

Hart Valley Drifters

Liner Notes

RECORDED LIVE AT KZSU RADIO STUDIO A - STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN FALL 1962

This release contains Jerry Garcia's earliest known studio session, and was recorded at Stanford University's KZSU Studio A in Palo Alto, CA at the tail end of 1962. The mono recording was captured at 7 1/2 ips on an Ampex 350s tape recorder with a single studio microphone and no overdubs. The 1/4" full track master reel was used to master this release, but occasionally shows its' age with minor flaws. Listen comfortably with our promise that every effort was made to produce this performance for release in a manner that honors the spirit of its creation.

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INSIDE BOOKLET

"Everything That's Old Is New Again"

by Brian Miksis

Given the recent attention to the Grateful Dead's 50th anniversary, it also seems appropriate to celebrate Jerry Garcia's earliest musical period and influences, which paved the way for the decades of music that he shared with us. And what a way to celebrate: This release, a virtually unheard studio recording of Garcia at age 20, fills in a nearly empty slot of his musical canon.

In 1999, we were treated to a long lost and newly found jug band recording from the pre-Dead era on the out-of-print Grateful Dead Records release *Mother McCree's Uptown Jug Champions*. But this new release is the earliest known studio recording of Jerry Garcia in existence, most likely his first. One day more than fifty years ago, Garcia and four band mates walked into Stanford University's KZSU radio station Studio A to make this recording. They called themselves the Hart Valley Drifters, and the spoken introduction tells us that the band included Jerry and his good friends Robert Hunter and David Nelson. They were joined

by Ken Frankel, another early musical partner of Jerry's, and Norm Van Maastricht, a recent transplant from Michigan. The story behind the session is fuzzy, but all evidence suggests that it happened during the last two months of 1962.

So where has this tape been all these years? As a tape collecting Deadhead and budding archivist since my teen years in the 1980s, I became obsessed with that empty section of the Jerry Garcia catalogue. Several tapes of Jerry's folk and bluegrass material had made the rounds for years, but the sound quality was bleak and they were paired with information that was vague at best. That one of the most recorded people on Earth had performances preserved from long before he became famous was tantalizing, and learning more about these recordings became my personal mission.

In 2008, my research brought me to a former Stanford student named Ted Claire. In the small world department, Claire had played rhythm guitar in a 1970s band with Robert Hunter called Roadhog. During our chat that day, Ted left to get something to show me, and returned with a reel of tape that he'd had in his closet for almost fifty years. He told me that while at Stanford he often recorded bluegrass bands for his KZSU radio shows *Folk Time* and *Flinthill Special*, and that this particular tape featured Jerry Garcia. Although he remembered little of the session, he recalled feeling "nervously ill-prepared with only a five minute crash course on the studio mixing console and Ampex 350-S tape recorder." That tale is told with the incomplete opening on both "Handsome Molly" and "Cripple Creek." Oh well -- they were just kids, after all.

The Hart Valley Drifters was one in the long line of groups that Garcia put together during the folk revival of the early 1960s, but it was perhaps his first band to present a professional level of musicianship and vocal harmony. Borrowing a phrase used by legendary folk singers Utah Phillips and Dave Van Ronk, Jerry later referred to this period as the Folk Scare. He and Robert Hunter had been studying folk and bluegrass music since they'd met the previous year, and like many other folkies of the day, they pored over a treasured copy of Folkways' 1953 release of Harry Smith's *Anthology of Folk Music*. It was assembled from Harry's own collection of 78 rpm records and contained the keys to a magical and musical past. Hunter and Garcia also begged, borrowed or stole records by groups like the Carter Family, the Stanley Brothers, and the New Lost City Ramblers. As a result, they had access to both traditional recordings made during the 1920s and 1930s as well as newer contemporary material. Musical ghosts of America's past were speaking to the young Garcia through these records, and traditional songs like "Deep Elem Blues" and "Shady Grove" would remain in his songbook for the rest of his life.

The KZSU session captures an early moment in Jerry's career when he'd become well educated in American roots music, and was becoming a self-taught multi-instrumentalist. He'd already learned guitar and banjo, and would soon add mandolin, autoharp, and fiddle to his repertoire. Norm Van Maastricht played Chet Atkins and Merle Travis finger style guitar when he first arrived in Palo Alto and met Garcia at Dana Morgan's music shop. Jerry could see Norm's talent, but his band didn't need a guitar player. Jerry remarked, "Too bad you

don't have a dobro. We could use a dobro player." Norm explained that "It just so happened that I had an uncle who had a National all metal Duolian model. Jerry showed me how to tune it and some basic ideas about the proper approach. God love 'em, those guys cheerfully put up with what must have been some really bad dobro playing." Sadly, Norm is buried in the mix on this recording -- as a beginner, he couldn't bring himself to step closer to the single microphone that recorded all five of them.

Ken Frankel recalls how difficult it was to find other accomplished musicians to play with in those days, and how excited he was to walk into Lundberg's Fretted Instruments in Berkeley and meet Jerry, who was making tape copies of old time music. Jerry was just as happy to meet Ken. After all, here was a guy who could play fiddle and also knew bluegrass banjo perhaps better than Garcia himself at that point. They would go on to play together in several groups, including the Thunder Mountain Tub Thumpers, who are mentioned in Robert Hunter's spoken introduction on this recording. Ken shared the story of Hugh Bagley, who was running for sheriff in Monterey County and who offered the Tub Thumpers a job during his campaign in the spring of 1962. "We must have played two weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, driving around playing bluegrass on the back of a flatbed truck while he shouted slogans through a PA system." The Stanford session particularly showcases Ken's accomplished bluegrass banjo style on instrumentals like "Clinch Mountain Backstep."

The only documented live performance by the Hart Valley Drifters was as part of the first College of San Mateo Folk Festival on November 10, 1962. The show featured many other musicians, but also included three separate performances by Garcia himself -- a brief solo set of banjo folk tunes, then a second set of old timey songs performed with Garcia on banjo and Nelson on guitar, and finally a third set of bluegrass music by the Hart Valley Drifters, giving the audience a broad view of what the folk revival had to offer. This would also be David Nelson's first paid gig, part of a lifelong friendship with Garcia that included co-founding the New Riders of the Purple Sage in 1969. David remembers that on stage that night, as well as at the Stanford session, "the banjo Jerry is playing is my own Paramount Style A which I bought at Lundberg's after I'd saved money working at Sears in the summer of '62. Sometime later we traded; my banjo for Jerry's guitar." Ultimately, the Stanford session catches Nelson playing rhythm guitar at the earliest stage of his long and storied career, a guitar he brought to the station on his motorcycle, sandwiched between himself and his friend Art Evanson.

Although Hunter and Garcia did write at least one song during this period titled "Black Cat," they generally honored the folk revival tradition by playing old songs as authentically as possible. On stage one night in the summer of 1962, Garcia quipped, "We're back to do a little of the old time hill music that we stole from the [New Lost City] Ramblers, and they stole from old records, and the musicians that were on the old records stole from their fathers. So it's all part of the oral tradition, and that's your lesson in folklore for tonight." The Hunter/Garcia songwriting machine would not really emerge for several years, but the ethos of what historian Greil Marcus called the "old weird America" that the Harry Smith Anthology evoked were soaking in, and would permeate their later work. On this recording, Hunter shows that he had not only learned his way around an upright bass but was a large

part of their vocal presentation. Garcia, Hunter and Nelson's well-practiced three part harmonies would win them, as the Wildwood Boys, the band competition at the Monterey Folk Festival in May of 1963.

During this period, Jerry was making a living by teaching at Dana Morgan's music store in Palo Alto, but I think one could conclude that he is still a student here. The distinctive style and precision musicianship that we all came to know and love isn't quite there yet, but what you do hear is an eager song collector and a young man who is emulating his heroes. Cutting through the nervous energy, you can hear him flexing his vocal muscles throughout, taking the lead on every track. He stands out on the Stanley Brothers' "Roving Gambler" and "Think of What You've Done," and on "Sugar Baby," he channels the haunting original Dock Boggs' vocal while covering the Folkways version by Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley.

One of Jerry's early bluegrass guitar heroes, Carter Stanley, supplies the influence for his guitar runs on "Cripple Creek" and "Pig In A Pen," the latter being a song Garcia would revisit with gusto on the banjo while a member of Old & In The Way more than a decade later. The collection winds up with a stunning performance of Doc Watson's take on the Mississippi Sheiks' "Sitting On Top of The World." It's a simple version consisting only of Ken's guitar and Jerry's voice that leaves the hairs standing on the back of your neck. It's a departure from the recording that ended up on their debut album, but the roots of the Grateful Dead are clearly marked.

The fact that this tape was made by five beginners, most of whom would go on to be well known, and survived to be heard all these years later is fairly remarkable. We are also blessed that a budding photographer friend named Jerry Melrose was there to capture the day in pictures. To put the music in some perspective, the Four Seasons' "Big Girls Don't Cry" and Bobby "Boris" Pickett's "Monster Mash" were at the top of the charts when this recording was made. These kids weren't interested in their own pop music, but were focused instead on the pop music of their grandfathers. Sit back and take a long drink from the same musical well as Jerry and his friends did so long ago. It conjures up the old adage which says everything that's old is new again. We hope you enjoy this new studio album from the Hart Valley Drifters, only 54 years late.

TRACK LISTING

1. BAND INTRODUCTIONS [1:13]

2. ROVING GAMBLER [3:46]

(Traditional)

3. GROUND SPEED [1:29]

(Earl Scruggs) Peer International Corp. (BMI)

4. PIG IN A PEN [2:16]

(Fiddlin' Arthur Smith [traditional] arr. by J. Garcia) Universal Music Corp. o/b/o Ice Nine Publishing Company (ASCAP)

5. STANDING IN THE NEED OF PRAYER [2:10]

(Traditional)

6. FLINT HILL SPECIAL [2:00]

(Earl Scruggs) PeerMusic III Ltd. o/b/o Scruggs Music Inc. (BMI)

7. NINE POUND HAMMER [2:42]

(Traditional)

8. HANDSOME MOLLY [2:19]

(G.B. Grayson/Henry Whitter) Peer International Corp. (BMI)

9. CLINCH MOUNTAIN BACKSTEP [1:18]

(Ralph Stanley/Ruby Rakes) Fort Knox Music, Inc./Trio Music Company, Inc. (BMI)

10. THINK OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE [2:42]

(Carter Stanley) Fort Knox Music, Inc./Trio Music Company, Inc. (BMI)

11. CRIPPLE CREEK [1:25]

(Traditional)

12. ALL THE GOOD TIMES HAVE PAST AND GONE [3:09]

(Traditional)

13. BILLY GRIMES, THE ROVER [2:44]

(Traditional)

14. PADDY ON THE TURNPIKE ("BOYS, MY MONEY'S ALL GONE") [1:39]

(Traditional)

15. RUN MOUNTAIN [4:12]

(J.E. Mainer) Fort Knox Music, Inc./Trio Music Company, Inc. (BMI)

16. SUGAR BABY [3:54]

(Moran Dock Boggs) Boot House of Tunes (BMI)

17. SITTING ON TOP OF THE WORLD [3:37]

(Walter Jacobs Vinson/Lonnie Carter) MPL Music Publishing Inc. o/b/o Edwin H. Morris & Company (BMI)

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HART VALLEY DRIFTERS

JERRY GARCIA banjo, guitar, lead vocals

KEN FRANKEL banjo, fiddle, guitar

ROBERT HUNTER bass, backing vocals

NORM VAN MAASTRICHT dobro

DAVID NELSON guitar, backing vocals

RECORDED LIVE AT KZSU RADIO STUDIO A - STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN FALL 1962

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