

Join Us

Gain immediate access to the PosterBase Database, the first and only one of its kind, Price Guide Book and FREE online Image-Supplement for posters and handbills.

About this Site

- ▣ About this Site
- ▣ Sample Articles
- ▣ Subscribe Today

DEPARTMENTS

- ▣ Feature Articles
- ▣ PosterBase
- ▣ Acid Test Chronicles
- ▣ Bootleg Alert Post
- ▣ Classified Ads
- ▣ Link Page
- ▣ Michael Everett Posters
- ▣ One-of-a-Kind Club
- ▣ RSS Headlines
- ▣ Site Map

PRODUCTS

- ▣ All Products
- ▣ Product Department

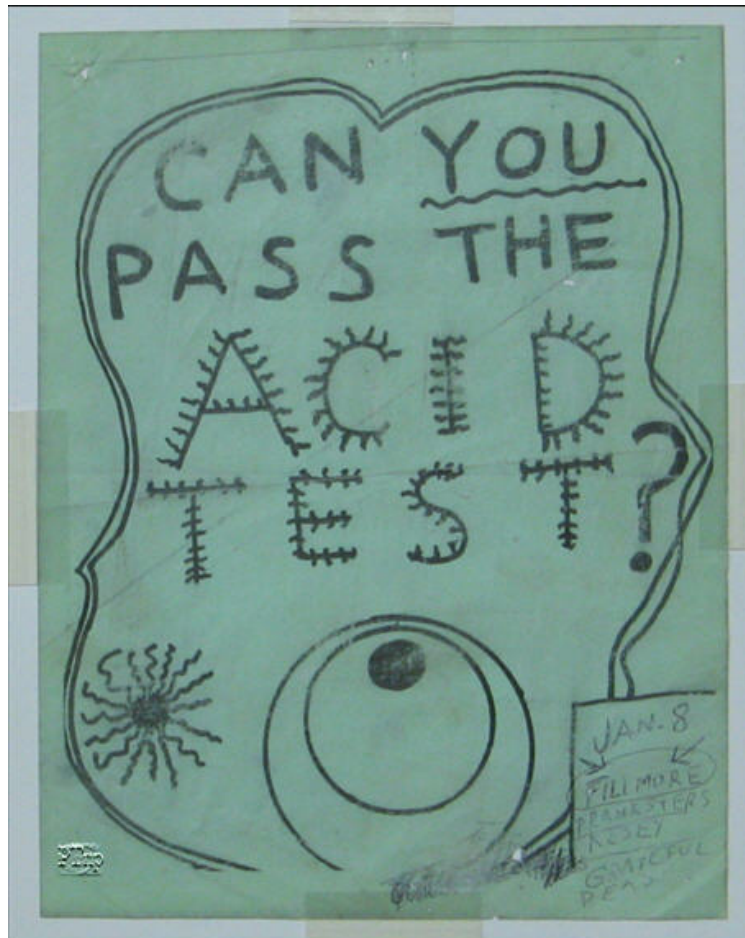
Other

- ▣ Our Guarantee
- ▣ Postertrip Want List
- ▣ Privacy Policy
- ▣ Terms of Use

RESOURCES

- ▣ Article Index
- ▣ Contact Us
- ▣ Help
- ▣ Tell a Friend
- ▣ Text Size
- ▣ Your Account

[home](#) | [Acid Test Chronicles](#) | The Acid Test Chronicles - Page 15 - . . .

 Search


This is a One-of-A-Kind handbill for the Fillmore Acid Test on Jan 8, 1966. Following in the style of the Palo Alto handbill and the Paul Foster poster, the box was placed in the lower right hand corner and "filled in". This was originally mimeograph printed on Day-Glo green thin paper. This is the only one that has survived. Historic!

The Acid Test Chronicles - Page 15 - The Grateful Dead - 5th Acid Test - Fillmore Aud. Jan. 8, 1966

The Fillmore Acid Test was the first Large Scale Acid Test.

The Dead had just recently played the Fillmore for the first time, one month prior, on Dec. 10, 1965. But this was different, No real organization and no real expectations, as usual. Another acid free-for-all.

"After Palo Alto, the Test was ready for the big time -- the Fillmore Auditorium. Much has been written about the role of the Fillmore in the then emerging countercultural groundswell, but at that moment it was simply the best possible venue for our trip: a huge (for us) audience space; a wide, low stage; and, best of all, balconies on three sides so that the light show and Prankster Central could spread out and be able to throw light on anything occurring in the hall. This Test also marked the emergence of Mountain Girl (aka Carolyn Adams, a Stanford student from Poughkeepsie, New York, who had been introduced to the Prankster scene by Neal Casady; later to become one of the great loves of Jerry's life) as the Prankster Queen -- at least in my eyes. She ended up being responsible (if that concept is even thinkable in this context) for mixing the multiple mutable audio loops connecting every part of the space with every other. Occasionally, her voice could be heard floating -- the sound actually moving though the hall -- with a loving and harmonious commentary on some piece of the action.

We've loaded our gear into the Fillmore, we're all set up, the people are arriving, the Pranksters are firing up the Mobius loops, and, like a conquering hero or some Robin Hood figure out of swashbuckling antiquity, in comes Owsley, wearing a Aussie digger hat and a leather cape. Every inch the figure of the psychedelic warrior, here's a man who knows that he's onto something, something cosmic and eternal. It's hard to reconcile this vision with the freaked-out dude from Muir Beach. I walk up and shake his hand. "So you're Owsley," I say. "I feel as if I've known you through many lifetimes." "You have," he replies, "and you will through many more to come." Indeed, I felt as if I'd been living inside his head; maybe that was the result of all the trips I'd taken using his product.

During the Test itself, the acoustic space of the hall was finely sculptured and very dense -- it was very much a sonic "landscape," with solid objects here, open spaces there, paths of least resistance (for sound). One could wander from an area dominated by the Thunder Machine, traversing a space populated by disembodied voices carrying on many simultaneous conversations (almost like being in Neal's head) to a space in front of the stage where the music was pretty obviously being played by the band. However, the so-called nonmusical sounds from the other regions would

This site runs on:

MemberGate™
Software

Click here to find out why

come stealing in, sometimes masking the music being played. These experiences set off some interesting trains of thought for me: Why couldn't noise, or speech, or sounds that weren't made up of a series of harmonics be part of musical thought, musical discourse, especially if used rhythmically? We had already begun experimenting with feedback (extremely loud distorted tones wrenched from the speakers by electromagnetic interaction between the musical notes perceived by the pickups and the magnetic fields of the pickup, speaker, and amplifier), and one of our favorite tricks became fading down to sixty-cycle hum (normally the bane of a musician's existence) and using that as our fundamental tone to generate harmonic music.

The main event at the Fillmore, however, was the manifestation of the group mind in a large crowd. For the first time, the physical, luminous, and sonic spaces were unified -- the dancers moving, the musical sound breathing, the lights pulsing -- as one being, limited only by the inscrutable laws of probability. At the end, after eternities of ecstatic ego loss, a voice was heard, asking, "who's in charge here" The depth of existential thought revealed in that question dropped us all right into the theatre of the absurd. The voice belonged, of course, to a San Francisco police officer, whose duty it was to see that all events involving alcohol were shut down at 2:00 a.m., according to state law. After being shown the dearth of alcohol on the premises, but still highly suspicious of the general hilarity still resounding around the original question, a decision was reached: "Ya gonna shut it down." So, OK, we'll shut it down; but in our own inimitable manner, we just couldn't let it go without a last gasp: Bob Weir climbing a very tall ladder in the middle of the floor, shrieking the "Star Spangled Banner" at the top of his voice, accompanied by myself and others, for all the world like some demoted fundamentalist pirate TV network ending its broadcast day with a bang." -- Searching for the Sound - Phil Lesh - Pages 69-72

"For sheer unmitigated total all-out craziness you couldn't beat the Acid Test. Nothing has ever been like those. They were really the most fun of any of those kinds of things. I remember the one at the old Fillmore was tremendously successful because they had all those little cubbyholes...It had that segmented thing going--the big room and lots of little rooms. There were microphones distributed all over the place, and all different people with mixers and tape recorders, and speakers all over the place. And so somebody might say something in the corner and it would go through a delay and you might hear it up in some other room completely unrelated, but there would be this incredible timing thing that would be happening so that everything that happened would sort of fit right in perfectly...Somebody would find a microphone on the floor and say, "Hey, is anybody there?, and all of the sudden they would hear their voice, huge, coming from all over. And they would start raving, and it would go away, and something else would come up...Then the cops came and busted that one. The Acid Test was a good one for the whole cop show. The cops came in, and they looked around. here's one of Ron Boise's big sculptures, the big thunder machine is there--[freaks] banging on it, pouring Day-Glo paints over it, and it's making this incredible din, resonating, and weird tapes and weird sounds going on, and people running around, and all this totally bananas shit going on. Here's these straight good old four-square San Francisco Irish cops, a whole bunch of them, a dozen or so of them. And they're in there -- "Who's in charge here?" The limit of the absurd, you know, "Who's in charge here?" The cops standing in the middle of the floor with half a dozen freaks around them raving at 'em, raving strange things at 'em...and here's this cop, like a lieutenant up there, trying to make an announcement over the microphone while the dials are being run by some madman up on the balcony somewhere, so the cop's voice is coming in and out, and Kesey is raving some semi-patriotic slogans over the top of the cop's rap about it--"We have to clear the place out." And the thing would cut off right in the middle of his rap. Phil and Weir are there arm in arm around each other, and they're singing "Star Spangled Banner" real loud in the cop's ear, and some big bear of a freak is banging his hand with a tambourine. It was so funny, really hilarious. All this funny stuff for timing. It was like a huge Marx Brothers movie...That's what I loved about those things. There was absolutely no paranoia -- there's no law against being weird. The police were like big buffoons, some kind of dog police or something.

...Then the cops were up in the balcony. they were going around in a little official know, sort of inspecting. all of the sudden these freaks are there with this ladder, and they're putting the ladder up to the balcony, and they're climbing it, and they're hollering "Hug the heat!, Hug the Heat!. It was amazing!" -- Garcia recalling the Fillmore Acid Test for a Radio Interview - Captain Trips - Sandy Troy - Page 78-80

"...The Pranksters had just held an acid test at the Fillmore Auditorium, a big ballroom in the middle of one of San Francisco's big negro slums, the Fillmore district. It was a wild night. Hundreds of heads and bohos from all over the Bay area turned out, zonked to the eyeballs. Paul Krassner was back in town and he heard the word that was out on ...The Scene. Everybody would be "dropping acid" around 5 or 6 P.M. to get ready for the Acid Test to begin that night at nine o' clock at the Fillmore Auditorium. Krassner arrives and ---shit!---he sees:

...a ballroom surrealistically seething with a couple of thousand bodies stoned out of their everloving bruces in crazy costumes and obscene makeup with a racous rock n roll band and stroboscope lights and a thunder machine and balloons and heads and streamers and electronic equipment and the back of a guy's coat proclaiming "Please don't believe in Magic" to a girl dancing with four inch eyelashes so that even the goddamn Pinkerton Guards were contact high."

Kesey asks him to take the microphone and contribute to a running commentary on the Scene. "All I know", he announces into the din, "is that if I were a cop and I came in here, I wouldn't know where to begin".

Well the cops came in, and they didn't know where to begin. They came in to close the Test down at 2 A.M. in keeping with the local ordinance and the whole thing was at it's maddest height. Mountain Girl had hold of a microphone and was shrieking encouragement to the flailing dancers. Babbs was beaming spotlights at heads who were veering around bombed and asking them spectral questions over another microphone.

---Say there---What's your trouble---have you lost your mi-i-i-nd! Page Browning was grinning Zea-lot. The cops started shouting for them to close down but couldn't make themselves heard and started pulling plugs out, microphone plugs, loudspeaker plugs, strobe plugs, amplifier plugs---but there were so many goddamn plugs, the most monumental snake pit of wires and plugs in history, and as fast as they would pull 8 plugs out, Mountain Girl would put 10 plugs back in, and finally Mountain Girl had a microphone up on the balcony somewhere and was screaming instructions to the dancers and the cops, louder music--more wine!---and they couldn't find her. Finally they ordered the Pranksters to start clearing the place out, which they did, except for Babbs, who sat down in a chair and wouldn't budge. "We said get busy", said the cops.

"I don't have to. I'm the boss here. *They're working for me.*"

"Yeah?" --- and one of the cops grabbs Babbs by a luminous vest he has on, succeeding only in seperating Babbs from the vest. Babbs, grinning maniacly but suddenly looming most large and fierce.

"You're under arrest!"

"For what?"

"Resistin' "

"Resistin' what?"

"Your gonna come quietly or do we have to take you?"

"Either way you want it" says Babbs, grinning in the most frightening manner now, like the next step is eight karate chops to the gizzards and giblets. Suddenly it is a Mexican standoff--with both sides glaring but nobody swinging a punch yet. It is a grand hassle, of course. At the last minute a couple of Kesey's lawyers arrive on the scene and cool everything down and talk the cops out of it and talk Babbs out of it and it all rumbles away in the valley as part of the *welthassle*. - Electric Kool Aid Acid Test - Tom Wolfe - Pages 252-254

Scully's description of the Fillmore Acid Test sounds more like Cirque du Soleil than a gathering of hippies watching a band.

"Ken Kesey had built this super structure of rigging – basically scaffolding with platforms," he recalls. "It was maybe three stories high...It was in the center of the Fillmore Auditorium and there was a stage on one end and balconies that run around the sides.

"Kesey and Babbs were at the top of this thing with goggles on and their white jumpsuits that were all tie-dyed and covered with an American flag..." he continues. "Kesey was telling everyone to 'be in your own movie and let your freak flag fly.' "It was like they were on the deck of the Enterprise."

Scully conjures a cacophony of imagery as he describes the scene: mirror balls, strobes, black lights, liquid projection on the walls, art sculptures and, on the stage, the Grateful Dead playing their mind-expanding version of the blues. "I was just astounded. [The Dead] were raising the roof, literally...it was just an amazing experience."

A few days after Scully's introduction to the Dead, he became their manager at the request of the Dead's sponsor and soundman, Owsley Stanley, better known for the prolific amounts of powerful LSD he manufactured and distributed.

"Up at the Fillmore Auditorium, Ken Kesey's Acid Test event was in action when I got there around the middle of the evening. The people were like the backstage crowd at the California Hall dance (that the *Airplane* played the same night). The coetumes were, wow! A strobe light was flickering at a very high frequency in one corner of the hall and a group of people were bouncing a golden balloon up and down in it. It was a most perturbing frequency. It hurt to look at them.

In one corner there was a piece of metal tubular sculpture by Ron Boise, a thumping machine. If you hit it you got different sounds if you hit it in different places. There was a lot of electronic equipment which sent out a low reverberation that resonated throughout the hall. And the whole place was filled with streamers and balloons. There were TV cameras and a TV screen, and you could see yourself in it. Onstage there was a rock group; anybody could play with them. It was a kind of social jam session.

A guy in a white mechanics suit with a black cross on the front, and on the back a sign saying "Please don't believe in magic" ran up and down all night. Oh wow! Periodically the lights went out and everybody cheered. Giant frisbees, balloons like basketballs, acrobats, girls in felt eyelashes four inches long, people with eyes painted on their foreheads, glasses low on the nose with eyes painted on them, men with foxes on their shoulders. Wow! - Michael Rossman - From the San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 1966 - From the Grateful Dead Family Album, Page 28.

"The Captain has just informed me that we're going into "Operation Crystalization, announces a hidden voice. The chief engineer has left his station at the TV console to go down to the engine room to prepare the engine fuel to enter this new configuration [cut to Prankster Ken Babbs sipping from a tiny cup]. Cassady, however, will remain at his post in the projection booth in order to keep driving this ship..."

It's January 8, 1966, and the Merry Pranksters, a boy's gang with girl pals, steeped in the sci-fi argot of Captain Marvel and EC comics from the 1950's, are staging a party inside a cavernous second-floor auditorium in San Francisco called the Fillmore. The "Captain" is Ken Kesey, known outside the group for his psychic thriller *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962). Neal Cassady, celebrated teddy boy of the Beat Generation, reputed to be able to retread tired with his thumbnails, has attached himself to the Pranksters as a mechanic/hipster of the old school. The "engine fuel" is LSD, known as acid; and this is an Acid Test, which is another motif from the sci-fi hero tales: *Can You Pass the Acid Test?* The future has arrived wearing the robes of the past.

Everybody's dancing a herky-jerk dance, with heads bobbing back and forth and invisible wires tying shoulders and knees to an invisible puppeteer. Cassady dances and clutches his hair at the same time, as if holding his own strings. The women, who are pretty, wear short cocktail dresses--all but the one in jeans and an oversized striped T-shirt, who stomps and spins in a pool of righteous abandon. This is Kesey's young sidekick Mountain Girl, nee Carolyn Adams, from Hyde Park, N.Y. A few men, including Owsley Stanley, the mad chemist behind the "engine fuel," wear crewneck sweaters and owl glasses and look like graduate students from the late 1950's and early 1960's, which some of them are. Others, such as Page Browning, wear space-age costumes. With his harlequin-painted face and teased sequin-studded, Browning looks like Blueboy, the catlike villain Jack Webb introduced on *Dragnet* later in the 60's, an acidhead gone bad.

It just seems to be orderly chaos, YES, crackles a second voice over the loudspeaker. In the end, nothing but mindless chaos, that same old dude, good old mindless chaos, hassling, ever hassling.

But wait a minute. How can chaos be both "orderly" and "mindless"?

In these harum-scarem scenes from Kesey's videotape, which is pastiche of the Fillmore Acid Test and another one in Los Angeles, the stray remark from the control tower is our first clue that there may be method to the madness. That isn't to say that the mix of music, liquid light projections, and weird sound effects, filtered through hallucinogenic drugs, has been doctored to produce a desired effect. Or that the mind, swooping like a heat-seeking missile toward the flash of form in a swarm of new sensations has construed an order more pleasing to itself--which is what the mind usually does. The overture to chaos, "hassling, ever hassling," is the "ripple in still water / when there is no pebble tossed" (as the song goes), which tells us that the action, whatever it is, is happening *beneath* the surface of reality, and not on the face of it.

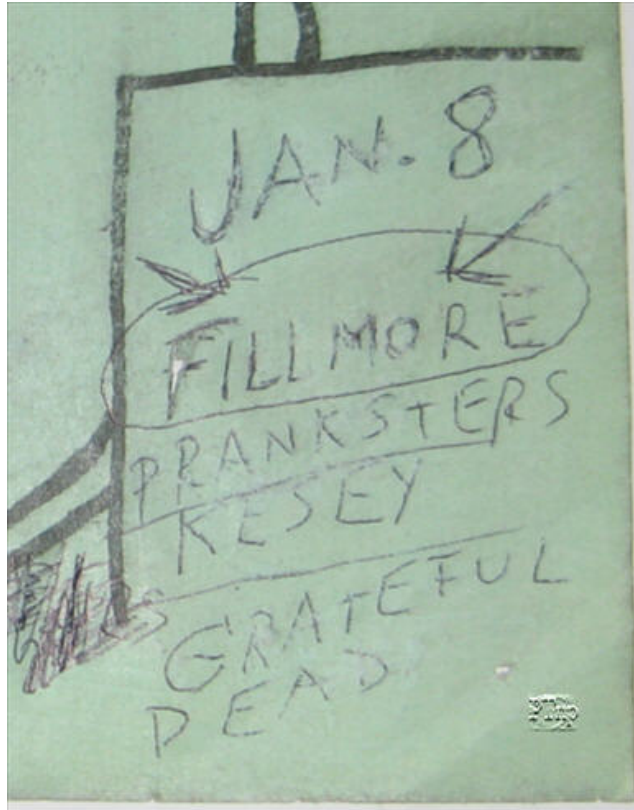
Acid trips, in any event, are far from mindless; and they sometimes repeat themselves, as if with LSD the subject taps into a hidden chamber of the brain that is linked by underground circuitry to a cosmic zoo. Thus an Oakland Hell's Angel, Skip Workman, who was turned on to LSD by the Pranksters in 1964, and attended some of the Acid

Tests, always saw the same huge fire-breathing dragon, heaving against a field of American flags. "The dragon was keeping time with the music," he recalls, "and sometimes the dragon would be blowing a bugle and the notes would come out of the bugle." And all he could think of on the morning of a trip was, "*I gotta see the dragon again.*"

At the Fillmore, the Pranksters' house band stands off in a corner, playing the blues. The musicians appear oddly disconnected from one another, and from the dancers--which is not how the musicians read it, but the viewer doesn't know that. There's a chubby biker dude in leather mouthing a harmonica and singing 'I'm a Hog for You; a bass player with a blond Fauntleroy hairdo; the boy--or is it a girl?--playing guitar; a straight-looking kid on drums; and the lead guitarist; whose thick black crinkly pageboy wobbles like a dime-store wig as he rocks over his strings. Wearing a polka-dot shirt and a palm-leaf vest, he sings the refrain of a Reverend Gary Davis song over and over:
Death... don't have no mercy, ..in this land

These are the Warlocks--Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, Phil Lesh, Bobby Weir, Bill Kreutzmann, and Jerry Garcia -- who have just renamed themselves the Grateful Dead. Like the Merry Pranksters, who include Stanford University dropouts, along with Ken Kesey's Oregon friends, they have come up to San Francisco from Palo Alto. Unlike the Pranksters, who are theatrical, mischief-making, messianic, a little older, the Warlocks have been influenced by a more cabalistic mentality of the Beats, whom Lesh and Garcia, in particular, revere.

...At the Acid Tests, Jerry's Palo Alto gang was entering a new configuration, as American in its aching for transcendence as it was in its early search for musical roots in the American past. Operation Crystalization had begun." -- Sweet Chaos - Grateful Dead American Adventure - Carol Brightman - Pages 13-16



All the necessary particulars. Date, Band Name, Location and Kesey and the Pranksters listed as well.



This is the bottom corner of Pig Pen's poster. What is nice about this poster especially, besides the provenance, is the fact that the box contains the essentials...Location, Time, Date. This is important.



This is the lower right corner "Box" in the white poster hand-colored and brought home by Owsley. It was supposed to be used for the event, from the story that is passed down. Unfortunately, there is no Time, or Date in the box, only the location.