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Calendar

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The poster pictured above is the only Paul Foster poster that has survived, that was originally hand-painted with watercolors and pastels by the original Merry Pranksters. This poster was given to Reggie Williams, owner of the Straight Theatre, in 1966, when the Further Bus pulled up to his office on Haight Street and the Merry Pranksters arrived to gift it to him, personally. The poster hung on his office wall for a couple years, until the office closed and the poster was put in a trunk and forgotten about. Years later, in 1987, it was sold at a poster show in San Mateo, to Mike Zaidlin of sixties.com. The poster was featured on the front inside page of the Book, High Art, by Ted Owen. At the time, Mike had the poster restored, backed to Linen, professionally by an art restorer, and since a couple small pieces of the poster were missing, (lower right corner, and left bottom, and top right slice) the missing parts were added in to create the full poster visual effect. Ken Kesey made a copy from the Muir Beach goldenrod original he owned, for the purpose of filling in the missing space. That is the reason "Muir Beach" is the location, and it appears exactly the same as Kesey's reprints of "Muir Beach". The actual location of this particular poster was most likely, the Fillmore Acid Test. The original poster of the poster was the

1st. The original color of the poster was blue.

In 2008, 2 more colored posters surfaced. A white one, with the "Fillmore" filled in the location box sold for \$56,000. A blue one with the corner ripped and missing (why is it the blue ones always lose their location boxes?), sold for \$42,000. The main difference between these two and the one featured here, is that the two which surfaced in 2008, came from Owsley's collection passed onto Bob Mathews, one time manager for the dead, and the posters were hand-done by Owsley, in colored markers, not by the Merry Pranksters, in water colors and pastels, the trademarks of the Merry Prankster artwork.

The poster has been signed on the matting by the following people, starting in the top left, clockwise : Chet Helms, Lee Quarnstrom (Prankster), George Walker (Prankster), Sunshine Kesey, Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), Hank Harrison (Warlocks Manager), Sonny Barger, Hugh Romney (Wavy Gravy), Allen Ginsberg, Tom Constantine, Ramrod, Ken Kesey, Rock Scully, Ken Babbs, Phil Dietz (Prankster), Chuck Kesey, Phil Lesh, Herb Greene, Mountain Girl, Bob Weir, Timothy Leary, Billy Kreutzman, Grace Slick, Mike Hagen (Prankster).

"The Acid Tests were the epoch of the psychedelic style and practically everything that has gone into it. I don't mean merely that the Prankster's did it first, rather, that it all came straight out of the Acid Tests in a direct line leading to the Trips Festival of January 1966. That brought the whole thing full out in the open. "Mixed-Media" entertainment--this came straight out of the Acid Tests' combination of light and movie projections, strobes, tapes, rock 'n' roll, black light. "Acid rock"-- the sound of the Beatle's Sgt. Pepper Album and the high-vibrato electronic sounds of the Jefferson Airplane, the Mother's of Invention and many other groups--the mother's of it all were the Grateful Dead at the Acid Tests. The Dead were the *audio* counterpart of Roy Seburn's light projections. Owsley was responsible for some of this, indirectly. Owsley had snapped back from his great Freakout and started pouring money into the Grateful Dead and, thereby, the Tests. Maybe he figured the Tests were the wave of the future, whether he had freaked out or not. Maybe he thought "acid rock" was the sound of the future and he would become a kind of Brian Epstein for the Grateful Dead. I don't know. In any case, he started buying the Dead equipment such as no rock 'n' roll band ever had before, the Beatles included, all manner of tuners, amplifiers, receivers, loudspeakers, microphones, cartridges, tapes, theatre horns, booms, lights, turntables, instruments, mixers, muters, servile mesochronics, whatever was on the market. The sound went down through so many microphones and hooked through so many mixers and variable lags and blew up in so many amplifiers and roiled around in so many speakers and fed back down so many microphones, it came on like a chemical refinery. There was something wholly new and deliriously weird in the Dead's sound, and practically everything new in rock 'n' roll, rock jazz I have heard it called, came out of it.

Even details like [psychedelic poster art](#), the quasi-art nouveau [swirls of lettering, design and vibrating colors, electro-pastels and Spectral Day-Glo](#), came out of the Acid Tests. Later other impresarios and performers would recreate the Prankster styles with a sophistication the Pranksters never dreamed of. Art is not eternal, boys. The [posters became works of art](#) in the accepted cultural tradition. Others would even play the Dead's sound more successfully, commercially, anyway, than the Dead. Others would do the mixed-media thing until it became pure ambrosial candy for the brain with creamy filling every time. To which Kesey would say: "They know *where* it is, but they don't know *what* it is." -- Electric Kool Aid Acid Test - Tom Wolfe - Pages 250-51

Prankster Motto - "Never Trust A Prankster"

"The rule was 'Never Trust A Prankster', " says Lee Quarnstrom. "It was that way because you could never really trust any of us. Rather than have to explain something like why we ate all the food in Gordon Lish's refrigerator and left no note or explanation, you could just say, 'Never Trust A Prankster.' " It was another case of the Pranksters meeting rational expectations (of morality, of controlled behavior) with illogic. For Ken Babbs, the reason you should never trust a Prankster is the same reason you shouldn't expect perfection from non-Pranksters: people are human." -- On the Bus - Paul Perry - Page 110

only, and according to fair use.

Ron Bivert: "At La Honda we had regular Saturday night parties that we got ready for all week by hanging lights, putting up various kinds of decor, and setting the stage. We were also editing film and sound tape for the movie. Then at some point we ventured forth into public venues.

Later we got involved with the Hells' Angels, and they came down and partied with us at La Honda. We went to Muir Beach and did an Acid Test there. We did an Acid Test in Palo Alto. We did an Acid Test in San Jose. We did one in the Fillmore Auditorium. We did the Longshoreman's Hall Trips Festival and then we did the "What's Happening" thing at San Francisco State University. Basically, those were the Acid Tests we did in Northern California.

.....Kesey didn't attend any of the L.A. Acid Tests. What happened was that he and I rented a red mustang convertible in San Jose and drove to Los Angeles. Then he went off to Mexico in a truck with Ron Boise.

The rest of us started acid-testing our way south. We rented a series of houses in L.A. and had five, maybe six, Acid Tests in Los Angeles. We did one at Paul Sawyer's Unitarian Church, we did one in a sound stage, we did one in a movie hall, we did one in a garage in Watts after the riots." -- On the Bus - Paul Perry - Page 123, 156

(The Acid Tests he was mentioning here, vaguely, are the Cinema Theatre on Feb 25, and the Carthay Studios, March 19)

"The use of LSD had given the Pranksters a feeling that they were acquiring new powers and that together they could form a group mind. The appearance of Owsley on the scene was fortuitous, because it gave Kesey a virtually unlimited supply of LSD and enabled him to bring this new consciousness to many more people. In December 1965 Kesey decided to further his mission of altered consciousness by going public with a series of "Acid Tests. Mountain Girl outlined it: "We had this idea to give LSD free to people at events that we were going to set up. It grew out of a party idea, a Saturday night party. Every Saturday night you have a colossal party and you invite anybody and everybody you can think of to invite and turn them all on and have a good time and show weird movies, light shows, or anything we could think of at the time to do. The early Acid Tests were at Kesey's place, and there was also one at Babb's place. We did them for three or four weeks before we took it to San Jose." -- "It was a total experience," Kesey explained to writer Tom Wolfe, "with all the senses opened wide, words, music, lights, sound, touch--lightning." This was just the sort of experience that Garcia was looking for in his music." -- Captain Trips - Sandy Troy - Page 170-71

Jerry Garcia speaking about the early Acid Tests.

"It wasn't a gig, it was the Acid Test," Garcia once said. "Anything was O.K.. It was far out beautiful magic. We had no reputation and nobody was paying to see us or anything like that. We weren't the headliners, the event was. Anything that happened was part of it. There was always the option to not play. ...The freedom is what I loved about it. When you're high, you may want to play five hours, but sometimes you may want to stick your head in a bucket of water, or have some jello or something."

"At the Acid Tests there were no demands made upon the musicians. Garcia stated, "There were no sets. Sometimes we'd get up and play for two hours, three hours; sometimes we'd play for ten minutes and all freak out and split, We'd just do it however it would happen. It wasn't a gig, it was the Acid Tests, where anything was OK. Thousands of people, man, all helplessly stoned, all finding themselves in a roomfull of other thousands of people, none of whom any of them were afraid of. It was magic -- far out, beautiful magic." -- Captain Trips - Sandy Troy - Page 81

"The nice thing about the Acid Test was that we could play or not. And a lot of times we'd really be too high to play, and we'd play for maybe a minute and then we'd lose it and have to leave--"This is too weird for me!" On the other hand, sometimes we'd play, and there was no pressure on us because people didn't come to see the Grateful Dead, they came for the Acid Test; it was the whole event that counted. Therefore we weren't in the spotlight, so when we did play, we played with a certain kind of freedom you rarely get as a musician. Not only did we not have to fulfill expectations about us, we didn't have to fulfill expectations about music either. So in terms of being able to experiment freely with music, it was amazing. (Grateful Dead Family Album - Page 29 [Interview with Garcia and Kesey on the Acid Tests])

Bob Weir - Speaking about the early acid tests.

"Here or there that would occur and then dissipate. A lot of lights, a lot of sound, a lot of speakers all around the room. You would walk by a microphone, for instance,

and maybe say something and then a couple minutes later you'd hear your own self in some other part of the room coming back at you through several layers of echo. The liquid lightshows began there. I think it was the first time anyone saw them. People were rather gaily adorned: dyed hair, colorful clothing and stuff like that. And everybody was loaded to the gills on LSD."

"There was a lot of straightahead telepathy that went on during those sessions. We learned during those sessions to trust our intuitions, because that was about all we had to go on. When you learn to trust your intuitions, you're going to be more given to try things, to experiment. And you're going to be more given to extemporaneous assaults of one sort or another. We learned to start improvising on just about anything."

"We were participants, and so were they. We were all just making waves, as big and bold as we could, and seeing where they rippled against each other and what kinds of shimmers that all caused."

"For me and my friends, these drugs (pot, acid, the other "entheogens" were seen as tools -- tools to enhance awareness, to expand our horizons, to access other levels of the mind, to manifest the numinous and sacred, tools that had been in use for thousands of years by shamans, by oracles, in the ancient mystery schools, by all whose mission was to penetrate beyond the veil of illusion. In short, these experiences were not embarked upon as an escape from "reality" -- they were explorations into the super-real, voyages designed to bring a larger sense of reality back into human consciousness, which had become irredeemably bogged down in the material world.

It's been asserted by some quarters of traditional teaching that these experiences were artificially induced shortcuts to spiritual levels that were better attained through long and reverent spiritual work. That's partly true; however, I saw these visions as a sign that we were on the right track. After all, the drugs wouldn't let you stay there -- you came back eventually to "reality" -- but knowing that these levels of spirit existed inspired us to search out as many ways as we could to return to these exalted levels of awareness.

With my first psychedelic experience I had broken through my depression and I was now ready to seek out less solitary forms of creative pursuit -- and guess what? Things started happening. First, I ran into my Mills composition classmate Steve Reich, who at the time was driving a cab in San Francisco and working with the San Francisco Mime Troupe as musical director. The Mime Troupe was as classic an anarchist collective as ever was -- a bunch of actors and far-left theorists dedicated to provocative street theatre, their productions of classic farces (such as Moliere's Tartuffe), both in theatres and outside in the parks, were practically the only rays of light in the otherwise dim and gray cultural atmosphere of San Francisco at the time. Ronnie Davis, the director, and Saul Landau, the manager, were both committed activists of the left; their agenda was basically to put the Man up against the Wall. Two other members of the creative team would also make their mark -- actor Peter Cohen, later known as Peter Coyote, and Herb Greene, a photographer who became a world-class portraitist on the par with Karsh or Avedon.

.....Actually the best thing about it was that I became involved with the troupe, essentially joining Steve in the music "department." Our function was to provide what little atmosphere music was needed in their bare-bones, no-frills productions; aside from that we could just fool around there with various ideas. Steve was just on the verge of a breakthrough in his compositional approach; in the next year he would emerge with a totally stripped down kind of musique concrete using overlapping rhythmic loops of taped voices, eventually becoming one of the postmodern era's most important and influential composers -- the inventor of minimalism, some say. Right then though, he was into improvised music, even as we were taking the troupe's tape recorder around the city to record various sounds for the shows, we were lobbying Ronnie Davis for a chance to do some sort of improvised music-theatre piece. Just

before Steve joined the Troupe, they had put on a "happening" called Event I, so we decided to call this one Event III/Coffee Break (There was no Event II). The idea was to combine improvised dance/movement, lights, and music--sound to -- to -- tell a story? Channel our aggressions? Epater les bourgeois? Nobody knew. Nobody cared. We just wanted to throw all these elements together, wail with 'em, and see what happened. In retrospect, this event, the manifestation of a collective unconscious, served as the prototype for what became the Acid Test (at that time lacking, of course, the Main Ingredient), a manifestation of collective consciousness.

In fact, Event III was like a precognitive vision of the Tests -- broad swaths of colored lights sweeping through space; chaotic but hypnotic music (played by Steve, Tom Constantin, myself), and a great drummer from Oakland, Wahlee Williams; Ronnie Davis in a cop uniform descending from a ladder in grotesque, disjointed moves as I rise from a trapdoor playing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" on trumpet. It was so crazy we might have well have been on acid. It was tremendous fun to work on that level with the troupe, but when their next production didn't need music, Steve moved on -- and so did I."

Searching for the Sound - Phil Lesh- Pages 36-38

"You'll be forgiven for concluding from much of the foregoing that the Acid Test was a celebration of barely controlled anarchy. Not so. It was in fact totally uncontrolled anarchy, ordered only by those same mysterious laws that govern the evolution of weather patterns, or the turbulence in a rising column of smoke.

Let's walk (or should I say dance? crawl?) through a typical Acid Test layout. Entering, we find ourselves in darkness, relieved only by the blinding flashes of strobe lights (carefully timed to be out of synch with one another and the music.) What seems like several hundred people are variously milling about, dancing strenuously, or puddled in the corners, against the walls, and on the floor, all clad in colorful and exotic clothing. (My favorite costume has always been prankster Paul Foster's outfit at Palo Alto: swathed in bandages like the mummy, wearing a WWII vintage gas mask and a sign around his neck that read I'M IN THE PEPSI GENERATION AND YOU'RE A PIMPLY FREAK.) Several projection screens are showing vastly different sequences of images, film clips, or full-color quasi-protoplasmic blobs moving in time (or not) to the music. The music itself is manifesting not from silence, but from a bed of ambient sound created by the aforementioned Mobius loops of microphones and speakers, and is enhanced by interjections of what we called "Prankster music" -- loud, incomprehensible, jagged, and not exactly lyrical -- and punctuated by shrieks, moans, expostulations, cries, murmurs, and laughter emitted spontaneously by the assembled freaks.

When a large crowd is present, as at the Fillmore or the Trips Festival, the experience of the group mind becomes much more intense, and much larger-scale; see how the entire wildly dancing audience behaves like waves in the ocean: whole groups of dancers rising and falling, lifting their arms or spinning rapidly in synchronized movement, darting swiftly through the crowd or languidly undulating in place -- manifesting the same sort of spontaneous consensus seen in flocks of birds, schools of fish, or clusters of galaxies.

To make music for dancers like these is the rarest honor -- to be co-responsible for what really is the dance of the cosmos. If, as some savants of consciousness suggest, we are actually agreeing to create, from moment to moment, everything we perceive as real, then it stands to reason that we're also responsible for keeping it going in some harmonious manner. The fervent belief we shared then, and that perseveres today, is that the energy liberated by this combination of music and ecstatic dancing is somehow making the world better, or at least holding the line against the deprivations of entropy and ignorance." -- Searching for the Sound - Phil Lesh - Pages 68-69

"About this time [Jan. 20-30, 1966], everyone in the band, except for Pigpen, had been taking acid at least once a week for more than six months. It's safe to say that in the ninety days or so that the Acid Tests existed, our band took more and longer strides into another realm of musical consciousness, not to mention pure awareness, than ever before or since. At the beginning, we were a band playing a gig. At the end, we had become shamans helping to channel the transcendent into our mundane lives and those of our listeners. We felt, all of us -- band, Pranksters, participants -- privileged to be at the arrow's point in human evolution; and from that standpoint, everything was possible." -- Searching for the Sound -- Phil Lesh - Page 76

"Part of what made the Acid Tests work were the pranks of Kesey and Babbs and the antics of Neal Cassady, who would rave over the microphones or wander around blowing people's minds. Mountain Girl remarked, "Neal Cassady was the main announcer, the mad commentator who gave the blow-by-blow. His entire life force was behind him. He was beautiful at the Trips Festivals and Acid Tests. We'd give him the microphone and a spotlight and some brilliant piece of clothing to shred. He'd do weird scat singing if the music wasn't happening. He'd talk or give commentaries on the girls. Just constant entertainment. He moved fast and loved dancing in the strobe light babbling all this comic rap stuff." -- Captain Trips - Sandy Troy - Page 80

"Roy Seburn did one of the first light shows," says Babbs. "He had an overhead projector and he got a bug and put it on the tray. And this bug was just huge up there on the wall. Then he put a spider on the tray and the two things fought. I'll never forget it. It was one of the best shows I've ever seen." -- On the Bus - Paul Perry - Page 114

Now, I'm not sure if anyone has figured this out or not, other than the Prankster participants of the day, but if you look below the lettering on the poster where it reads "Optics,"..... That explains why that "Bug" is on the poster, huh? (Close-up view on the next page)

Ram Dass: "My general feeling is that the Acid Tests were extraordinary. I felt they were sheer magic. In many ways I saw it as a religious ritual. I call them scary because there were clearly bad trips going on within the framework of the Tests. They seemed to me to be not bad trips in the sense that they were lethal, but bad in the sense that people were getting more than they bargained for.

Those of us from Millbrook saw acid tests as religious rituals and sacramental events. Going into the Acid Tests we still thought that acid had that quality about it that made us feel like religious seekers or research explorers. But the Acid Tests were different in that they had an incredibly strong sensual immediacy. They turned people inside out into the moment, in a way that they felt extremely alive. These events were crowded, wild, and confusing; they almost demanded surrender. For some, the surrender was great; but others didn't like that feeling of having no safe ground." -- On the Bus - Paul Perry - Page 149

Timothy Leary: "I don't think that the Acid Tests made the federal government move any quicker toward a clampdown on acid. What the pranksters were doing was an authentic pagan religious ceremony that initiated thousands of people. By the way, I never heard of any casualties from it. There were 3000 people in one of those warehouses with electric Kool-Aid and I never heard of any casualty rate,

Out of those Acid Tests we have a living, growing flower known as the Grateful Dead. Several hundred thousand people go to see them each year. It is almost like the bus. They just keep traveling." -- On the Bus - Paul Perry - Page 167

"With the advent of the Acid Tests, the Warlocks dropped out of the straight music scene and became the psychedelic explorers destined to become innovators of the so-called "acid rock". Garcia explained, "The Acid Test was the prototype for our whole basic trip." He commented, "We were lucky to have a little moment in history when LSD was still legal and we could experiment with drugs like we were experimenting with music." When LSD entered the scene, "the whole world went kablooey."

The Acid Tests: to go where no human had gone before -- a psychedelic journey combining LSD, rock 'n' roll, light and movie projections, tapes, strobes, and black light that took the explorer on a trip with no reservations. "Okay, so you take LSD and suddenly you are aware of another plane, or several other planes, and the quest is to extend that limit, to go as far as you can go," said Garcia. "In the Acid Tests that meant to do away with old forms, with old ideas, try something new." -- Captain Trips - Sandy Troy - Page 72

"LSD, of course, was the genie behind the Dead's birth, though in 1972 I didn't grasp that either. And who in the counterculture, whether hippies or politicians, could have guessed that when you entered the world of psychedelics, you would pass, unaware, through doors first opened by the Central Intelligence Agency? For it was during the CIA's search for "truth drugs" and behavior-altering substances among hallucinogens such as LSD, mescaline and psilocybin, in the 1950's and early '60s, that the genie escaped from the bottle.

It surprises me to learn that the Grateful Dead, most of them anyway, used LSD nearly every time they played until the 1970s. By the early '70s, the larger crowds demanded more control from the musicians than LSD permitted, also more predictability; and by then, for the band, the hard drugs had begun to roll in, cocaine and heroine. LSD, however, introduced the Dead to what percussionist Mickey Hart calls a "road map," to which they could return again and again to "bring back the sights and sounds and sensations" of the early trips."

...

"Students of religion will see a religious movement in the fervor of the congregation, and they will not be wrong. A religious note is touched almost every time Jerry Garcia speaks of psychedelics, as when his discourse (in 1993) on how acid allowed him to go beyond the ordinary experience; to probe an alternate reality that as a child he believed existed but that he could never find. "Everything on the other side was really okay, and even fun," he discovered. The acid world was "shadowy, ambiguous and half-concealed," not unlike the spiritual world of Catholicism, which he inherited from his Spanish father and Irish mother. He was sure he had "received direct instruction about his life while high," Garcia told the interviewer, and he swore that once he had "ridden up into the heavens and had been shown the face of God." --

...

"I asked Kesey whether he was referring to the Menlo Park experiments--which he was--and whether he knew that the CIA was behind them. No, he said. Allen Ginsberg used to tell them this, but nobody believed him until the Freedom of Information Act unlocked the evidence. How did Ginsberg know? I asked. "Ginsberg was one of those little ferrets," Kesey said, "and he had a lot of other little ferrets under him, and they ferreted out a lot of this stuff," When the proof arrived, Kesey had said, "Of course, of course." Now, he submits, "that's how you know there are angels and other beings, because irony suggests a humor from above," His mind caterwauls ahead. "And when you see something like the Grateful Dead spreading acid around that the CIA has brought into the country [which isn't exactly what happened, but Kesey's not a stickler for detail], you can feel the irony, and can get a little giggle out of it yourself."

Hunter appreciates the irony, too. "You betcha," he says when I marvel over the unexpected creativity of government military research. "They created *me* for one

thing. And Kesey and the Acid Tests." -- Sweet Chaos Grateful Dead American Adventure -- Carol Brightman - Page 2, 7, 23-24

With the Pranksters suddenly out of their lives and the Acid Tests over (at least for the time being), it was time for the Grateful Dead to become more self-reliant and carry it's own version of the Acid Tests spirit into the clubs and ballrooms of San Francisco. It wasn't, Garcia noted, quite the same:

"In order to keep on playing, we had to go with whatever form was there. Because for one thing, the form that we liked [the Acid Test] always scared everybody. It scared the people who owned the building that we'd rent, so they'd never rent twice to us. It scared the people who came, a lot of time. It scared the cops. It scared everybody. Because it represented total and utter anarchy. Indoor anarchy. That's something people haven't learned to get off with. But our experience with those things is that's where you get the highest...

Tha Acid Test was the prototype for our whole basic trip. But nothing has ever come up to the level of the way the Acid Test was. It's just never been equalled, really, or the basic hit of it never developed out." - But what it evolved into over the next three decades was no less remarkable. - Garcia: American Life - Blair Jackson - Pages 101-102

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