

# Voyager

## The MagellanMusic Newsletter

Winter 2018

### ***Oh How Time Never Stands Still. Or does it?***

With 2017 coming to a close so does the year-long 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of 1967. Namely the Summer of Love. To some 1967 is just another number or another year. Like so many others it passes, it's full of events, it ends, then on to the next. But to historians and hippies 1967 was different. It seems like the entire 1960's was a lifetime on its own. There were so many events that it's hard to remember it all. But most shocking is the time frame; from the Beatles whopping emergence in February 1964 to February of 1970 only seven years had passed. Seven years. It's almost unbelievable that an epoch of social revolution was so profound that it changed the world in so short a time. So much happened that one needs a history book to put it all in place. And 1967 was just one of those years. The Summer of Love particularly a mere three months. Today that feels like a tick of the clock. Yet artists like Hendrix, Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, Cream, the Doors, Grateful Dead, Country Joe, Quicksilver, and numerous others became icons of Rock. Bands today feel ultimately complimented when compared to such names, but even as short a decade as it was the Summer of Love feels like time stood still.

But unfortunately, for those of us who experienced those wonderful times, it didn't. We're the old gray haired crowd now. We have to see doctors to help our ailing bodies and keep more scripts than weed. Radio stations dedicated to 1960's music are practically gone except for what's online. Classic Rock stations are 1980's with some 1970's thrown in with only a sprinkling of 1960's. Even Best Buy and Wal-Mart don't have very many classic titles on shelf. We were blessed with the re-release of countless 1960's albums at the turn of the century thanks to home computers, but the buying cycle slows once the eager collectors have stocked up. Those treasures on CD will go back again to the 'n/a' (not available) status, and downloads might be dropped to save space in the big mainframe computers. That makes it very important for music lovers to know that the immense wealth of great music is still out there and now is the best time to get it. CD's are best when available, but when not, downloads are plentiful. The problem is many PC users are still wary of downloading. It seems difficult and confusing but it's not a science and there are people around to help. Only when the many hard-to-find titles are gone do we wake up and kick ourselves for being such dummies. So here's a list of a few artists/albums that are prized but rare classics to consider for yourself or others.

### ***The most underrated albums:***

**"S.F. Sorrow"** by the Pretty Things – Some say the Who was so moved by this that it inspired "Tommy", but unfortunately "S.F. Sorrow" was far better. And it would prove to be the Pretty Things' magnum opus too. Even for a double album these young guys were innovative, psychedelic, and creative from start to finish. Not a bad track on it. Hard to believe that a group of such inexperienced musicians could create such a classic.

**“The Zodiac: Cosmic Sounds”** - is maybe the strangest but most original psychedelic band of all. They were a collection of top notch studio musicians, today known as the 'Wrecking Crew', brought together by Jac Holzman who was the head of Elektra Records. He brought on the producer and writers, which made it a big collaborative effort, hopefully the start of a series of albums on different subjects. This first one, using zodiac concepts, was so venturesome that it accomplished several firsts. It was the first known 'concept' album, beating the Beatles “Sgt. Pepper” by mere weeks. It was the first to feature spoken word instead of singing, which inspired the Moody Blues. It was the first to feature the new Moog synthesizer. It was also a first that allowed a good share of writing by studio musicians. For psychedelic hippie listeners, this is a classic.

**“Of Cabbages and Kings”** by Chad & Jeremy – Yes, you read this correctly, Chad & Jeremy. This and the follow-up, “The Ark”, were both excellent psychedelic albums, so good and different that the average listener wouldn't know who it is. Although both albums are good, “Of Cabbages and Kings” features a track that lasts the entirety of side two. This was unheard of at the time, one of the first such tracks on a rock album. Plus it was a semi-concept album dealing with the overbearing influence of the Establishment. This and “The Ark” proves they were among the most underrated of all.

**“Eternity's Children”** by Eternity's Children – is actually a compilation album from 1999 with 25 tracks that pretty much covers the gamut. Their sunshine pop sound was so radiant that their one minor hit, “Mrs. Bluebird”, seems to make the whole thing worthy. And why the song only made it to #69 on the charts is a total mystery. There are a few throw-away tracks on this collection but overall it's clear why they were a box of magic never opened.

**“H.P. Lovecraft II”** by H.P. Lovecraft – Funny that they took their name from the horror writer but it didn't reflect that attitude at all. Their first album, which was self-titled, was a good fray of Psych/Pop, but “II” was a bit more spacey. More like the developing yet unnamed 'art rock' at the time it came out in 1968. Plus there were multi-instrumentalists in the band that gave it a wider sonic palette than their first album, but both are worth having.

**“The Collectors”** by the Collectors – were a Canadian band who were a real surprise. Their history started in the early 60's, which means that by the time this came out in Fall of 1967 they were a polished, experienced band. This album is well played, well written, great arrangements, and features another unheard of 20 minute track on side two. This album altogether was so adventurous that their American connections could have made them a shoe-in but unfortunately it didn't happen. After two albums they folded.

**“Sallies Fforth”** by Rainbow Ffolly – were a young English band that had such unexpected talent that when putting together a demo tape even the recording studio recommended an entire album of demos, which they did. And that's good because the upbeat, whimsical Magical Mystery Tour-ish pastiche couldn't possibly have been reproduced. But unique as it was nothing came together afterward thus a 'one album wonder'.

**“Clear Light”** by Clear Light – was a band formed in Los Angeles in 1966 that almost made it. There was a vague similarity to Iron Butterfly in that most songs were good psych/pop but featured one long song that got attention. Plus they made the rounds of many venues and concerts with name artists. They fell apart after this one lone LP but strong enough that today it's nearly a cult album. A dedicated fan even maintains a website for them.

**“The United States of America”** by the United States of America – led by the radical/experimental composer Joe Byrd, the USA were a wonderful mix of song, avant-garde, and early art rock. It was a collage of sound and attitude that listeners simply hadn't heard before. So unusual that certain instruments weren't actually instruments, such as ring modulators and no-keyboard synthesizers. Even their live shows were more like performance art, such as using fog machines and unusual lights never used before. Of course there was no way to maintain an experimental band like that, so after their one LP they split up.

**“The American Metaphysical Circus”** by Joe Byrd and the Field Hippies – was an extension of “The United States of America” but with a few changes. It too went far beyond the expectations of contemporary rock, a style that needed trained ears to grasp, which listeners didn't know how to do just yet. And since there were no live appearances this album died a faster death than USA but equally strange and unique.

**“Part One”** by the West Coast Experimental Pop Band – Like the band name says, 'experimental' was a key word to their attitude. They didn't hold to the norms, an odd mix of Pop with Avant-Garde, but among their 6 albums we pick this one because it's more accessible. The 11 tracks are 2 to 3 minutes with a great splash of creative oddities, remarkably creative for such young guys.

**“July”** by July – were a British band who captured a tasteful but unusual style of psychedelia in 1968 and 1969. Their vocals and originality were such a standout that they too became a near cult band. Several tracks have been used on psychedelic compilations, and the vinyl LP is one of the most sought-after collectibles in Britain.

**“Agemo's Trip To Mother Earth”** by Group 1850 – There was no working band as psychedelic as Group 1850. They were from Holland, became somewhat established in Netherlands, but so heavy on the fringe that they couldn't get their breakthrough in Europe much less Britain. It's why today they're considered something like Velvet Underground in that listeners didn't grasp how good they were until they were gone.

**“The Inner Mystique”** by the Chocolate Watch Band – These guys had a garage band reputation more than anything, but considering their playing and writing ability they were a cut above that. It's hardly a perfect album, has its share of bumps and grinds, but tracks like “Voyage of the Trieste” and “The Inner Mystique” are first class. They could even be used as examples of what Psychedelic Pop really is.

**“Peak Impressions”** by the Freeborne – In the 1960's Boston had a hip music scene nicknamed the Bosstown Sound, and Freeborne was one of the more adventurous bands. They were talented, good singers, eclectic, played an array of odd instruments, but the tough part is 3 of them were still in high school thus they couldn't really break out. Only retrospectively is their one album really appreciated.

**“Outside Looking In”** by the Tangerine Zoo – were another from the Boston area and much the same happened with them. Their first album was a good stab at psychedelia, but their second, “Outside Looking In”, really scored. It was true to the psychedelic vibe, very original, aspiring, and the use of various instruments was surprisingly creative. If they had had a lucky break things might've been different, but at least the band members remained pals and did reunions over the years.

**“Puzzle”** by the Mandrake Memorial – They were from the Philly area and did amazingly well in that region. Their first album is thought to have sold 100,000 copies, were a frequent support band for many name acts, and their 3<sup>rd</sup> album, “Puzzle, was so ambitious that it had a good taste of prog rock. Everything from hard rock to classical to moody instrumentals. Regrettable that such a good band faded into obscurity.

**“The Red Day Album”** by Thomas Edison's Electric Light Bulb Band – This is as rare as it gets considering that it wasn't released until the new century thanks only to big interest in old bands and online availability. They too were ambitious, quirky, charming, different, original, very 60's, and as refreshing a psychedelic pop experience as you'll find anywhere.

There are many more I could add but these are a great way to discover so much creativity that many of us missed. Most of them are found on Amazon or iTunes, but if not you can try [www.mp3va.com](http://www.mp3va.com) or [www.allflac.com](http://www.allflac.com) for downloading.

### ***MagellanMusic makes it to Pandora***

It doesn't seem like much right now considering how rapidly they're sinking, but at one time Pandora was the number one music streaming site. The name was used so often it was almost like the generic word for streaming. That's when **MagellanMusic** attempted to get onto their huge roster, but at that time they handpicked all artists and Indies were shunned. But now Pandora is looking for all the listeners it can get and bands like **MagellanMusic** are now in. Pandora has been slowly sinking and a buy-out is likely, so they need help to stay in business. **MagellanMusic** is not snickering among themselves whispering, “*Told ya!*”, but it's nice to know Pandora has become humble.

### ***Album and CD sales aren't the only things bad***

To put it simply, the worldwide music industry has fallen in sales dramatically since 2005. And that even includes streaming despite it being such a fast growing music source. At that time the total income for the music industry was just above \$20 billion per year, but as of 2010 it had dropped to under \$15 billion and has remained at or around that mark since. Except population in America alone has increased by almost 20 million people at the same time. This startling revelation forces one to ask if the music scene really is that bad or stagnant, and the answer is an unfortunate yes. The old tried and true reality is in effect – if it's not very good, nobody wants it.

### ***Did you say streaming now has a lobbying group?***

As bizarre as it sounds, it's true. Europeans have put together a group called DME – Digital Music Europe – to base itself in Brussels and work with various governments to legally set things straight to avoid lawsuits, etc. Streamers have collectively reached a revenue level of \$5.7 billion, so to them it's well worth having lobbyists work for their cause.

### ***Today one doesn't even need talent to make it big***

Today there are two completely separate music industries. One is the “superstar” business, run by the major labels, who are solely focused on big names and how to make the most amount of money in the shortest amount of time, and two is the “Independent” business or well established names. For the latter it's the old style of living for music instead of music for a living, but an example of the former is 14 year old Danielle Brigoli a.k.a. Bhad

Bhabie. She appeared on the Dr. Phil show and soon her "Cash Me Outside" motif was made into a video that became a big hit. Big enough that after other videos followed and millions of fans came out of nowhere simply to view her videos on YouTube and Instagram, for free, she was signed to a major contract with Atlantic Records. Except Brigoli has little experience, she's not a songwriter, not a musician, no album, only 3 'singles' (which don't exist), thinks of herself a 'rapper' (the only choice without talent), but has amassed millions of fans only by viewing video's and not selling anything. The conclusion is the American music scene has wasted away into laughable drivel.

### ***One final note...***

The good news is Charles Manson is dead. The bad news is the legacy will live on. Despite 1960's maniacs like Charles Whitman, Richard Speck and the Zodiac Killer, it's difficult to find a bio about the 60's that doesn't relate Manson to the counter-culture. It's pathetic that the LA press were eager to shape the events with lies and over-exaggerations for more newspaper sales or higher viewer ratings, but now that Charlie is gone he'll fade into history as he should have in the first place. Perhaps the hippie connection will go along with it. Perhaps he'll be an historical artifact with all the myths stuffed into that little box with him. But best of all, perhaps Sharon, her unborn son, Abbie, Jay, Wojciech, Steve, Leno, Rosemary, Gary and Shorty will finally be remembered with the respect they have deserved for too long.

Always remember, *"A loving heart is the truest wisdom."* - Charles Dickens

***Happy Holidays!***