediate rise in the price of gold, as well as many consumer goods. 1973 was also the year that the personal income of US workers peaked and a recession that lasted at least two years began. The recession created a situation where wages stagnated while prices of certain essentials continued to climb, further shrinking the real income of the labor force. The nation's minimum wage was stuck at \$1.60 an hour. Congress would only increase that amount by a total of fifty cents an hour over the next seven years. In constant dollars, this meant that there was no real increase in the wage earner's spending power. Meanwhile, the desire of both capital and labor to increase their share of the national income only served to push prices ever higher, despite a decline in the hegemony of the US dollar in the world capitalist system. Wall Street and its associates in Washington were already setting the stage for a policy that is now known as neoliberalism.

When it came to most of America's youth, this economic situation only meant that they were going to have to find work to survive, if there was any. The age of prosperity was over for the regular folk in the US of A. With the minimum wage barely increasing at all over the decade, the prospects for the unskilled young were not good and becoming worse. Furthermore, the corporate transfer of better paid, usually union, jobs to non-union countries was now underway. The counterculture dream of a meaningful and idyllic life was slipping further away for young working class Americans than at any time since the early 1960s. The streets were back to merely being places one hung out after work, not places to hang out in place of work. Unlike the not-so-long-ago streets of their hippie predecessors, they were no longer places young adults chose to live in while trying to create a new world.

The young Bruce Springsteen knew this scenario all too well. His teen years in the Jersey shore towns of Asbury Park and Freehold introduced him to the life of the working class in a rapidly changing capitalist economy. His father, a factory worker, who like most factory workers depended on the whims of capitalism, was occasionally unemployed. Many of Springsteen's friends were even worse off and often employed part-time or seasonally. Northern New Jersey was in the throes of a major economic shift and New York City was tumbling towards bankruptcy. Over the course of the decade, the songs Springsteen composed would shift from the colorful stories of hard luck street characters and oceanside lovers that dominated on his first two recordings to tales of escape, frustration, hopelessness and defeated love. Never a hippie, his physical appearance would change from that of an ungroomed skinny freak to a clean-cut guy who looked like the Marlboro man, substituting a guitar and a song for a cigarette and a horse. The music Springsteen began to make

earnest in 1975 was music about the working people he knew. It described their despair, yet it also expressed their desires; desires that might be considered quite diminished after the headiness of young people's dreams in the 1960s.

In other words, Springsteen was not a counterculture bard. As he saw it, his place was within the greater American milieu. After all, it was what he knew best and, more importantly, what he related to best. Although the Grateful Dead had produced what several critics labeled a "hippie" album when they released *Wake of the Flood* in late 1973, just five weeks after Springsteen's *The Wild, the Innocent and the E Street Shuffle*, it seemed clear that the hippie culture the Dead represented was shrinking back from the broader world into the bohemian quarters it had originated from or it was retreating to the countryside. Springsteen's view of the nation would become the future of American music. Indeed, he had already been heralded as such by rock critic Jon Landau. The counterculture would not disappear completely, but it would never hold the attention of America's youth like it had for a few short years in the late 1960s. *Wake of the Flood's* inspiration derived from the Northern California countryside the Dead had fled to in 1970. The album's lyrics spoke of farming and seasonal cycles. The songs on the album offered stories of country maidens and harvests. They mixed biblical images reminding the listener of the eternal cycle of death and rebirth with stories about rivers and intrepid travelers. The songs spoke about survival on both an individual and cultural level. The message seemed to be that the counterculture would exist in the country and in the minds of those who joined the traveler's caravan, if it was to survive anywhere. Another group deeply connected to the counterculture was San Francisco's Jefferson Airplane. After two electric albums (1968's *Crown of Creation* and 1969's *Volunteers*) celebrating the revolution in consciousness and calling everyone to battle, the group backed off, formed other bands (Jefferson Starship and Hot Tuna) and the revolutionary calls morphed into science fiction fantasy (*Blows Against the Empire*), blues and rock and roll weariness (*Red Octopus*.)^{viii}

In that other world of work and bills, the reality of capitalism's cyclic rollercoaster ride was rendering the post-scarcity economy moot, except for those who had never known scarcity. In other words, the rich were staying rich and everyone else was paying the cost. It was business as usual in the land of Wall Street and the Bank of America.

Besides Springsteen, there were other musicians addressing the situation of working youth. Bruce Seger of Detroit is one such musician. Like Springsteen, Seger's songs told stories about family and economic despair; decaying downtowns and failed hopes. Neither artist indicated how the situation might be reversed. Those that did call for radical change were few and far between. One such band calling itself Prairie Fire, was a musical entity that worked with the Revolutionary Union (RU). In fact, RU helped sponsor Prairie Fire's 1974-1975 tour of fifty-four cities. Despite their musicianship, Prairie Fire's overt politics and commitment to the communist revolutionary mission almost guaranteed that their records would not be promoted as aggressively as the non-revolutionary Springsteen. It's not that both groups wrote about different situations, it was much more about how they marketed their songs. For instance, not long after Prairie Fire's tour was over in 1975, Bruce Springsteen appeared on the covers of both *Time* and *Newsweek* magazine the same week. Prairie Fire never even made the cover of the Revolutionary Union's San Francisco newspaper.

Bruce Springsteen wrote and sang about the lives of those whose work and income were inextricably tethered to the ups and downs of capitalist economics. Working people had little power when it came to expanding economic growth and, when the economy shrank, their work weeks and income shrank along with it. The Grateful Dead retold ancient myths about those who tried to live outside those cycles, yet they were also tied to their own rhythms of losing, winning, fighting and hoping. Some

rock bands, echoing their brothers and sisters in the streets, made hopeful calls for cultural and political revolution. By the end of the decade, the music called punk rock lashed out at it all. Pissed off at being left with the aftermath of capitalism's post World War Two party, angry and mostly white working class kids calling themselves punks blamed the hippies, the Queen of England, the cops, and even occasionally the Blacks for their future of no future. The angriest-sounding of them all were the Sex Pistols. Their tantrum was heard around the world. It agitated the mainstream press and a multitude of others in government and the upper classes (which was part of the point.) Then, as soon as the tantrum began, it was over and everyone counted their losses. Other punk groups were neither nihilistic nor as random in their attacks. They made music instead of headlines. Like any of the predecessors in another of rock's brief but multiple periods, no punk band would have been successful at another time or in another place.

If there was one other rock band that appeared to live the freak life besides the Grateful Dead, it was the band Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Following their extremely successful debut at the Woodstock festival, the group recorded a second album titled *Déjà Vu*. The first single from the album was Joni Mitchell's poetic paean to the counterculture myth the Woodstock festival had become. The band accelerated the song's original tempo and added the rock guitar work of Stephen Stills and Neil Young, changing Mitchell's jazzy approach into a rock radio format that broke into *Billboard* magazine's top twenty. Other songs on the record reflected the changes being experienced by members of the counterculture as the generation matured and searched for a way to maintain the alternative vision. The song "Our House" described two lovers' domestic bliss, while "Teach Your Children" offered poetic platitudes about childhood and parenthood. Joni Mitchell, too, sang of the more domestic realities.

Less than two months after *Déjà Vu*'s release, National Guard troops killed four students during an antiwar protest at Kent State University in Ohio. The protests began after President Richard Nixon announced on national television that US troops were invading Cambodia, thereby expanding the war in Southeast Asia. Within minutes of Nixon's announcement, protests broke out across the United States, with many of them taking place in university towns and villages. By the next evening hundreds of colleges were on strike, high school students were walking out, military draftees refused to work; ROTC and other military-related buildings on campuses were set afire and civil authorities called in National Guard and reinforced their local police forces. The universality of the protests, especially among the young, did two things. It proved the broadness of the opposition to the US war in Vietnam and created a national crisis. Some establishment figures called for a retreat from the barricades while others sent fully-armed troops directly into the fray. Ohio Governor James Rhodes was of the latter camp, sending hundreds of National Guard troops to Kent, Ohio on May 2, 1970. The afternoon of May 4th, four students were dead from Guard bullets and over a dozen others were wounded, some permanently. Neil Young penned an angry song deploring the murders and the band released it as a single almost immediately. The song peaked on the *Billboard* charts at number fourteen. The introduction to the song is one of rock's most memorable guitar licks ever recorded. The song was banned on some radio stations because of its lyrical content. This included the entire Armed Forces Network (AFN) in Europe. An AFN disc jockey who ignored the ban and played the song anyhow was stripped of his radio duties and reassigned. Post Exchanges (shopping centers on military posts) pulled the record from their shelves. The band toured in late 1970 and early 1971, despite a number of personal differences exacerbated by the road and cocaine. After the tour, various members toured separately and together. They then reunited for a sold-out (despite no further new releases as a band) tour in 1974.

The Not So Merry Month of May 1970

The last days of April 1970 seemed relatively uneventful. The first Earth Day occurred on April 22nd that year. For the most part the day was not a radical showdown with police. The most recent such episode had taken place in many US cities following the conviction of the Chicago 7 defendants in February. Over a hundred thousand members of the US radical movement were gathered in the last weekend of April in New Haven to protest the trial of Black Panthers Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins on charges they were eventually acquitted of. Even that protest was characterized as mostly peaceful.

Then April ended. Not with a whimper but a bang. The night of April 30, 1970, Richard Nixon told the world that US forces were invading Cambodia ostensibly to destroy the war-making capabilities of the NLF and northern Vietnamese military. The speech was not even over before students and others across the US were in the streets. The protesters in New Haven issued a call for a nationwide student strike. A torrent of protest raged across the nation. In Frankfurt am Main, Germany, thousands of protesters marched on the US Army offices known as the IG Farben Building. Besides the German protesters, there were GIs refusing to work and US military dependents walking out of their schools. Black armbands expressing solidarity with the protesters and against the war could be seen on many a young person on base—GIs and dependents alike. The authorities were naturally wary. May was to be the cruelest month this calendar year.

Protests and riots raged across the nation. At the University of Maryland and dozens of other colleges and universities, authorities called in the National Guard. The bands played on, aware of the maelstrom growing all around them. No one, however, except for the perhaps the most apocalyptic members of society, saw what was coming next. On May 4, 1970, the Ohio National Guard murdered four students and wounded more than a dozen others during a protest at Kent State University.

Organizers working with the Boston-Cambridge anti-imperialist group the November Action Coalition (NAC) were among the many Boston area antiwar organizations organizing a never-ending round of protests. It seems that some NAC members were fans of the band and had the ear of the Grateful Dead. The band wanted to do something to express their state of mind about the escalation of the war. So they set up on Kresge Plaza on the MIT campus during a May 6th protest and played a nine song set.

The maelstrom of war, racism, and rebellion unleashed in the wake of Nixon's words on April 30th took at least eight more stateside victims in the weeks following that Grateful Dead concert in Cambridge, Six blacks protesting racism in Augusta, Georgia were gunned down. On May 14, 1970 two more young people were killed by Mississippi state troopers while protesting the war. The forces of law and order were resorting to the one card they could always pull from their sleeve: raw, murderous violence. Black and Brown-hued Americans knew this all too well. White ones were rediscovering it. Neither the war nor the racism of US political and cultural society was near an end.

Bob Dylan was out of the public light when the 1970s began. His *Nashville Skyline* album, released in late autumn 1969, was on the charts but not even remotely revolutionary in a political or cultural sense. Although it shared the countrified sound Dylan had introduced on his previous disc *John Wesley Harding*, it shared none of that album's apocalyptic lyrics. In fact, it was mostly forty minutes of nice country music. Those Dylan fans who looked to him for groundbreaking, even revolutionary insight were appalled. At the time, there was a cultural chasm between country-western music and rock. This had little to do with the music and much to do with the different worlds the musical forms represented. Country and western assumed the supremacy of white America, well-defined gender roles, and celebrated a lifestyle that revolved around working hard that only improved by pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps. By the end of the 1960s, these assumptions were occasionally being challenged by musicians like country star Johnny Cash and bluegrass pioneer Earl Scruggs. Furthermore, songs like Jeanie C. Riley's "Harper Valley, PTA" and Tammy Wynette's "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" seemed to represent a stronger female archetype than was usual in the genre.

Bob Dylan's next album, titled *Self Portrait*, was even less revelatory than *Nashville Skyline* as far as the public was concerned. More interesting to Dylan fans and the counterculture media were the recently released bootleg recordings collected on the disc everyone called *The Great White Wonder*. These songs came mostly from a series of light hearted recording sessions made in Woodstock, New York with the backing band from his 1965 tour. This band, which had been going by the name The Hawks, was now calling themselves The Band. Other songs on the album were from earlier sessions and live shows. I recall a local station outside of DC (WHMC) playing the album endlessly.

By 1974, Dylan was back with a vengeance. Along with *Self-Portrait*, he had released a collection of somewhat jazzy tunes titled *New Morning*. After leaving Columbia Records for the new (to Dylan and the recording industry) label Asylum, he went on tour with The Band to plaudits and applause. Tickets were almost impossible to procure and almost everyone who attended a show went away impressed and happy that Dylan was back. The truth was he was just getting going. Over the next twenty months or so, he released two albums, *Blood On the Tracks* and *Desire*, with both of them topping his previous records in sales and encouraging critics to write happily that Dylan “was back.”

For the purposes of this text, the more interesting album was *Desire*. Released in January 1976, the disc kicked off with an almost seven-minute ballad championing the cause of a boxer imprisoned under questionable circumstances. The boxer, whose name was Rubin Hurricane Carter, had been doing time in the New Jersey prison system for a murder and robbery in a bar several years previous. The details of his conviction were quite sketchy and had recently come to the attention of prison and civil rights activists, including communist groups and churches. Although the prisoner rights movement had quieted since the rebellions at Attica and other prisons earlier in the decade, there were still plenty of people advocating for justice and fair treatment.

The music on *Desire* was a masterful blend of gypsy melodies (from street violinist Scarlet Rivera), Indian rhythms, Dylan lyrics, and harmonies from future country music star Emmylou Harris and Ronee Blakely. The poet Allen Ginsberg played finger cymbals on a song or two. In the wake of the album's release, Dylan and a few of his longtime friends (musicians Joan Baez and Bobby Neuwirth foremost among them) began to organize what turned out to be the last great counterculture revival musical revue and freak show. Yes, the Grateful Dead would continue their magical mystery tour for almost two more decades, but by the time it ended, the spontaneity that defined the counterculture would be the rarity instead of the norm, at least on stage. The Dylan tour was named The Rolling Thunder Revue and had everything a countercultural traveling show could want: rock and roll, politics, drugs, tour buses, beautiful women, and a genuine Beat poet and all-around counterculture hero, Allen Ginsberg.

The tour was not just another rock band on the road. Somewhat like Leon Russell and Joe Cocker's 1970 Mad Dogs and Englishmen tour it was a traveling circus, except with a purpose. That purpose was to free Hurricane Carter and, by doing so, remind the rock and roll nation that racism in the United States had not disappeared. Indeed, it was as bad as it ever was, albeit better camouflaged. The biggest difference was that it was harder to see now that America's legal apartheid had lost its sanction, thanks to the civil rights and black liberation struggles of the previous twenty years. The other role this tour would play would be to remind the rock and roll nation that its music was more than just a goodtime sound. It was a talking drum, the manner by which the culture's message reached its adherents and the powers that be. Free Hurricane! Free our minds! Free our country! That's what the civil rights movement was all about. Unfortunately, that movement itself was in disarray. Many of its most militant and identifiable individuals and groups had been murdered or jailed—Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and several members of the Black Panthers, among others. Others had lost the way via drugs, drink, despair, and the many temptations of capitalism. Some were just plain tired. Still others had rendered themselves virtually irrelevant by picking up the gun or the bomb and going underground, occasionally making a small noise by blowing up part of a building or by robbing a bank. Those in the movement who were left and were still thinking politically were joining communities that seemed to spring up weekly like mushrooms after a rain. It was a dismal time in terms of the revolution.

Death of a Digger

In 1973, Emmet Grogan's book *Ringolevio* was published. It is a slightly egocentric social history of Grogan and the Haight-Ashbury scene during the counterculture's early years. Grogan, one of the original San Francisco Diggers that provided free food, clothing and assistance to the hippies flooding into the Haight, lived within the myth he created. He was found dead in a New York subway car less than three years after the book's publication. The cause of death was a heroin overdose. Besides representing an end to the Digger ethos, Grogan's death garnered a memorial tribute from Bob Dylan on the cover of the album *Desire*.

So, Dylan hit the road. By doing so, he made rock and roll relevant again. The songs on *Desire* and the songs the entourage played on tour seemed like more than tales of vanity, lust, and hedonistic pleasure, and the performers were on a mission of truth. Truth was important since it was an idea in pretty short supply in 1975. Richard Nixon had slithered his way out of the White House in ignominy only a few months before. Gerald Ford, the man who had been chosen to replace the resigned Nixon without even the charade of an election, sat in his place. The US war in Vietnam, which was started and sold on a series of lies and mistruths, finally ended in May 1975 with a victory for the Vietnamese. Already, that victory was being rewritten by historians and journalists with too much invested in America's non-existent exceptionalism. Somebody who was unafraid to speak (or sing in this case) the truth was sorely needed. As it turned out, Bob Dylan and the Rolling Thunder Revue would fit the bill.

Dylan was insistent on keeping the tour away from the glitz and excess big rock tours had become synonymous with. The shows on the tour were rarely announced more than two days before they were scheduled. Even then, the announcements were usually made via a loose network of FM radio stations that had pioneered the "underground" radio concept. Among these stations were WNEW in New York, WHFS in Bethesda, Maryland, KMPX in San Francisco and WBCN in Boston. All stations using this format allowed the disc jockeys to play music to their liking, ignoring the pressure from record companies or advertisers. This free form approach contrasted to the Top 50 format and the new Album-Oriented Rock (AOR) format becoming popular as corporations bought up previous independent stations on the FM dial. Although the core of performers remained intact, several of the performers on the Rolling Thunder tour changed frequently. Dylan's muse was the spirit of the Beat, the rumble of the road, and the Shoshone medicine man whose name the tour bore.

By the end of the decade, however, he would be a born-again Christian looking for answers to the questions he had always asked. The simplicity of the born-again message would not only diminish his musical reach and creativity, it would also decrease his fan base substantially.

The Rolling Stones, on the other hand, defined rock's glitz and excess. Not only did they define it but by 1975, they seemed to revel in it. They weren't alone in this (Led Zeppelin was a determined rival for the crown), but since the Stones were the biggest rock band in the world after the Beatles broke up, they were the example held up for scorn and praise for this fact by critics. While Mick Jagger partied with the rich and the British aristocracy, the rest of the band enjoyed their riches, even moving to France in 1972 to avoid British taxes. They saw themselves as tax rebels, but it was difficult not to see them as just some more rich guys trying to avoid paying tax. As it turned out, the exile helped produce one of the best Rolling Stones albums ever recorded. That album, titled *Exile on Main Street*, was recorded in the basement of Keith Richards' home in southern France and blended blues, country, and rock and roll into a gritty, down-to-earth double set of disturbingly beautiful music. If there were a list of albums whose sound and lyrics encapsulated the situation of the counterculture in 1971, *Exile on Main Street* and Sly and the Family Stone's *There's a Riot Going On* would top the list. Both albums were rootsy chronicles of the counterculture's descent into narcotic cynicism and the depression that a failed romance almost always brings. The Stones continued to make fairly good music throughout the decade, but the street credibility they had earned in the 1960s

was gone by 1978. Despite Keith Richards' expressed wish that they could mount a tour like Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, the fact was that Keith was becoming increasingly marginalized as a creative force in the band. The Rolling Stones would never again tour as anything less than the very rich men they had become. To their credit, they would continue to champion non-rock and lesser known acts by hiring them as opening acts. In 1972, Stevie Wonder had this job. As far as many women fed up with the Stones' sexist reputation (deserved or not), Wonder proved the more appealing act on the bill. The Rolling Stones would never stay at a Motel 6 again, nor would they carry their own drugs, clothes, or instruments on tour. Perhaps the only remnant of their street credibility lay in their blues-driven music and Keith Richards' junk habit. Addiction to heroin apparently still had its democratizing side effect, which remained one of its few positive attributes.

Disco and Counterculture

Disco was never a part of the counterculture dance mix. However, writing any kind of cultural history of the US in the 1970s requires at least a mention of this particular beat. Born in the funk music and gay bathhouse scene, disco depended on a slick, repetitive beat and simple lyrics. It was music to dance to, not to listen to. The scene wasn't just about the music though. It was also about clothes, blow-dried hair, sex and cocaine. If there was a perfect example of how corporate capitalism could strip the soul from a cultural form and leave only the elements that could be packaged and sold, then disco would be it. The production of the John Travolta star vehicle Saturday Night Fever sealed the deal, removing any remnant of substance from disco and replacing it with the pathetic and syrupy pop of the film's white bread soundtrack.

The advent of punk rock was partially a reaction to the excess represented by "classic" rock bands like The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin. More importantly, punk was a reaction to the growing love affair between the wealthy, the aristocracy and some of the most popular rock musicians. This reaction was expressly stated as such in Britain and some cities in the United States. In San Francisco, punk rock bands openly challenged not only the wealth and bourgeois nature of much of rock's aristocracy, but also what they perceived to be a lazy hippie drug-addled apathy that had become synonymous with the Grateful Dead and their fans. How accurate were these perceptions? Leave it to us to say that they were accurate enough to provoke an impassioned response among many, especially young mostly white youth, to propel the movement known as punk.

If nothing else, punk was a new antithesis to the more mainstream rock world. Like any such movement that comes about in reaction to an existing one, the proselytizers of punk were more dismissive of what came before them than they were grounded in their historical understanding. While claiming to be from the street, and therefore raw and unadulterated, most punks never acknowledged that the Rolling Stones, Grateful Dead, and many other big rock acts (The Who, Deep Purple, and so on) could also claim their origins in the streets as much as any punker.

Punk was not a homogenous genre. It varied from city to city, country to country. It remained primarily an urban phenomenon limited mostly to the English-speaking world. Most of the bands in New York were incubated in the scene emanating from the CBGB club in Manhattan's Bowery. These groups, in true American style, mostly shied away from politics. The primary theme of their lyrics was teenage alienation. This trope was often filtered through an apocalyptic drug-hazed vision with sexual twists. Three of the biggest new wave bands, The Ramones, Talking Heads, and Television, all represented different musical and lyrical sensibilities. All were lumped together with the New York Dolls, Patti Smith and Blondie (and a myriad of lesser bands) by the decade's end. These bands represented New York punk to the world.

In Britain, the punk scene was much larger and more overtly political, even if that politics was often nihilistic in nature (think Sex Pistols). Unlike most punk groups in the US, punk bands sold enough records to actually make the charts in Britain. The music was often classified together with New Wave and reggae music by mainstream critics and observers. On the west coast of the United States, the

primary urban areas hosting some kind of punk scene were San Francisco, Los Angeles and Vancouver, British Columbia. In San Francisco, the scene originally centered around the Mabuhia Gardens club in San Francisco's North Beach district. The Dead Kennedys did the most to make the venue famous. Eventually, the all-ages club run by Berkeley's Gilman Street Music Collective would make a longer lasting name in the punk world. Los Angeles was home to punk bands like X and Black Flag (actually from suburban Orange County). The latter group was an originator of what became known as hardcore, a fast-paced, loud and minimalist form of punk rock. The Canadian city Vancouver, BC featured hardcore punk as well, most notably the band DOA. Already a city with a prominent counterculture community in its Gastown District, Vancouver was also home to a militant leftist and anarchist community. Those radical politics would come to define much of Vancouver's punk scene. Punk music and the accompanying subculture would truly take off in the 1980s, a fitting rebuke to the harsh reality of Ronald Reagan and Maggie Thatcher's class hatred.

D.O.A.'s Political Punk

In 1978 Vancouver left / anarchist Joey Shithead (guitar/vocals) left the band Black Skull and formed D.O.A with Chuck Biscuits on drums and Randy Rampage on bass and vocals. Their politics and brash musical stylings ticked off members of their audience and provoked fights. Their slogan was "Talk minus Action equals Zero." The fights would bring the police, who would wade into the crowds both in and outside of the clubs they played, creating greater melees. As their reputation for trouble grew, it became more difficult for them to play clubs interested only in the profits punk bands were beginning to bring by the late 1970s. Despite this, DOA found plenty of sympathetic folks and organizations to play for, their politically charged music striking a chord in the hearts of some Reagan era youth.

Chapter 2

Test Me Test Me, Why Don't You Arrest Me?

Because of the illegal nature of their lifestyle (drugs and otherwise) and the punitive attempts by police and other authorities to shut that lifestyle down, many young people in the 1960s and 1970s had seen the inside of a jail by the time they were in their twenties. It seems safe to state that the percentage of those in the Sixties generation who had been arrested was considerably higher than that of their parents' generation, especially in the white community. Perhaps it was this fact that created sympathy (if not outright empathy) for those black and brown Americans who were imprisoned. Whatever the reason, by the early 1970s, there was a substantial prisoner rights and support movement comprised of members of the New Left and the counterculture. This movement grew in proportion to the increased repression instituted under the Nixon regime. Examples of this support included benefit concerts featuring rock bands in the San Francisco area for those arrested during the May 1968 People's Park riots and other benefits for members of the Black Panthers facing prison or already in jail.

The trial of the Soledad Brothers in Marin County, California and the attempt to free them multiplied the prisoner support movement exponentially. The men on trial were charged with killing a guard at Soledad prison in California's Central Valley. The defenders of the accused claimed that the authorities really had no idea who the guard's killers were, but had charged the men known as the Soledad Brothers because of their political activism and leadership roles in the prisoner rights movement. George Jackson was the best known of the defendants. A Black Panther, his book about his life titled *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* became an international bestseller and his name was synonymous with revolution. George Jackson's younger brother Jonathan was deeply involved in the movement to free the Soledad Brothers.

The younger Jackson's frustration with the legal process grew as hopes for George's freedom dimmed. Finally, on August 7, 1970, Jonathan Jackson stood up during a session of the Soledad Brothers trial, pulled out a shotgun, distributed weapons to the defendants and took several hostages including the judge. This group then took a van and attempted to leave the courthouse building. They never made it. Most of the passengers in the van died in a hail of gunfire from police and correction officers' weapons. Controversial university professor, prisoner rights advocate, Communist party member and Black Panther sympathizer Angela Davis was arrested soon after the incident. Davis was charged with "aggravated kidnapping and first degree murder" because she had supposedly bought some of the guns used in the incident. In addition, she was friends with both Jackson brothers, had written letters to George Jackson, visited him in prison and been very active in the campaign to free the Soledad Brothers. She and George were romantically linked.

Angela went underground and remained on the run until October 13, 1970, when she was finally arrested by the FBI. During her time on the run, she was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list. This only enhanced her status among antiestablishment youth around the world. Her trial and the campaign to free her became an international struggle, bringing together musicians (the Rolling Stones wrote the song "Sweet Black Angel" and John Lennon and Yoko Ono wrote "Angela" about the case), leftists of virtually every sect, Black nationalists, counterculture freaks and several governments. After a trial watched intently by the world, she was acquitted of all charges in June

1972.

The Symbionese Liberation Army (or SLA), was a second generation urban guerrilla group. Its brand of armed struggle was inspired by that of the Weather Underground Organization (WUO) which had arisen from the self-ignited ashes of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The demise of SDS, owing to an insistence on revolutionary purity among its various factions and a fair dose of government provocateurism, harassment and surveillance, had left a vacuum in the political activities of the counterculture. Although the Yippies remained a source of theatrical activism, the group's strength was never in organizing a lasting movement. After the political conventions of 1972 which saw Yippie non-leaders Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin being called out by a group known as the Zippies for not being radical enough, the only issue the Yippies could turn any numbers of nationally for was related to their campaign to legalize marijuana. There was also a turn by more serious leftists away from trying to organize the counterculture and towards studying various strains of Marxism-Leninism. This turn towards more traditional communism, which resulted in what became known as the new communist movement, combined with the McGovern campaign for president that organized primarily around ending the war in Vietnam, had pushed most of the counterculture element of the New Left away from communism/socialism and into the arms of the Democratic Party. The influx of former new leftists into the Democrats' arms would make the 1972 convention one of the most open and progressive mainstream political conventions in US history. It would also create a backlash from the party's more conservative and pro-military/big business wing. The leaders of this backlash reformulated party rules and processes in order to take the party back from the leftist upstarts. By changing the party rules, the traditional wing of the Democratic Party ensured that a convention like 1972 and a candidate like George McGovern would never again have a real chance to win the Democratic nomination.

On the other hand, the new leftist political radicals who were joining the new communist groups continued to organize in the workplace and on campus. To fit into the factory culture as they perceived it, some of these groups decided that members should cut their hair, end their alternative living arrangements and, in extreme cases, turn off their rock and roll. As it turned out, this trend towards conservatism in the radicals' social trappings was based on an incorrect understanding of the US working class and, for those not willing to amend their analysis to the new nature of that class, would determine the increasing irrelevance of many of the groups in the new communist movement. Contrary to these groups' analysis, by the mid-1970s, the US working class was not primarily middle-aged white and male. Instead, workers were increasingly female, young and non-white. As for the white men entering the work force, they were also considerably less conservative than their predecessors. Even if they had never been to an antiwar protest or dropped LSD, chances were that younger US workers listened to rock music and at least knew people who smoked pot. That in itself made them considerably different than their fathers.

The SLA ignored all of this. Like their WUO compatriots, they lived in a different world. In part this was due to their residence in the San Francisco Bay Area—where the Sixties were still very much alive, especially when compared to the rest of the United States. Although there were still plenty of freaks to be found in many college towns, the few remaining hippie ghettos in big cities, and communes around the country, the retreat of the Sixties counterculture was obvious to those who had populated those same communities only a few years earlier. The combination of police harassment and gentrification was doing its part to facilitate the retreat of the youth oriented, leisure based counterculture. Only in places where the counterculture had been able to build strong institutions was

it able to resist the forces arrayed against its permanence. It was this reason, then, that the counterculture was still a dominant force in Berkeley and San Francisco. Despite their often incoherent politics (or maybe because of them), the SLA were able to gain enough support in the Bay Area to keep themselves shielded from the police. In part, this was because they looked like most other people their age and blended into the local environs.

The SLA had its roots in a prisoner literacy group located at California's Vacaville Prison. College students from the San Francisco Area working with prison officials organized a group designed to teach prisoners how to read and write. One of the prisoners in this particular group, named Donald DeFreeze, became friends with many members of the group and adopted (at least in word) the group's political philosophy. After escaping from Vacaville through the prison laundry, DeFreeze joined up with the students and helped form the Symbionese Liberation Army. In 1972, two members of the group killed Oakland Schools superintendent Marcus Foster, a Black man, because he wanted to institute a student ID-card system in the schools. This murder alienated much of the Bay Area Left, who saw Foster as a mostly-progressive individual, from the group. Some folks on the Left, including the Black Panthers, instituted an investigation of the SLA's members and discovered that DeFreeze, who was now calling himself Cinque (after the leader of the Amistad slave ship rebellion) had links to an undercover unit of the California Highway Patrol and the Los Angeles Police Department. There was speculation that the literacy group itself had been set-up by authorities to spy on and entrap young radicals. Two other SLA members, Bill and Emily Harris, also had backgrounds that appeared suspicious to the Panthers and their team of investigators. If the actions of the SLA were not enough to drive potentially sympathetic people away from the group, these suspicions convinced the Panthers and many others on the Left to disavow any connection with the SLA.

On February 4, 1974 the SLA kidnapped newspaper heiress and college student Patty Hearst from the Berkeley apartment she shared with her boyfriend Stephen Weed. The original demand of the SLA involved trading Hearst for some SLA members already in prison for killing the Oakland School Superintendent. When this demand was rejected, the SLA demanded Patty's family distribute seven million dollars worth of food to every poor California family. The family responded by immediately distributing \$6 million to people in poor neighborhoods of Oakland and other California cities. Afterwards, the SLA refused to release Patty because the family had not distributed enough food and the food that was distributed was found to be of poor quality. By April, Patty Hearst had allegedly joined the SLA, renamed herself Tania (after Che Guevara's companion), and was photographed carrying an M1 carbine during a bank holdup. The authorities ramped up the search for the SLA as the group carried out a series of dramatic robberies in California. On May 17, 1974 the Los Angeles police and members of the California Highway Patrol laid siege to a house in Compton, California (near the Watts section of Los Angeles) rented by SLA members. After several hours during which the house was set on fire by the police, the siege ended and the six SLA members inside were all dead. Hearst and other members were not in the house. On September 18, 1975, Patty and another member Wendy Yoshimura were captured in San Francisco. Only two SLA members remained underground. They would not be captured for decades.

The saga of the SLA turned out to be, more than anything else, a media event. Even after the siege and deaths in Compton, which many stations televised live, the press remained interested. As an indication of the alienation from law enforcement and the State still felt by the counterculture, it is important to note that the remaining SLA members were able to stay on the run for as long as they did because they were assisted by some counterculture communities and individuals. These alleged

included the leftist athlete and counterculture sports guru Bill Scott, his wife Micki and possibly even basketball player Bill Walton. Like Scott, Walton was well-known for his leftist political views and his participation in the counterculture life. The authorities were unable to get those who helped the SLA members remain underground to talk.

Native Americans

Merry Prankster and Whole Earth Catalog editor Stewart Brand organized a performance piece in the 1960s he called American Needs Indians. Later in the decade (and into the 1970s), Native Americans began a series of political actions designed to force the US government to honor its treaties with various Indian nations. These actions included the occupation of Alcatraz Island near San Francisco, several protests in Minnesota and the Dakotas, a multi-week occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs offices in Washington, DC in 1972, and a months-long 1973 faceoff with federal troops, FBI agents and US marshals in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. All of these actions were organized under the auspices of the American Indian Movement (AIM), a group of radical Native Americans representing various nations across the United States. Support for the group came from across the radical Left and the counterculture.

As the 1970s continued, Native Americans continued to organize protest encampments and lobbying efforts. Two of the better known organizing efforts revolved around land issues and the mining of resources from Native American lands: specifically in the Four Corners area of the US Southwest in an area called Big Mountain and in the Black Hills region of the Dakotas. Gatherings at these two sites were well-attended by Native Americans, freaks and various political organizations. Although there were quarrels between some freaks and the organizers over the use of mood-modifying substances which the Native Americans forbade in part because of the ravages alcohol created in the native American community and because the organizers did not want to give the police an excuse to bust the gatherings, for the most part the gatherings came off smoothly and cemented relationships between Native American groups and some counterculture organizations wanting to provide material support.

In 1978, AIM organized a march across North America. Called The Longest Walk, its intent was to prevent the passing of a Congressional Bill abrogating all US treaties with Native American tribes and nations. The walk began at the American Indian Center in East Oakland, California. The sendoff was attended by members of the Communist party, USA, the Revolutionary Communist Party, several dozen Native Americans who lived in the Bay Area, individual hippies and the Hog Farm. After walking 3200 miles, several thousand walkers (Native Americans and their supporters) arrived in Washington, DC for a protest against the proposed legislation. Congress did not pass the bill and it did not become law.

The last major protests against the US war in Southeast Asia began in late April of 1971. These ten days of protest were actually several separately organized actions designed to make opposition to the war impossible for Congress and the White House to avoid. In addition, the more radical organizers planned to make Washington, DC itself ungovernable. To clarify their intention, these groups, led by a loose-knit confederation of political and counterculture individuals calling themselves the Mayday Tribe, created the slogan, "If the government won't stop the war, then the people will stop the government." The protests the Mayday Tribe organized incorporated anti-imperialist politics, rock and roll, and serious direct action tactics. The direct actions that occurred on May 1 and May 2, 1971 were preceded by a week of more traditional protests that included lobbying of Congress and numerous rallies sponsored by a coalition calling themselves the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ). This latter group included antiwar members of Congress, clergy from numerous faiths (many who had been active in the antiwar movement for years), the Socialist Workers Party, and numerous pacifist organizations. In addition, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War were camped on the National Mall carrying out a protest action they called Operation Dewey Canyon II. The Nixon administration had refused to grant camping permits to the VVAW and threatened to have them removed by force. However, fearing a media and popular backlash to an operation reminiscent of General McArthur's routing of the Bonus Army's Washington, DC encampment back in 1932, Nixon's Justice Department backed down and allowed the veterans to remain on the Mall. As for the PCPJ, one of their rallies on the Capitol Steps was attacked by police. Hundreds of protesters were swept up in this raid and thrown in detention centers, including the RFK Stadium in southeast DC.

Some congresspeople and other government officials were also snared by the sweeps.

However, the biggest and most dramatic protests of the ten-day-period began on Saturday, May 1st. Approximately forty thousand protesters gathered in Washington's West Potomac Park to listen to rock bands, speakers and other performers. After the concert, which went into the night, most of the protesters camped in the park. Those protesters who had organized affinity groups prepared for the demonstrations set to begin the following Monday when Washington went back to work. During the concert, military and police helicopters buzzed the area, but stopped when some groups of protesters began releasing helium filled balloons. The pilots were afraid the balloons and the attached strings would get caught in the helicopter rotor blades. Meanwhile, the Justice Department cancelled the permits for the campsite and any future protests, clearing the way for a police raid of the encampment the morning of Sunday, May 2, 1971. This was a blatant attempt by the authorities to prevent the massive direct actions planned for Monday. After the raids, about half of the protesters scrambled out of town. The remainder found shelter in churches, colleges and other friendly sites in the area. The direct action protests would go forward.

The next day around dawn, Monday, thousands of protesters flooded the streets of Washington, DC. Their tentative plan was to prevent government workers from getting to their job sites, especially those buildings connected to the military and the Justice Department. People blocked streets with their bodies, with hastily constructed barricades, with broken down cars, and with trash cans and trash. Several thousand played cat-and-mouse with the police, blocking streets then running away when the police came. The police, armored in full riot gear, attacked the protesters and arrested as many as they could. By the following day, over 12,000 protesters had been arrested, many of them illegally and without cause. Martial law had come to Washington, DC for the second time in five years (the previous crackdown was during the rebellion after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.)

As noted earlier, this was the last big antiwar protest of the Vietnam era. It was also the last antiwar protest that included the conscious organization of hippies and freaks. The war would continue for four more years, but the will to fight against it on the streets of America had evaporated. Nixon realized that young American men would no longer fight the war and he pushed his Vietnamization program with even greater earnest. This program not only involved the removal of US troops from Vietnam and placing the bulk of the fighting responsibility on troops from the Saigon military, it also involved the bombing of Laos and Cambodia. This proved to be a cynical, murderous transfer of pointless death and killing.

Several lawsuits were filed against the Justice Department and other law enforcement institutions in the wake of the mass arrests at the Mayday protests. Years later, and after thousands of hours of work by attorneys and others, several hundred of those who were detained received checks from the government for damages they incurred. A friend of mine who was arrested at a PCPJ rally on the Capitol steps received \$7000.00. He had spent two days in RFK stadium and been beaten by the police during his arrest. Once inside the stadium, antiwar medics patched him up.

On August 28, 1973 Abbie Hoffman was arrested for conspiracy to distribute cocaine. According to a biographer (and fellow traveler) Jonah Raskin, Hoffman had been involved in smuggling and dealing cocaine for at least three years. Abbie insisted until his death in 1989 that he was the victim of entrapment. However, in drug-related cases, the line between entrapment and what would constitute a reasonable search is very fine indeed. By 1974, the dismemberment of the Fourth Amendment (against unreasonable search and seizure) to the US Constitution was already well underway. Although there will always remain some question as to whether or not Abbie was set up, the fact was that he was

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