



The SIXTIES

Blog Archive

▼ 2009 (2672)

▼ December (167)

Where have all the protests gone? US students in I...

Copenhagen's independent state, Christiania

Celebrating desertion

Boomers see views relaxing on marijuana

Ravi Shankar resented the Beatles for making him a...

OBIT: M.I.T President During Vietnam War Protests

NYC tribute to Fred Hampton

John Lennon, the boy we knew

John Lennon's lost six-hour interview

Book offers daily glimpse into Beatles' history

Activist-actor Russell Means takes his first stage...

From Puerto Rico to Harlem: an Afro-Latina's sojou...

UMass: Propping up another radicalized "hero"?

Sex! Punk! Politics!

Taking Woodstock and cinema's love of trippy scene...

Mondo Mod / The Hippie Revolt (1967)

Leftist lawyer Alexander Hoffmann dies

Mary Travers Is Praised for Her Voice and Words

The Union of Their Dreams [book review]

Dolores Huerta Speaks To Local Highschoolers

60s artists to open new doors at Pacific

Marianne Faithfull puts pain behind her

The resurgence of Rudolph Wurlitzer

Ayers, Dohrn accuse Hillary of 'white supremacy'

A Freudian analysis of Crumb and Spiegelman

It's R. Crumb's Bible Now

UCSC Hiring a Grateful Dead Archivist

A Grateful Dead Shabbat

Dead and more Dead

Counter-culture activist, ex-fugitive shares story...

Judith Malina to Direct Anne Waldman's Red Noir fo...

Government Experiments on U.S. Soldiers

Sunny day, everything's A-okay [Sesame Street]

Myths of Our Time

Turn Me On, Satan!

Where Activism is Born

Can Obama Face the 'Unspeakeable'?

The DJ and the Dharma [Wes "Scoop" Nisker]

Please Do Not Bend, Maggs Gallery

Lennon, Manson and me [Alejandro Jodorowsky]

Panel emphasizes value of sit-ins in battle for ci...

A Review of Bread and Puppet's Holiday Shows

Rock legends in celebrated

Saturday, December 5, 2009

[Relix, the Book: The Grateful Dead Experience](#)

Book Review:

Relix, the Book: The Grateful Dead Experience Compiled by Toni Brown

<http://blogcritics.org/books/article/book-review-relix-the-book-the/>

Author: El Bicho

Nov 26, 2009

While it will only be of interest to Deadheads and like-minded folk, Relix, the Book is an impressive testament to the devotion and community created by fans of the Grateful Dead. Their relationship with the band, the music, and each other helped create a different business model many new bands now use.

Because of the Grateful Dead's acceptance and encouragement of not-for-profit bootleggers, Les Kippel founded the First Free Underground Grateful Dead Tape Exchange where fans traded concerts. After he was featured in a Rolling Stone article entitled "Mr. Tapes of Brooklyn," Kippel was overwhelmed by the demand, so in 1974 he started a newsletter entitled Dead Relix featuring news about the band and info about trading bootlegs. Since then, Relix has expanded operations. The newsletter is now a magazine with an online presence and there is also a music label.

Compiler Toni Brown went to her first Dead show in 1969, in the late '70s she met Kippel, whom she later married, and worked for the magazine and related businesses. She provides notes of additional information throughout the book.

The newsletter started out with articles and crude drawings. They gained access to the band and other musicians and began running interviews. A 1975 letter from Dick Latvala is featured, who Deadheads will know as the man behind Dick's Picks.

Relix covered other bands from the San Francisco scene such as Jefferson Airplane and Dan Hicks and readers didn't seem to mind. In 1978, editor Jerry Moore left and Jeff Tamarkin came in. Tamarkin widened the music covered to artists like Bruce Springsteen, Stevie Ray Vaughn and the Cars. In 1982, Tamarkin moved on and Brown took over.


After back-to-back covers featuring Ozzy Osbourne and Joan Jett, readers revolted and the magazine returned to their roots. I really would have loved to have seen those letters included here and think it was a mistake omitting them.

In 1989, The Grateful Dead went mainstream with their only hit single "Touch of Grey." That same year, Mick Skidmore gave the first review of an unreleased copy of Junta by Phish, one of the first bands to succeed following the Dead's business model. There's also a very good article about the burgeoning online experience with Deadheads on bulletin boards.

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The Death Of Mistakes Means The Death
Of Rock
Over 70,000 rally in Gaza for PFLP 42nd
anniversar...
JFK and the Unspeakable [book review]
International Civil Rights Center Honorees
Remembering The Warehouse [New
Orleans]
G.I. joe: Veterans-turned-baristas serve a
strong ...
Karma Catches Up With the Brotherhood
of Eternal L...
S.F. Mime Troupe Turns 50
Remembering the draft lottery 40 years
later
Not so pretty in pink
Charitable Front
The Beatles: 'A Hard Day's Night' vs.
'Help!'
Reagan Didn't End the Cold War -- Leftist
Intellec...
A place haunted by Lennon's murder
UC Students Statewide Protests - A New
Spirit of R...
Never forget the real history of America
[by Leona...
Unanswered questions in FBI killing of
Detroit Mos...
Remarkable Journey of the Civil Rights
Generation
Rundgren's Connection to Lennon's
Assassin
29 years later, Lennon's words still hit
their mar...
Devotee of Lennon Haunts Strawberry
Fields
Controversy over Malcolm X as bisexual
Shades of Gray [McComb, Mississippi]
Civil rights movement the topic of lecture
Interviews With Hunter S Thompson
William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe
[Film Re...
Bringing the Panther image to the masses
Bill Ayers Speaks at College of Education
No, I'm the real Irish republican
Bread and Puppet Theater Returns to NYC
A fuzzy hour about sharp Lenny Bruce
Kerouac & friends on the road again
Bill Ayers: Obama's ghostwriter?
'Sesame Street' celebrates 40 years of
sunny days
Kent State shootings site nominated as
historic si...
Mike Roselle and 'Tree Spiker'
Open Letter to Dean Neil Henry
American Indian speakers scheduled
Furry Freaks Pop Up in Parisian Bistro
2000 hippies converge
See your story in struggle for Civil Rights
OBIT: Ted Vincent [Full Tilt Radical
Boogie Brave]...
Historic Rolling Stones appearances
Art D'Lugoff dies at 85; longtime owner of
the VII...
The Night Fred Hampton Died
Roszak Continues Work with New Study of
'Elder Cul...
Forward to yesterday
Old hippie days Up River
Take a trip with The Summer of Love
Janis Joplin belted out the blues and
blazed trail...
Woodstock in a rose-tinted lens
Yoko Ono, forever a force for peace
The Symbionese Liberation Army - US
Naxalism
The Best Beatle
Case Closed on "Hippie Mafia" Smugglers
UC protesters invoke Free Speech
Movement

The magazine also covered the low lights the Deadhead experienced ,evident in the article about the thousands who rioted at a show at the Deer Creek Music Center in Noblesville, Indiana, and of course, the devastating loss of Jerry Garcia in 1995. The remaining band members soldiered on with the Furthur Festival and solo projects and the fans followed, although without the same intensity.

Relix, the Book serves as a very good document for those who want to relive their Dead fandom and for those who missed out and want to see "what a long, strange trip" it was.

Posted by the radman at 1:16 PM 

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after 36...
Free Sundiata Acoli
The Secret to Legal Marijuana? Women
Trust: The Photographs Of Jim Marshall
UT Homecoming Rekindles Memories of a
Different Er...
Rock Historian Says Rock Is Basically Dead
The War On Cops
Hard Road To Freedom: Badger Stone
The Making of an Elder Culture [book
review]
'Last Words' by George Carlin
Band Aid: Do they know how much they
changed the w...
Who's Been Eating My Naked Lunch?
Renaissance Faire's free spirit survives
The Wilding of Sarah Palin
Civil Rights Convert Tops Greatest Gigs
Poll
Fillmore Poster Auctions Yields Impressive
Results...
VW launch new California campervan
Altamont 40 years later
Science Fiction and Politics
The poster boy for progressive self-
delusion [Tom ...
Woodstock Rising
Dead-Opoly
Relix, the Book: The Grateful Dead
Experience
Mennonite peacemakers discuss
resistance
Thanksgiving at Alice's Restaurant
Sisters are doing it for themselves, thanks
The Rolling Stones: Gimme Shelter Blu-
ray
FBI's Murder of a Black Panther Can Teach
Us
Ramparts magazine 's role in
counterculture
SDS and the Great Divide
Fear and Loathing without Hunter S.
Thompson
Guilty verdict reached on Rainbow arrest
Brown Beret theater
Kids These Days Love Classic Rock
William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe
Malcolm X was bisexual. Get over it
The classic rockers of pot movies
Freedom Riders' sacrifice and courage
A Conversation With Cornel West
The battle for Jack Kerouac's estate
The Man Steps In: a Brief History of KCSB
FBI: Former H. Rap Brown leads violent
sect from p...
The State of Woodstock 40 Years Later
'60s Flashback Barnstormin' in
Woodstock's shadow
Dennis Hopper has prostate cancer
Welcome to Potopia [Oakland]
SFO, Oakland Travelers Can Carry Medical
Pot
The Darkness and Glamour of Revolution
A Review of Revolutionary Suicide
When is it cool to bomb a courthouse?
Arlo Guthrie Interview
A study of Germany's student
revolutionaries in 19...
Alice Brock dishes up some tasty art
I was the ultimate rock chick!
National Lawyers Guild Calls for
Investigation Int...
Video Interview with Emory Douglas
American Indian Film Festival
R. Crumb exhibit and conversation spark
controvers...
The Education of a Black Radical
Mario Savio and the Free Speech
Movement

LA Nuggets Film Fest
Mumia maverick
Replacing Black Power With Militant Islam
Marijuana growers upend hard-luck
California town
Bob Dylan: Secret Wingnut? Book Says So.
A woman with protest on her mind
Thanksgiving, Public Education, and
Criminalizatio...

- ▶ November (282)
- ▶ October (257)
- ▶ September (268)
- ▶ August (190)
- ▶ July (191)
- ▶ June (239)
- ▶ May (293)
- ▶ April (231)
- ▶ March (214)
- ▶ February (179)
- ▶ January (161)
- ▶ 2008 (2761)
- ▶ 2007 (338)

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