

UNBROKEN CHAIN

VOL. 7

NO. 1



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Chain Reaction

Editor's note: A couple of these letters are anonymous because the comments were written on the recent reader poll and were unsigned.

The new issue (6/6) is great! The review on the Planet Drum concert was fantastic. I saw it a night later 11/24/91 at the Keswick Theater. There could not have been more than 750 people there. Outside the show we got involved in an impromptu drum session with about 30 people involved. Next thing you know is the tour bus driver was honking his horn to the beat. He then came outside and joined in. Mickey was unreal, the closest thing I've seen since was his drum solo during the Friday night show at Nassau. The new songs are good but I'd say Vince's is the best. Keep up the good work. Brian Kennedy, Stroudsburg, PA.

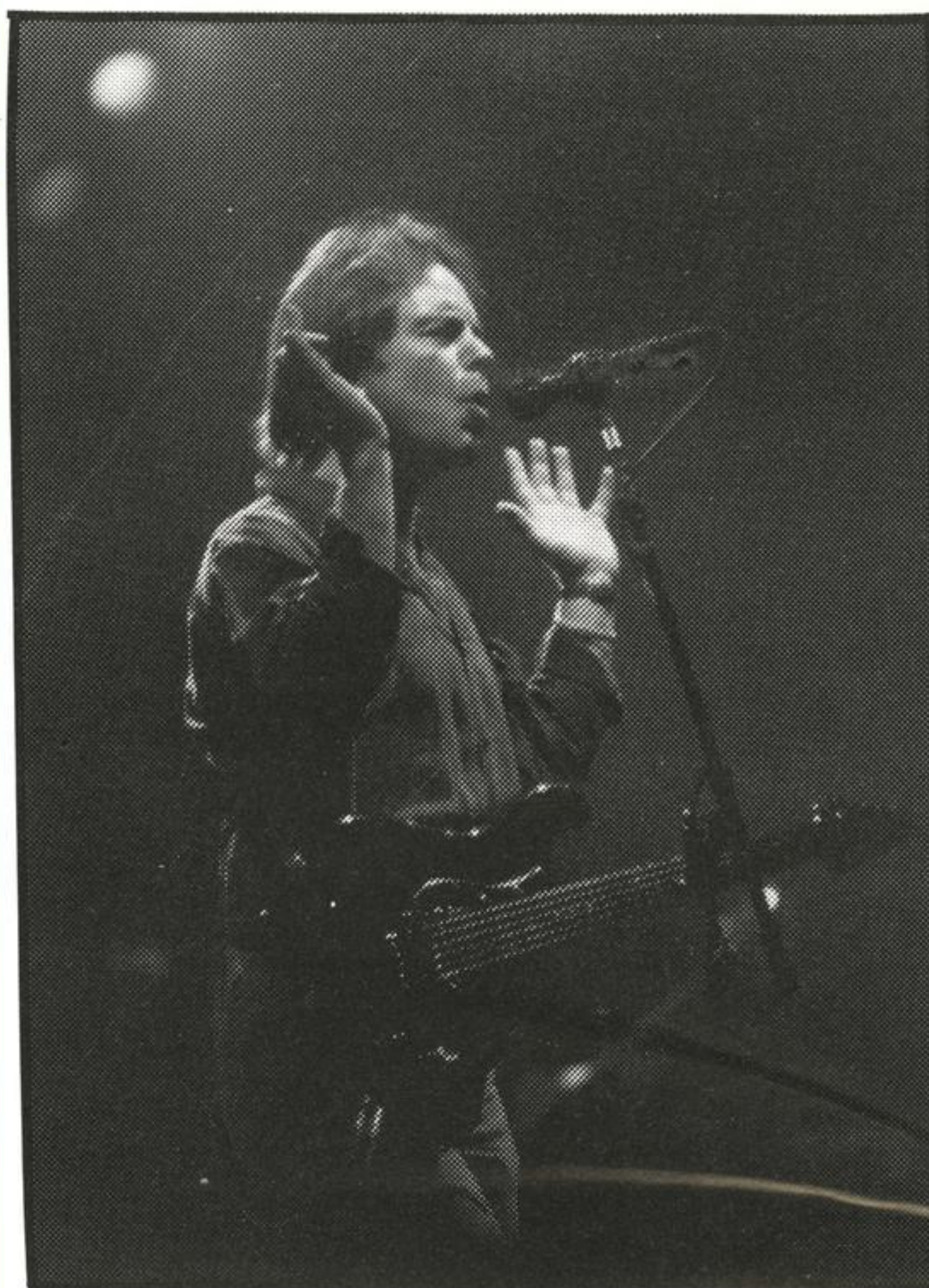
UC is a great publication that is obviously staffed by well-informed, intelligent people. I have no criticism, but I will point out that it does have a profoundly regional flavor. This doesn't bother me, because I am originally from Virginia. However, I now live in Michigan, and I wonder if the subscribers or readers in other parts of the country feel left out. We hear an awful lot about the "Richmond Scene" in UC. I know from personal experience that the Richmond/Charlottesville/Blacksburg/Northern Virginia scene is a strong one, but I'll bet that 'heads in Utah could care less. This is more of an observation than a criticism. On a lighter (and more important) note, I got back from Hamilton a couple of days ago, and the shows were great. Cops Coliseum was wonderful! Vendors were left to their business, and the police were totally relaxed. I'll never miss a show there again. We got an awesome Shakedown Street and a Dark Star. Get the tapes if you weren't there. I also saw both Palace shows in Detroit. The first night gave us killer versions of Music Never Stopped and Morning Dew...then a GLORIA encore! It was smokin'! The second night was a standard showcase of recognizables, though we got a New Speedway. Not a climactic tour-ender, but it was a solid, error-free show. Keep up the good work! Peace, Redbeard, Milan, MI (Christopher Roti)

I think it really sucks that the Dead don't play many places other than the Bay Area and the East Coast. Not all Deadheads are able to travel 700 miles or 3000 miles at the drop of a hat. It hurts to read all of these reviews of great shows which are taking place beyond my reach. Oh, sure, Eugene, but they've played 4 shows there in 8 years (and 1 in Tacoma). 0 in '85 (two cancelled); 0 in '86, 1 in '87; 2 in '88 (Tacoma, Eugene); 0 in '89; 2 in '90; 0 in '91 and 0 thus far in '92. But at least the Northwest may get the Decadenal shows in August. I love the Dead's music but these days it's usually with a trace of hurt. Oh well, I got tapes!!! How 'bout an article about us Deadheads who live too far away to see the band regularly? Long live the Dead! Jim Stoltzfus, Seattle, WA

In the interest of maintaining the accuracy of my favorite G.D. mag, I feel obliged to point out that the jam you have labeled as "Dear Prudence jam?" from 12-30-91 is, in fact, the infamous "Your Mind Has Left Your Body jam" a.k.a. "Heaven Help jam" (after "Saint"). Deadbase could give you more info, but this is the same jam that appeared out of "Terrapin" on 3-24-90 in Albany. Before that, the two most famous versions are probably 11-11-73 Winterland and 12-2-73 Boston. It showed up again in Boston on 6-28-74, and actually Jerry teased it a little on 9-25-91 in Boston out of "Space" (where Bruce mistook it for "Dear Prudence" -- they certainly are similar). In addition to mentions in Deadbase, the band teased the theme on 10-30-73, 2-24-74, 10-22-78 (during the "Mojo" jam), and 5-6-81 just before drums. Just thought you'd like to know! Art Cohen, Cambridge, MA

I dropped a note to UC right around the time Golden Road stopped their operation, suggesting an upgrade in format in order to "fill the gap." At the time, I think Laura mentioned that it wasn't financially feasible. Well, it looks like you've come through in flying colors. Keep up the great work!

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Tim Ashbridge

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Editor's Page

By Laura P. Smith

Vol. 7, No. 1

May 1992

Howdy folks, and welcome to Volume 7, Number 1 of the *Unbroken Chain*. Once again, Spring Tour has come and gone, and we have been working like fiends trying to get this issue out to you.

Baby update: I'm now six months pregnant and counting. My due date is dangerously close to Jerry's birthday, July 31 to be exact! (For those of you who don't know, Jerry's is August 1.) I have to admit that I'm not particularly looking forward to the month of July! As many of you know, the heat and humidity here in Virginia can be insufferable during the summer months. But rest assured, I'll be sitting in the air conditioning, sipping virgin daquiris and keeping cool by the pool right up until the moment I check into the delivery room. You won't see me on tour this summer though. For the first time in many years I've skipped the mail order and fully intend to boycott RFK. Nothing personal - I've always enjoyed RFK in the past - but I just don't want any part of the stadium scene that close to my due date, and Charlotte is just too far to drive in this condition!

Sarah update: I know I've probably said this before but I can't help it - she's getting cuter every day. At 2½ years old, she surprises Fry and me everyday with the things she says and does. The other night I was carrying her inside the house when out of the blue, she patted me gently on the arm and said, for no particular reason, "Mumma, you wundaful!" It just about made me cry. I didn't even know she knew the word, let alone that she connected me with it. It's things like that, the little things, that make parenting so worthwhile and rewarding. Well, that's enough personal blather. I know what you folks really want - DEAD news!

Spring Tour, in the opinion of most of the people I talked to, did not exactly live up to their expectations. The shows were shorter than what we are used to, with a general increase in the actual time for *Drums/Space*. The majority of the shows were conveyed to me as being lackluster, with the tour slowly picking up steam as it moved up the East Coast. The new songs have been pretty well accepted, but unfortunately we have to report to Phil and Bobby that their songs *Wave to the Wind* and *Corrina* each received a few votes in the "Song to Retire" category in the annual Reader's Poll. Personally, I could do without *Wave to the Wind* but I kind of liked *Corrina*, and I especially liked Vince's new tune, *Way to Go Home*, as did many of our readers. But telling the boys to retire *Wave* or *Corrina* before they've even had a chance to polish them off seems a little premature. Why not pick on a tune that we've tried to accept, but just can't, like *Victim or the Crime* or *Picasso Moon*?

The tour started out in Atlanta where it was reported in the newspaper that several members of the Grateful Dead band and crew

were being treated for colds by a local osteopath. Of the three nights in Atlanta, the second night was said to be the best. Hampton highlights included the East Coast's first *Same Thing* since 1967, along with a great rendition of *Tom Thumb's Blues* during the first set, first night. On a tour where most of the first sets included only six or seven songs, the first night of Capital Centre, with nine songs, was a generous dose of music, and the *Quinn* encore that night was an added bonus. The second night of Capital Centre was an equally good show, with a second set *Dark Star* and *Morning Dew* closer. A surprise *Satisfaction* encore ended the Landover run on a high note, even though Bobby couldn't quite remember the words. That was the first time for this little gem since 7/7/86 at RFK.

The Nassau and Philly shows seemed to pass without much fanfare, although the 1-900-RUN-DEAD line reported that the vending scene in Philly was probably the most happening thus far on the tour. As many of you already know, the "no vending" edict was being strictly enforced at Hampton and Cap Centre by local police, coliseum security and Grateful Dead Productions employees. Maybe by the time the tour reached Philly, GDP was getting a little weary of policing the thousands of otherwise law-abiding, peaceful vendors trying to make a buck. At Hampton, of all places, I got hassled for trying to set up blanket to have a picnic on.

The Canada and Michigan tour stops both got high marks from the "tourists" we talked to. The first night of the Copps Coliseum shows (3/20/92), fans were treated to the always welcome *Shakedown Street* to open the second set. The *Gloria* encore played on the first night of the Palace show in Auburn Hills, Michigan was none too shabby either. That was the first *Gloria* since the 11/1/85 show right here in good ol' Richmond. I've probably missed other highlights here but I know you folks will set me straight, right?

We are still receiving more Reader's Polls every day so in order to include all of them in our tabulations we will publish the results in the next issue. I realize that some of the questions may have seemed overly broad or hard to answer, but I appreciate all of the time you folks spent filling them out and especially thank you for all the positive comments about *Unbroken Chain*. I have learned quite a bit about what you want to see in *UC* and will try to provide those things for you. One of the most common suggestions was to have a regular feature on taping, and we are working on getting that going for the next issue. And, to all you tapers and tape traders out there, suggestions and/or submissions in that department are welcome! Comics, crossword and book reviews seem to consistently get the



Sarah Smith

Photo by Pop Pop

lowest scores in terms of "favorite part" of the *Chain*, with high marks going to set lists, interviews and editorials.

In more recent Dead news, Bruce Hornsby has announced his retirement from touring with the Grateful Dead. Bruce cites his main reason for this departure is wanting to spend more time with his wife and newborn babies. Bruce gives an in depth interview starting on page 5.

The Garcia Band and Garcia/Grisman are each doing a five-night run of shows at the Warfield Theatre in San Francisco in late April/early May. Of course, by the time you read this it will be history, but we would like to have set lists to share with our readers in the next issue. If you have them please send them in!

Jerry was seen sporting a new haircut at the 4/25/92 JGB show at the San Jose State University Events Center. Vince Welnick's band, the Affordables, opened that show and played for about an hour, and among other tunes, played "Way to Go Home."

There are some rumors going around that there may be a Weir/Wasserman tour coming up in July, and supposedly a Red Rocks date has already been announced in Denver. As of April 22, there was no mention of this on the Grateful Dead Hotline. There is still no official word on the August Creamery Benefit shows in Veneta, Oregon either, although we have heard that the shows could possibly be on August 15 and 16.

My plan for *Unbroken Chain* is to have an issue out after Summer Tour but before the baby is born. I hope that this all goes according to plan, but I have been moving a little bit slower than usual lately so please be patient.

All good things in all good times!

See you in July! Laura

Chain Reaction, con't.

I'd like to read more critical reviews of the shows. I enjoy reading highlights, etc., but some shows are super quality and quantity, while others, though they contain highlights, are basically duds. I'd also like more crossword puzzles or things of that nature (fill in the blanks, word finds, etc.) How about an article with reader input on favorite songs or songs we'd like to see go away. Reader input would tell why on each account. How about an article on people, animals, cars, etc., named after GD characters? For example, my dog's name is "Bertha"). This may show a lighter side to the scene. Ken Mosler, E. Northport, NY

Why do you continue to bash the Capital Centre? I've seen shows in over 20 different states and it's no worse than a lot of places. Open drug sales of LSD in '87 and '88 (blatant yelling of "sheets") started the bad police scene. But it has gotten much better there since. I've seen 18 shows there and they continue to get better. I'd much rather leave the show right after the concert than not see any shows near my home! Face it, every place can't be as cool as Hampton on the East Coast. I have season tickets to the Washington Capitals and know people inside the Cap Ctr. - they are very happy with how the shows have gone the last couple of years (including JGB), and of course the money they've taken in. So get off the "police state" thing - it's getting old!

I'm glad to see the little piece on Willie Dixon on the Editor's Page, we really can't say enough about how great an influence this man was on what we call "Rock & Roll" today...so, I was a little surprised to see later on, on the set list page, "The Same Thing" referred to as an "old Pig Pen tune." It's actually one of Willie Dixon's greatest tunes, and was originally done by Muddy Waters (It'll give ya goose bumps). Besides "Little Red Rooster," the Dead also cover 2 other Dixon compositions regularly -- "Spoonful" and "Wang Dang Doodle." Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining or anything, but I just think it's good to know the origin of some of the band's material - I'm sure they'd be the first ones to approve! Bob Keller, Amityville, NY

P.S. The coliseum shows here in NY were great - including a smoking version of "Same Thing." "Corrina," the new Weir tune, blew me away on 3/12. Check it out!

Finished the most recent issue, and as always, I'm pleased! My Spring Tour only stretched out to Landover and Philly, but nevertheless I was satisfied with those shows! Especially second night Landover! One of the most appreciative things about being a Deadhead in particular, is the fact that you will always meet the kindest and most interesting people from all over the United States. Another benefit, are nights like 2nd night Landover. Just a musically enjoyable night! Hats off to Vince W. for a great NEW song! I'm a long time Brent fan, and from where I ventured off to behind the stage, I saw the GD crew clapping and screaming nothing but positive comments! Hopefully more to come! Gratefully, Craig Beirftempfel, Glenshaw, PA

I arrived early in Landover and parked near the Capital Centre entrance when I was turned away at the gate. There were a lot of folks around, and one of Prince George County's finest came to preside after about an hour. I laid pretty low until, all of a sudden, he invited us, over his loudspeaker, to approach his car. We thought this was strange, but he invited us to cover his car with stickers, which was accomplished in a matter of minutes. He hung around, smiling and having his picture taken with his cruiser. Yes, a uniformed PG Co. cop with his dead-head cruiser! I politely thanked him for breaking the mold and gave him a hug. Good vibes!

On a scary note...I encountered a young man from Charleston, SC who had a sad tale to tell. He and his friends were detained for no good reason at the Belvidere Toll Plaza (which is in Richmond, VA) on the way to Capital Centre. He claims to have been doing nothing, just trying to pay the toll, when the toll taker asked him to pull over. He noticed that other victims were deadheads and young blacks driving nice cars. He, sadly, signed something that allowed police to search him and his car. All passengers were presented with summonses and a fine which could be paid in lieu of a court appearance.



Steve Deems

Warning: A Traveler's Advisory

This June, if you're headed north through Virginia on I-95 enroute to RFK from Charlotte, expect to be targeted by the Virginia State Police. Although we have no information that the police are planning to bust people on the highway this year, let it be known that people driving cars or vans adorned with Dead stickers fit one of the profiles state troopers use in questioning travelers on I-95. Their preferred checkpoint is the Falling Creek toll plaza south of Richmond at State Route 150. As many as half a dozen state troopers with drug-sniffing dogs are sometimes stationed there. If there is anything wrong with your car, like a broken tail light or expired sticker, they have an excuse to pull you over. But often, they'll just question drivers as they pass through the toll booth, checking them and their passengers out while they talk to them. If they don't cite a violation but ask you to pull over, you have the right to refuse. Just tell them politely that you're on your way to Fredericksburg and are in a hurry to see your sick grandmother. They have no legal right to stop you unless they have probable cause to suspect some sort of legal violation (like if you have beer cans visible or the car reeks of smoke). If you are pulled, they may ask to look in your trunk. They have no legal right to do that either. Just say NO. Searching a trunk requires a warrant. You can avoid the Falling Creek checkpoint by getting off I-95 before you reach the plaza. Take the Exit for State Route 10 to Hopewell (used to be Exit 6E but number has recently changed), then get on I-295 North. That will put you back on I-95 just south of Ashland. You'll avoid Richmond altogether and save \$1.00 in tolls, too. Pass the word!

Not as bad as it could have been, but why did it happen at all? Granted, I wasn't there, I don't have all the facts, but this seemed like a nice, well-meaning kid, and I felt compelled to apologize to him for being mistreated in the city where I live. In the greater cosmic scheme, what is the world coming to? I heard rumors about getting pulled over for a Dead sticker, but I didn't quite believe them until now. All I can say is, BE CAREFUL. You don't have to be asking for it to get reamed. Karen Hawkins, Richmond, VA.

Bruce on the Loose: Hornsby speaks

In his April 13, 1992 interview with a friend of Unbroken Chain, Bruce Hornsby talks about why he won't be touring with the Grateful Dead anymore, his solo projects, and more.



UC: Is it true you won't be touring with the Dead anymore?

BH: Yeah, that's right. There are three major reasons why I'm not going to go out on tour with them anymore. Number one, my wife, Kathy and I just had twins and I want to be home with them. I don't want to be on the road as much as I have been lately. I don't want to miss their childhood -- this is an important time in their lives and I want to be there for them.

Secondly, I want to do more of my own music. I've been working on a new album. I felt it was time for me to just get back to me and get back to a strong focus on my own music.

The third reason is that I felt that Vince has really "gotten it." He's getting a lot of confidence, and the band's getting confident in him. I wouldn't have said that six months ago, nor would have they -- that is, the band -- but I think it's gotten to the point where it's time for them to be a band without this guy coming in and out when he can, meaning me. So those three reasons: the emergence of Vince being really strong, and the other two reasons more personal.

UC: And all of those reasons make sense to me. I mean I was kind of anticipating this.

BH: Well, it's just time to do it. I had a great time for a year and a half, 100 shows or so with them. When Brent died, they were in a tough time and they asked me to help them out. I was really into wanting to help. But it's to the point now where it's time for them to be a real band.

UC: Is this absolutely no Bruce, or are you going to be popping up from time to time?

BH: Hey, Garcia and I are always talking about things we want to do together. They are great people, some of my best friends. I love the Dead community, and I'll always show up here or there, sitting in and hanging, you know, so it's not the end at all. Certainly not as far as Jerry and I are concerned. We will be involved in other projects together. Jerry just played on my new record.

UC: That's what I understand. How many songs did he do on your new record?

BH: He worked on two, I know one of which will make the record, it's just a question of whether both of the songs make it. He's definitely on one thing and will be on the record. So no, it's not "the end," but it's the end as far as my involvement as being a guy who shows up at as many shows as he can.

UC: Can you tell me a little bit about your new album?

BH: We just started working on it in January. It's not an "and the Range" record. It's really a piano trio record with some all-star guitar player guests, such as Garcia, Robbie Robertson, Bonnie Raitt and Chris



Steve Deems

Whitley. Just various people with a horn section also. It's a little different record, it's a lot jazzier, a lot more of a groove record, a bit of a blacker record.

UC: What do you mean when you say a "piano trio"?

BH: A piano trio is a piano, bass and drums. That's what a piano trio means. It's the standard jazz format. Bill Evans Trio, that sort of thing.

UC: Are you cutting your new album in Williamsburg?

BH: Yes, that's right.

UC: Do you have a recording studio in your new house?

BH: Yeah.

UC: So these guys are going to come to you, basically?

BH: Right. Garcia was here when we played Hampton. Branford's coming to do the Olympic thing (we're doing a song together for the Olympics) and then he'll play some things on my record. And Bonnie's coming to town.

UC: How many songs are going to be on it, how many have you cut, and when are we going to see this?

BH: Well, I've cut eleven, I plan on cutting two or three more. It's hard to say how many will wind up on the record, at least 10, maybe more, depending on when we get down to the end and see what really hangs together well as a piece. There's a thread to it all. This is the first time that I've really taken my time with a record. I'm not making any promises about a release date, but I am sort of trying to shoot for the first of next year, which means the record will be done by October.

UC: It takes a long time once the recording is done to get released.

BH: Yeah, well, that's right, because it's not just about the record; you've got to work on the video and all. Spike Lee is going to make the first video for my next record.

UC: That's great! What's it going to be about?

BH: Can't reveal it.

Hornsby Interview, con't.

UC: Could you tell us a little bit about what you're doing with Branford on this summer Olympics music?

BH: We're just doing an instrumental thing, sort of a jazz-ish piece. They are having various artists doing songs for the Olympics. Each night of the Olympic telecast I think there is going to be one full-length video played -- a new piece of music. They asked me to do it and I asked them if it could be a duet, because we play a lot together.

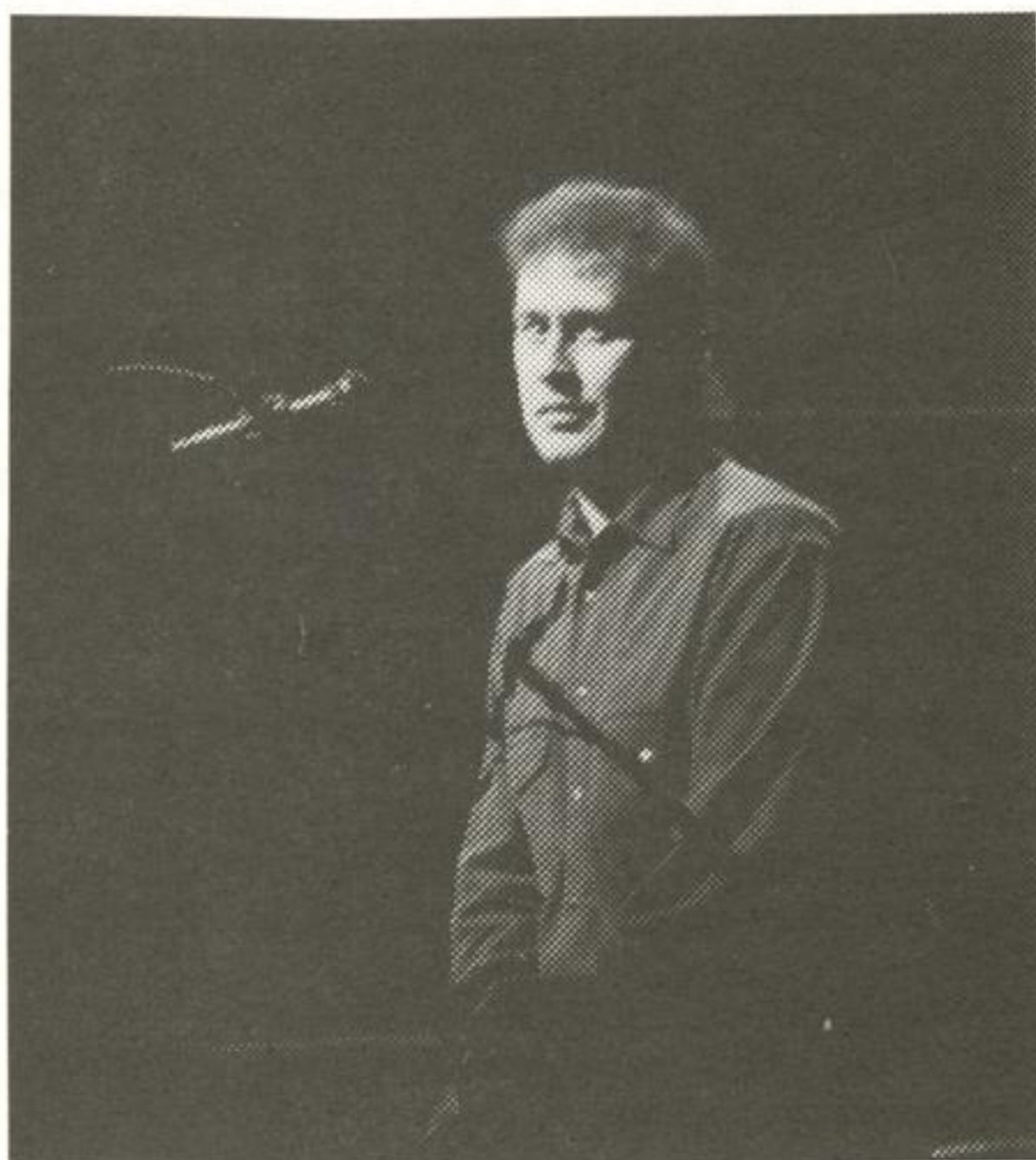
UC: Now tell me about the upcoming concerts with the Richmond Symphony.

BH: Well, a lot of people have a misconception about that. They think it's like Bruce Hornsby playing Stravinski or something which there's no way. I couldn't pull that off. I've always worked on classical music, but there's no chance I could do that; it would be a joke for me to try. It's our band with the orchestra. It's bass and drums and piano. It's a piano trio -- there you go. Joe Puerta with our band is playing. It's the three of us, John Molo, Joe and myself playing with the orchestra, playing my songs. We'll be doing songs like *Across the River* and *End of the Innocence* (the song I wrote with Don Henley) and, you know, the hit songs people would expect. We'll be doing *Valley Road* in an uptempo bluegrass fashion like I did it with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band on the *Circle Be Unbroken* record.

UC: So how does this work . . . are you working on some sort of orchestration to bring in the strings and all of this firepower you're going to have?

BH: Here's what's happening. Michael Gibbs from Britain is scoring the music. He's a strong orchestral string arranger and orchestral writer. He scores films. He did some orchestration on the first Peter Gabriel album, he did some for Joni Mitchell, a song called *Paprika Plains* on her album. He comes from a sort of a jazz background. I thought he would bring something more interesting to the party than some person scoring. I don't want this to be just your typical pretty, pop piano and strings concert.

UC: How does it work mechanically? Are you working with him currently?



Steve Deems

BH: We got together a couple of times in November and in New York last month, and we've talked on the phone a number of times, and I just gave him a few guidelines and very broad, very loose instructions like, for this song, take it out, you know, meaning don't be safe. And he's all for that. Then in other sections it's very specific. For instance, this is what should happen here, the strings should do this, and the texture for this section, you know, that sort of thing. How specific I am as far as instructions and guidelines depends on the song and the situation.

UC: So it's pretty much up to him?

BH: Well, part of the success of this concert really has a lot to do with his orchestration. How well he captures the mood and the vibe of the song.

UC: You do a lot of improvisation in your music. How is that going to fit in here?

BH: Well, there will be open sections set up for me and the trio. Frankly, we will be winging a lot of this! This is not something that is going to be easy, and there is going to be a lot of hand signaling and eye contact. We are only rehearsing two times for this thing. People are going to be seeing something that is very much immediate and spontaneous. There are a lot of areas where we are not very sure what the hell is going to happen. That's the scary part, but that's what happens. I'm really used to that, because I've always dealt in that type of improvisatory area.

UC: When I saw you play at the Mosque, I think it was 1988, there were something like four or five encores. Is that the type of thing you can do with union symphony musicians, or is this pretty much a time scheduled deal?

BH: I would imagine it is. We will be arranging a certain number of songs, I'm not really sure how many exactly, and that's probably all we can do with the orchestra because, once again, you can't really do on the spot orchestral arrangements for 60 pieces. But who knows? If that situation came up and there was a demand to play more, hell, we've got the trio, we could play the rest of the night! We'll see what kind of crowd it is!

UC: What can we expect to see now from the Range? Does the Range exist as we've known it?

BH: Not really. George Marinelli, the guitar player, has really wanted to try to get his own thing going. He wants to get his own record deal and be a solo artist. He's working on that in Nashville. We pick up gigs here and there as a band, but as far as what the future holds, it's unclear to me. I wouldn't be surprised if I went out next year with a different group, you know, just to do some different things. We've been a band for eight years, and it's been sort of nice on this record to work with a few other people. I might just go out with a trio and some horns next year.

UC: So does that mean you are going to be sticking pretty close to home while your sons are in this early stage?

BH: Absolutely.

UC: How has it been juggling family and performing?

BH: Well, the only time when it really was a conflict was in March when I was out with the Dead. I did that whole tour. I have to say, I really missed the boys and I didn't like being away. So that was tough. But at this point, I'm really done with that.

UC: So we're not going to see you at RFK this summer?

BH: Oh, well, you never know about that! That's highly possible.

UC: OK, but not going on the road with them?

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Hornsby Interview, con't.

BH: No, no. I won't do that again. It's time for them to be a band and really develop that unity with six players rather than having this "floating member" as Jerry always calls it . . . you know, this guy that comes in when he can. Like I said, Vince tends to have to recede a little bit and take up a more supporting role, and there was a time when that was really sort of necessary, because he was learning the music. He wasn't like me; he didn't know a lot of the songs going in. Now he's at the point, he's really got it, he's gaining a lot of confidence, and they're gaining a lot of confidence in him, and it just struck me that it is time for Vince to flourish.

UC: When you first joined the Dead, there was a lot more in the way of free-form jams, and we had *Valley Road* and *Stander on the Mountain*, and in 1991 both of those disappeared. Why did you stop playing your two songs?

BH: I pulled the plug on that because I felt that we were starting to butcher the hell out of them. The band started forgetting the songs, and so I just felt like until we rehearsed them some more, then we should put these on the shelf. So it was my call, but then we never rehearsed them. You know, the Dead is notorious for not being into rehearsing too much.

UC: But those were some of your best shows with the Dead. I think the highlight may have been the beginning at MSG in 1990, before the Europe tour, before you practiced with them. Man, there is some beautiful stuff!

BH: Exactly, but they were more into it then . . . it was their idea. I never felt it was my place to come in and say, "Hey, let's do this, let's do that." They were the ones who said, "Hey, let's do a jam, just Jerry and Bruce," or Phil and Bruce and Vince, and I thought, "This is great. This is something new for them." And I think the Dead fans felt the same way. But then all of a sudden, they just forgot about any of that, and it never happened again. But I never felt it was my place to say, "Hey, what about that?" I just felt like it was their band and they should do what they want. But I agree with you in the sense that there were more new ideas happening at the beginning, then it sort of just went back to business as usual. And I was disappointed in that, to be honest with you. Because I felt like, wait a minute, there were some great things coming up here. They were opening up some new avenues, some new things to do.

UC: Yeah, well, it was what you were talking about, it was a jazz trio or combo sort of a thing going on up there...

BH: And all of a sudden it just went back to a standard thing, I felt a little complacency, and yes, I can say, I was disappointed. There were times when they would say, "okay, we're gonna do *Dark Star*, and in the middle of it, Bruce, you just play; or, "we're going to take *Let it Grow*, and you do a segue into something else." These were some new things the band was experimenting with. But then, that all just stopped happening. I think they just forgot about it.

UC: So that was a planned-ahead sort of thing?

BH: That was always planned ahead. Obviously, what I played was not planned, I was just up there free-forming, but yeah, those ideas were coming from them. It was great!

UC: What's your opinion of the energy level of the Dead at this stage? You've just done the spring tour with them . . . you're familiar with what Jerry told *Rolling Stone* last fall.

BH: Well, I think the new songs really helped them a bit. I think if they hadn't had any new songs, this last tour would have been really rough. New songs really help. Hopefully, they will continue in that vein.

UC: But do you think that they are bored and that we are going to see some sort of an end to this ride?

BH: I don't think so. Everyone always sort of freaks out about, "oh, it's going to be over," and "what are the Deadheads going to do now?" I think that's really premature, and I think it's not going to happen. I think they are having a little creative rejuvenation here, they're starting to get some new songs going, and I think Vince is a catalyst there. Vince is really pushing to do that, and that's great. I think they feel the need to also. Everyone enjoyed playing the new songs, and I'm sure the fans like that because the long-suffering Deadheads are desperate for anything new, whether it's an old cover of *Rubin & Cherise* resurrected, or something along that line. I think that all these rumors of the Dead's demise are greatly exaggerated. That's just my feeling. I can't say for sure, but that's just how I feel about it.

I love the Dead community, and I'll always show up here or there, sitting in and hanging . . . so it's not the end at all.



UC: Well, you know their amnesia on stage is pretty legendary. Are they going to remember all the words to *Jack Straw* with you not there to help them?

BH: I'm sure they'll do fine. And if they're not fine, it won't matter. (laughs)

UC: We're going to like it anyway!

BH: That's right.

UC: The Leon Russell album. We haven't talked about that.

BH: Basically, what I served in that purpose was as a motivational force, and I helped him write some songs, and I sort of kept his creative force moving forward a bit. In the end, the record as it is is more of his cut concept of how it should have been than mine. He's really into the computer scene, so it's really more a computer record. To me, that's fine, but I feel the need to have a little more punch than that in a record than what drum machines afford you, and I had my years with a drum machine. I still love machines, but you only use them a certain way, so

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Talking Dead with Vince Welnick

by Al Kemp

*I had the pleasure of interviewing Grateful Dead synthesizer player Vince Welnick on March 17 before the Dead played the second of three concerts at the Spectrum in Philadelphia. In a tiny backstage dressing room, dominated by a large wooden Leslie speaker cabinet, I chatted with Vince about his expanding role in the band, his work with Dead tech whiz Bob Bralove, his new song **Way to Go Home**, and life with the Dead in general.*

I found him to be a gentle, thoughtful and modest man as he fielded my questions and occasionally used a keyboard on his dressing table to demonstrate a point. After that night's concert, I went home and played back the interview tape. This is how it goes:

UC: You seem more relaxed than ever, really at ease now compared to when you first came on stage here in Philly two years ago. What's different now?

VW: I have a clue. It's setting in easier. Not so much preparation is involved before the actual gig itself. I still prep up a lot before the tour.

UC: What do you do to prep up?

VW: I listen to the last tour and play along with it. That way I know I've got all the songs down at least once. Just review the stuff, and by the time we get out on the road it's pretty solid, pretty fresh.

UC: What is this thing? (gesturing to the large, humming cabinet in the corner of dressing room) Is this a Leslie?

VW: Right. That's another feature since the last time I was here. We decided that the organ in the Vox is OK, the Hammond in the Vox is all right, but the Leslie in the Vox doesn't make it, so in order to not have 16 of these up on stage, and not to have an iso-room to put it in, I've been sharing the dressing room with the Leslie now at gigs. It's funny, though, because no one can come back here during the performance, because it's miked. I was at the Oakland Coliseum, I had my wife and friends backstage, and during the soundcheck I could hear every word they were saying in the dressing room. So they have to kick everybody out. But it's the real thing now, and it makes the Hammond sound more Hammond-like.

UC: I assume there's been some rehearsals recently. What were they like? There's four new songs, right? Including **Way to Go Home**?

VW: Yeah. Well, I was with Bob Bralove at Bob Weir's studio a couple of days prior to the rehearsals starting, and people were dropping in and out. Mickey came in with three songs, one of which was *Corrina*. And Bobby worked on a bridge to it, and then we recorded . . . I'm trying to remember if we recorded *Way to Go Home* there, or did the demo of it there.

UC: How did you write it? Is it your own lyrics or did you collaborate?

VW: It's Hunter's lyrics, and then me and Bob Bralove wrote the music. I was working with Bob just laying down the track, with Bob Bralove, and he was making suggestions, and finally we landed on what amounts to be a pretty simple song, kind R&B-bluesy.

UC: It's easy to follow . . .



VW: Yeah, he suggested to me that it'd be a good way to start off, not to take too big of a bite. And me being the lead singer of the song, I didn't want to jump on anything too heavy-duty. The only setback was the lyrics, so I did some do-do-dooes over the track that was there and sent it to Robert Hunter and then, boom, he immediately invented the lyrics.

UC: I think it's a very auspicious start. I heard the Mardi Gras tape and people went wild about it.

VW: Well, thanks! I think that might have been the first time we did it. I'm excited about it. It's cool to be able to sing. That doesn't necessarily mean that I would want them all to follow suit. I would like to write some songs that Jerry or Bobby sing -- I don't know if it works like that -- or Phil to sing for that matter. Maybe all of us to sing together. I don't want to get into a stereotype where every time I write a song I've got to sing it. If it's appropriate for me to sing it, then so be it. This one I guess turned out that way. And I'm proud to sing it. It's fun. I like to sing.

UC: Are you gonna sing it tonight?

VW: Maybe! We do it in just about every town we play in, so there's a chance we might do it tonight.

UC: No promises, though?

VW: Well, I don't have any say in that. It's a Bobby-Jerry call. (Note: Vince sang the song that night to open the second set).

UC: Your vocal range has surprised a lot of Dead Heads who haven't heard you sing with other lineups. It's the most challenging vocal that you've tackled since you've been in the Dead, besides singing the bridge to *Wharf Rat* or something . . .

VW: That's just the kind of style . . . I guess when I write a song, I sing it kind of that way. Actually I thought it was simplified. Some of the stuff I used to do with the Tubes was pretty complicated, although I never sang lead. But I recall doing some challenging harmony parts there.

UC: You seem to be using a lot more voices with your synthesizer now. Are you expanding with it? When you first joined the band you were just kind of tinkling in the background, but now you're doing all kinds of things.

VW: I'm understanding the workings of the pedals and the voices that Bob Bralove sends me . . .

continued on page 9

Vince Interview, con't.

UC: He's like your effects man?

VW: He's like my better half. (Laughs) He's quite a good piano player in his own right, and he sends me sounds out for every song and changes them with each song. And then I have the options on the foot pedals to bring up half the sound or the whole sound or pieces of the sound. And I have some, like what you see in front of me (demonstrates on his keyboard), I have some like internal voices, so basically what I've got is three channels of sounds, which I can put all up at the same time and then control variations of them with two foot pedals. And then of course I have the organ. But I'm understanding how the sounds are coming through. There's more of a system now, although I never know what sound will be coming to me.

UC: So sometimes he surprises you when he punches in something?

VW: Oh, yeah. And he can make them as a primary sound, like when you hit the sound you hear this "ahhhh." Or he can also put it to where you hear the fundamental sound, like maybe electric piano (demonstrates). There's myriad ways that you can do it. And he can combine them with percussive sounds so you get like a marimba-voice combination. Or he can send them to different pedals, which lately we've been doing a lot. One pedal has the percussive sounds, and the other pedal would have the breathier -- either the strings or brass or voices or stuff that doesn't have a percussive beginning.

UC: So there's a whole lot more choices now . . .

VW: Yeah, there's a lot more variation with the sound being separated in that I can start with something mellow and turn it into something really big. And sometimes Bob will pump up the voices or strings as we go along. It's really amazing how it works. I let the sound dictate a lot of what register I play on the instrument, and how much of it I play. But then once I start playing something, then Bob seems to let that kind of dictate where it's going to go from there.

UC: Do you find there's certain registers you can fill with the Dead without crowding out others, without sounding muddy? Is there a niche for your instrument?

VW: Yeah. It's changing, though. I was more in the top registers initially, but now I'm finding, especially with Bruce playing, that I like to stay in the lower piano registers and just chomp down on a nice, real good sound, real round sound. Some of the stringy and especially the horn sounds are real irritating when they go up very high on the keyboard - and also unrealistic.

UC: I noticed you and Bruce switched instruments on occasion last summer. Would you prefer the piano or is synth your thing?

VW: On certain songs I would much rather be playing the piano, but if I'm not gonna play it, Bruce is definitely the right guy for that. During the Mardi Gras run, Bruce wasn't there, and I had a piano sound that Bob Bralove made up . . . which I really think is a nice round good sound. So I can get the piano sound without having the piano when Bruce isn't here. When he shows up, and we've got the big Baldwin and all, we drop the piano sounds, except for when he gets up to play accordion. I'll go for piano, especially on the Dylan songs.

UC: How did the *Estimated Prophet* horn jam come about? That seems to be kind of a signature part for you now.

VW: Well, basically it starts off with what Tom Scott did on the original: Yat-ta-ta-daaaa.

UC: On the album the horn part is there, but it'd never been played that way live . . .

VW: Well, it's a good sample, and down in that certain register, it sounds pretty convincing to me. So I just start off with the theme melody -- Yat-ta-ta-ta-daaaa -- and then I improv. It depends on what Bobby's singing, how long he wants to get down. I try to hold back as long as I can so he can get down on it, but usually I wind up jumping on it -- maybe too soon -- but it's a nice sound, and it works.

UC: Do you get off doing that?

VW: Oh, yeah, I'd love being a sax player or a drummer. That's the beauty of synthesizers. I can be anybody in a band, and now with the technology and the way Bob Bralove knows how to use this stuff, there's very little I can't reproduce.

UC: How would you describe this kind of music to someone who wasn't a Dead Head? What, to you, is the essence of the Grateful Dead's style?

VW: It's kind of folk-jazz-rock-psychedelic kinda thing. (Laughs)

UC: How can you tell when you're really having a good night, when the band is really pumping?

VW: I can't. I can be having a great night, and then I'll hear a tape later and it's lousy. Or I can think there's a bad night and find out later it wasn't so bad. And you have opinions depending on what side of the stage you are, on who's having a good night.



The beauty of this band is you can reinterpret the song every time around. So it can get a new life. If there's something you didn't like about the song, you can very well change it.

UC: Well, what about last night?

VW: I'd have to say it was OK. Although I heard variations from it being "not so good" to "it was great," even from within the band. So my only way of telling is to listen to the mix, and then there's some times when you hear the tape mix and you realize that the board mix wasn't very representative of the night. It lost something in translation. You can hear obvious variations in the board mixes. So I don't really know. I guess put it up to a vote with the audience, and I'll probably go along with them. (Laughs)

UC: Can you think of any outstanding nights you've played on this tour, or even since last year? RFK? Giants Stadium? Anything that stands out in your mind?

VW: A lot of them I thought were good, but I'd have to review the tapes before I could tell you with any authority, like if I was to tell a tapehead what tape to check out. I'd have to hear the tapes, and usually I don't get to do that until I get off the road.

UC: I'm not looking for an objective answer, just asking if there's certain gigs where you came off stage saying "Yeah!"

VW: Oh, hell yeah! Oh, absolutely. Most of the gigs lately, I come away personally feeling that way. I don't feel there's too many bummers gigs anymore to be had. And especially when we come off of 10 days of rehearsal, that seems to give everybody a shot in the arm. The band comes out gangbusters from the get-go.

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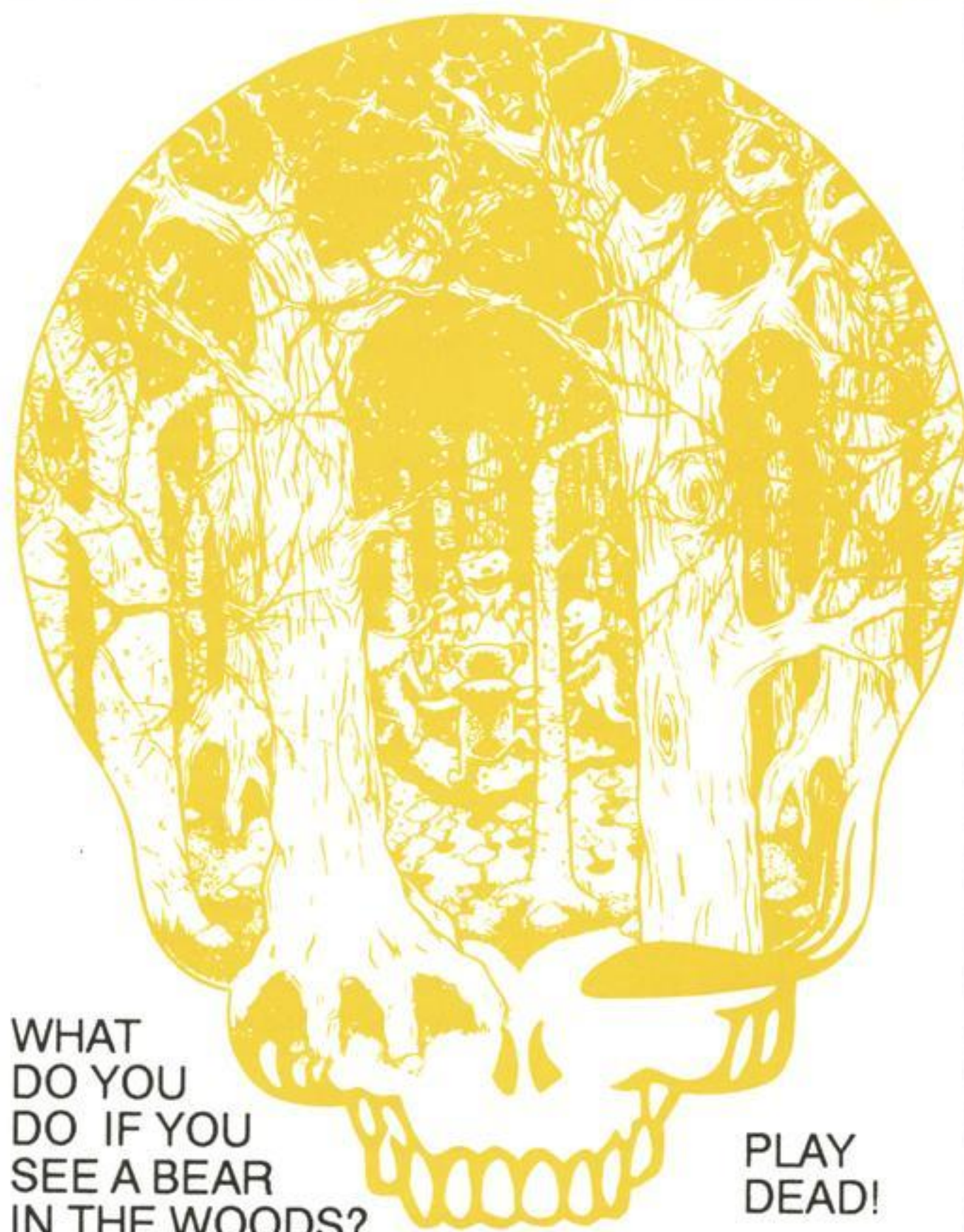
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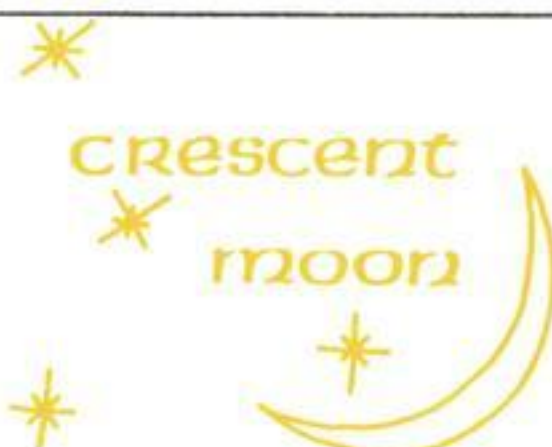
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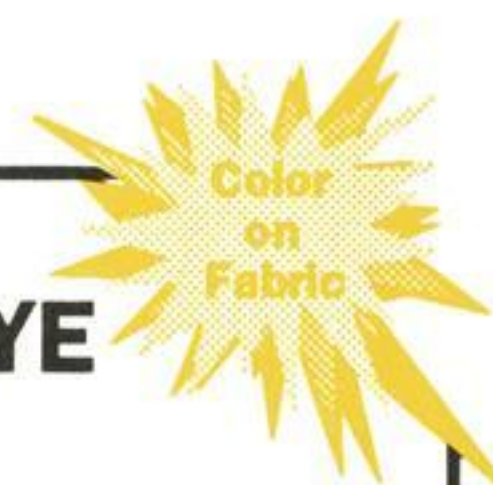
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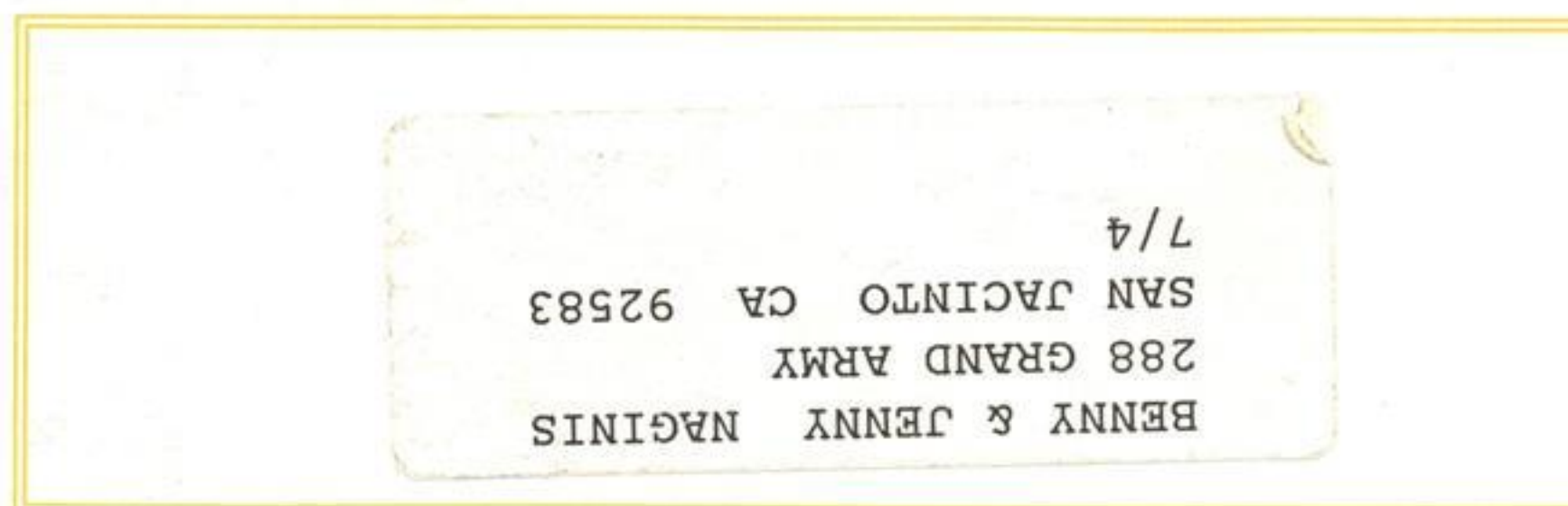
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