

Jerry Garcia, Bluegrass Edition

In 1975, during a Grateful Dead's hiatus, Garcia produced a seminal album for the bluegrass super group called the Good Old Boys

BY HARVEY KUBERNIK

MOST JERRY GARCIA fans know of his early interest in bluegrass music, which was an essential part of Garcia's development as an instrumentalist and songwriter, but many Garcia fans are unaware that in 1975, during a Grateful Dead's hiatus, Jerry produced a seminal album for another legendary bluegrass super group called the Good Old Boys, featuring guitarist David Nelson from the New Riders of the Purple Sage, and Frank Wakefield, one of the greatest mandolin players in the genre.

The Good Old Boys made one album for Round Records, recorded up at Mickey Hart's Ranch. Shortly after completing the Good Old Boys album, the group decided to do a series of live shows, but during that time period, two of the key players from the original studio lineup were unavailable to go on the road.

In a conversation with bassist Pat Campbell, Garcia mentioned that he would love to sit in on banjo, and with Jerry's participation, and the addition of fiddle player Brantley Kearns, a new version of the Good Old Boys emerged, ready to hit the club circuit.

On February 20th and 21st in 1975, the Good Old Boys played for two nights at Margarita's Cantina in Santa Cruz. The performances were well received, with outstanding singing, blistering mandolin and violin solos, and a crowd pleasing vibe that's apparent from the moment the band took the stage.

Out now is a new unearthed live



recording of the Good Old Boys from two shows those evenings at Margarita's Cantina. These February 1975 live dates were recorded by John Cutler on Owsley "Bear" Stanley's Nagra 2 track recorder.

The live recording, produced by Campbell and David Nelson, contains 21 traditional tunes including "Orange Blossom Special," "Here to Get My Baby Out Of Jail," and "T for Texas." There are three Wakefield compositions, "New Camptown Races," "Leave Well Enough Alone," and "Jesus Loves His Mandolin."

Campbell, the standup bass player on these shows spent three years since 2015 trying to secure a record label and retail outlet for the tapes he's sheltered since 1975.

Here, for the first time, thanks to a full restoration of these 2-track tapes, fans can finally hear this music on Rockbeat Records.

Pat Campbell has performed/recorded with Jerry Garcia, Big Joe Turner, Michael Bloomfield, New Riders Of The Purple Sage, Bernie Leadon, Lowell Folsom, David Nelson, Mark Naftalin, John Sebastian, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Keith & Donna Godchaux Band, Frank Wakefield, Don Reno, and John Herald. Pat is a founding member of Stockton's Water Brothers.

Campbell first encountered Jerry Garcia in 1974 at the Marin County Bluegrass Festival. Their musical paths crossed in the Bay Area. Garcia did shows with the Good Old Boys between 1974 and 1978.

"Jerry was always out there wanting to play music," reflected Campbell in a 2019 interview I conducted with him.

"Working with Jerry at that time, he was such a figure in that Grateful Dead scene, and it was hard for me to take sometimes, but working with him was just like working with a fellow musician. He was 'Jerry Garcia' but that kind of left after about five minutes. He became a band member. He was a gentleman and always very nice to me. 'You need a banjo player?' And he'd sit in with the band. Jerry was just intuitive on all kinds of instruments.

"David Nelson and Frank Wakefield put the repertoire together," explained Campbell. "Jerry picked a song to sing but he wasn't like a focal point or anything. The band was centered around David Nelson and Frank Wakefield. They picked the songs. They had it all together.

"We did a rehearsal the night before these shows. John Cutler then had enough sense to bring a Nagra two-track tape recorder and told me to get some 1/4 inch Scotch tape. John borrowed Owsley "Bear" Stanley's Nagra 2 Track Recorder that recorded this. The tape was in really good condition.

"I kept the tape for quite a while and didn't know if I wanted to release it. I played it for a few people. 'You should try and get this out' especially after Jerry died," he volunteered.

"In 2015 I decided that I should get this out. And I approached Jerry's daughter if she could help. Later on I was introduced to somebody else who got me to somebody else who got me to the

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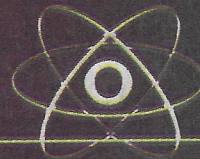
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record label.”

In 1976 I interviewed Jerry Garcia in Mill Valley. Jerry reinforced the flexibility he had with the Grateful Dead, pursuing side and solo projects and sitting in with musicians for live gigs.

“It works beneficially. Doing things with other people, you can appreciate the uniqueness of each situation a little better. I like the live experience. That’s where it counts. That’s when

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PAT CAMPBELL

music is real. It’s real in that situation. That’s the situation that I feel I have the greatest sense of personal responsibility about. I don’t mind putting out a bad record, but I really hate a bad concert. That really is depressing.

“It also has to do with a thing of allowing each person to have their personal space,” underscored Garcia. “We don’t tell each other what to do. I think, because our relationship is part of the family concept that comes into play at this point. We’re involved even if we don’t want to be. The thing is that we can disengage, and also, if we want to, we can engage. And I think having that option is a must.”

Good Old Boys Live Drink Up & Go Home, 2-CD Set is out now.

Harvey Kubernik is an author of 15 books. His anthology *Inside Cave Hollywood: The Harvey Kubernik Music InnerViews and InterViews Collection Vol. 1*, was published in December 2017, by Cave Hollywood. Kubernik’s *The Doors Summer’s Gone* was published by Other World Cottage Industries in February 2018. During December 2018, Sterling/Barnes and Noble published Kubernik’s *The Story of The Band From Big Pink to the Last Waltz*.

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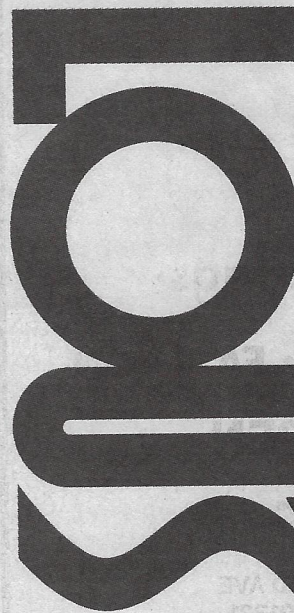
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