

DARK STAR PALACE
 COLLECTING THE FINEST ARTIFACTS FROM THE GRATEFUL DEAD UNIVERSE



SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2010

Jesse McReynolds: The Dark Star Palace Interview



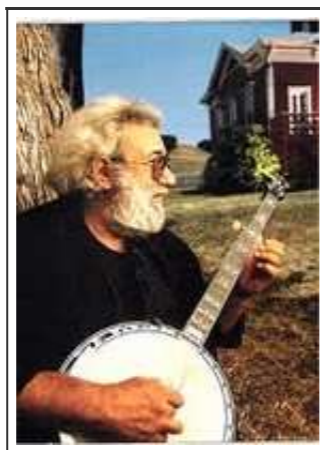
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ABOUT DARK STAR PALACE

Artifact of the Week: Interview with Bluegrass Legend Jesse McReynolds

Tape of the Week: 5/1/70 (acoustic set w/ David Nelson)



This week, Dark Star Palace fans are in for a *real* treat. A Thanksgiving treat! A fully American treat! For this week's **Artifact of the Week**,



we are posting an interview we did with one of Jerry Garcia's personal

idols, Jesse McReynolds, from the famous bluegrass-brother-duo, Jim and Jesse. He also happens to be one of David Grisman's idol's as well (so you can see how heavy the influence is on Jerry's acoustic output!). We'll also throw in a few video and photo artifacts of Jim & Jesse and Garcia/Hunter/Nelson to keep some eye and ear-candy front and center for ya. Jesse, who is member of the Grand 'Ole Opry and the Bluegrass Hall of Fame (as well as receiver of the National Heritage Fellowship Award, which is the United States' highest honor in the folk and traditional arts) recently released a new CD, "A Tribute to Jerry Garcia and Robert Hunter (and the Songs of the Grateful Dead)"... and what a disc it is!! The first time I put the disc on at home, something interesting happened as "Bird Song" was playing... I was looking out the window when I saw a giant red-tailed hawk gliding along a thermal toward Mt. Tam. Then I spotted a raven perched on a redwood tree. Then, the song moved into a great



DARK STAR PALACE

Dark Star Palace collects the finest

artifacts from the Grateful Dead universe. Every few weeks, we will update this Grateful Dead blog and post photos and info on artifacts, memorabilia and tapes that we have collected over the past 25+ years. With a collection that includes portions of the Grateful Dead's original sound system (used on Live/Dead '69, Europe '72, the Wall of Sound '73/74, Cornell '77, Egypt '78, etc.), equipment from the band's instrument rigs, microphones, preamps, EQ's, a Doug Irwin custom "Phil Lesh" bass, hundreds of tickets and backstage passes, thousands of master audience, soundboard and matrix recordings from nearly every circulating show, and a diverse selection of memorabilia, Dark Star Palace is sure to be an oasis for casual and obsessive Deadheads alike. There are future plans to open Dark Star Palace as a combined cafe, museum, recording studio, performance space and mind-bending 7,000+ watt "Hall of Sound" built from the Dead's original gear in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. Dark Star Palace is currently enjoyed by over 10,000 Dead Freaks in 85 countries around the world. If you have any feedback, we would love to hear from you!

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jam and my awareness opened up and I kept seeing more and more different birds all over the place! Seagulls, crows, hummingbirds and on and on. And yes, I was sober! I then flashed back to Alpine Valley '88 (the 100 degree shows!) and remembered the "Bird Song" that was played there as I watched a hawk ride a thermal above the band as Jerry led them through a jam that has always put a smile on my face. Needless to say, this new disc of Jesses delivers the goods for some positive musical transportation!!



The new CD came together with the help of a few of Jerry's old pals...Robert Hunter co-wrote a track with Jesse for the disc, Sandy Rothman and David Nelson chipped in on a number of the tracks and Stu Allen from JGB adds some wonderful guitar riffs throughout the disc. The liner notes alone are

worth the price of admission...you get to hear first-hand how Jerry was a "taper" and traveled across the country in 1964 to meet and tape his bluegrass idols, with a special focus on Jesse McReynolds! The song selection is diverse and inspired, Jesse's mandolin pickin' and singing are sharp as a tack, and the contributions by the band and guest stars are outstanding. I'm sure these tunes will be in heavy rotation for many 'Heads for years to come.



Before we jump to the interview though, I want to alert all DSP readers that the Rex Foundation is doing a benefit show at the Fillmore on Saturday, December 4th that is being billed as "The

[Jesse McReynolds: The Dark Star Palace Interview](#)

Nov 21, 2010

[Jerry Garcia's Alligator Guitar - Roll Yer Own!](#)

Nov 05, 2010

[Charlie Miller: The Dark Star Palace Interview](#)

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[Owsley "Bear" Stanley: The Dark Star Palace Coffee...](#)

Feb 20, 2010

[Year of the Tiger](#)



Feb 13, 2010

Wheel: A Musical Tribute to Jerry Garcia". This benefit looks absolutely off the hook. This is your chance to see Jesse McReynolds in action doing these Grateful Dead songs! Joining him will be a good chunk of Jerry's acoustic and bluegrass pals: David Nelson, Sandy Rothman, Peter Rowan...and some special guests!! :) This is a night NOT to be missed!! So don't delay in getting your tix. Dark Star Palace will be there...so be sure to stop over and say hello!



Egypt, 1978 (© urban image)

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i need a
bucklephsimon@ix.netcom.com

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i need a buckle

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thank you a very nice read!

[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Thank you for chat with the infamous charlie miller. I also would like to see a doc on CM working on a board. I always choose a miller board over another-- always quality and the fact that he edited...

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Although a Red Sox fan I am a huge "Real" Grateful Dead fan and the Giants did a fantastic job honoring Jerry for what he meant to San Fran. and the Grateful Deadheads everywhere. I proudly...

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Here's my Owsley story: I met Owsley by chance at a Dead show at the Nassau Coliseum on 3/29/91. A buddy



[Jesse McReynolds: The Dark Star Palace Interview](#)

DSP: Hey Jesse, this is Unterfunken from Dark Star Palace calling from San Francisco.

JM: How ya doin'?

DSP: Doin' great! I don't know if Dennis McNally told you much about the blog, but I am really honored to be able to speak with you and talk to you about your new record.

JM: Well thank you, I appreciate that, yeah.

DSP: Well, I'm not an expert interviewer, so I wish we were together in person so we could sit out on the porch and drink some lemonade and talk a bit about your history. (laughter)

JM: Yeah, well, I might need it!

DSP: Well, we'll do our best over the phone. So, Dark Star Palace is really a blog for fanatical Deadheads...and I understand your wife is quite a Deadhead, so you probably have some appreciation for our lot.



JM: Oh yeah, yeah! See, people in Nashville haven't caught on yet. I had an interview with one of the DJ's here and the first thing I said about the project was, first of all, my wife is a Deadhead! (laughter). He looks at me and says "What?!?" And I said, "My wife is a Deadhead!" And he said, "Are you sure? We are ON THE AIR!" (laughter) And he said "Are you sure you don't want to rephrase that?!?" And I said, "Well, if it makes you feel better, she's a Grateful Dead fan".



DSP: There you go!

JM: But ah, I don't know. People in Nashville are a little bit slow. (laughter).

of mine and I had, shall we say, achieved liftoff in a big way and were sitting behind the...

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[jazz-man wrote...](#)

I admire Charlie for all of the work he's done to get the music out to us. Where can I get a T-shirt with that "Charlie Miller High Time" logo on it? It's as cool as the "Betty..."

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[Anonymous wrote...](#)

I love all the stuff he puts out, but if you come up with a SBD that he didn't have his fingers in, then he will diss it endlessly and post ridiculous claims about it. CM does fabulous work, is...

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[Anonymous wrote...](#)

The real truth is Charlie conned several people who had tapes that are not out and is putting out these tapes when he was told not to. Why was he told not to, because the Band did not want them out...

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[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Goddess bless you, Charlie Miller!

[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Thank you for this interview. Charlie has always been a bit of a mystery to me. I'd love to see a short documentary that follows his process from receiving a master reel, working with it, to...

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[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Great interview. Thanks for all the great tapes CM!

[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Right on. DG once told me that it's always a good idea to check out a CM release; because he uses a lot of them on the GDH. This music is hard to beat...

[Backstage Passes Guy wrote...](#)

Awesome! Robbi's photos are the best!

[tom21589@yahoo.com wrote...](#)

Sure was one hell of an evening. Magic indeed! I'm the garbed up head with a kazoo in my mouth seated behind you! Nobody ever came by to collect our

DSP: Well, they will come around. I think it is just one of those things...(laughter) So Jesse, one thing I want to cover during our chat is to talk about American music in general and your impact on it with bluegrass and roots music and how that has spread around the world now...and how Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead have also played a large role in that by providing a different angle/niche for bringing roots music out there to folks. So, as we talk, we can touch on a few of those things.

JM: Yeah, it is just amazing. After I got into this project... well, of course, my wife keeps the Grateful Dead channel on XM on all the time, so I guess I'm now a Deadhead too!



DSP: Ha! Now you're one of us...! So, let's start at the beginning. I think it is really interesting in terms of your history and how far back music goes in your family.

JM: Yeah...

DSP: Well, I know that you were raised near Coburn, Virginia and that your dad was a coal miner and a banjo player and that your grandpa Charlie was a fiddle player and became one of the first recording artists for RCA Victor in 1927, right?



JM: Yeah, he was on what they called the "Bristol Sessions" there. It was sort of a historic event. He was a part of that along with hundreds of other musicians who came over the mountains! (laughter) They put an ad in the paper..Steve Sholes (who became head of Country music for RCA Victor) I guess did that. RCA put this ad in the paper and they didn't realize that that many people were gonna come out of the mountains for that session! (laughter) But he happened to be one of them.

damn statements! Oh well. Hey man, would you...

[Continue >>](#)

[WALSH wrote...](#)

I love this story and your blog. If you ever want to pass one of those buckles along...I would love it :)

[Darkstarz wrote...](#)

I am pretty excited about this tape of the week. I have been looking around for a copy of these rehearsal shows and haven't found any yet.

[Benito wrote...](#)

You do great work here, I'm really enjoying your posts.(Incidentally, McNally pegs the "opening" of 5th and Lincoln at April 1; it was found by David and Bonnie late in March).cheers

[Anonymous wrote...](#)

Neat-O

[happycat wrote...](#)

excellent post, love the detailed information, good job!!! the amount of psychic energy at shows was outstanding. I always wanted to know if the casinos lost more money after the Vegas shows,...

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[Jay wrote...](#)

When I read the book The Lost Symbol from Dan Brown recently, this experiment was the first thing I thought about when they get in to Noetic Sciences. Fascinating stuff. I bet John Kadlecik would dig...

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[Anonymous wrote...](#)

I like the bigger pics!!! Much better!

[Anonymous wrote...](#)

I like your photos by why are they so small even when you click on them?

[Anonymous wrote...](#)

OMG- I just found my new favorite blog. Thanks for doing this!



DSP: So, did that have a big affect on your family and community?

Did he become a “big recording star”?

JM: No, not really. See, that record (done with the Bull Mountain Moonshiners), it didn’t do very much back then. It wasn’t publicized that much until the history of the recoding business came in.



DSP: Right.

JM: At the bluegrass festivals that started, I’d say 20 to 30 years ago, that is when the Bristol Sessions were printed with all the artists on it.

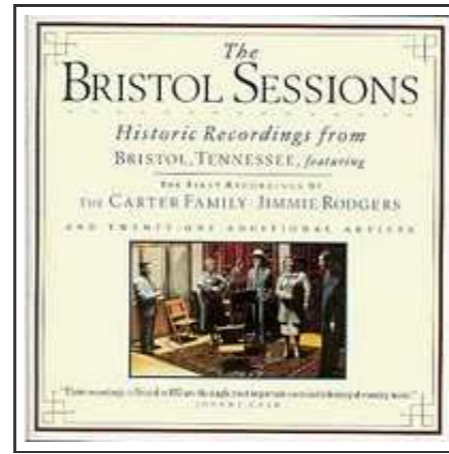
DSP: Interesting. So did you have a chance to hear your grandfather play his fiddle around your cabin and such growing up?

JM: Yeah, I heard him play fiddle, though of course that session was in 1927 and I wasn’t born until 1929. But he was a big influence on a lot of people. In fact, my brothers on my grandfather’s side, they played music. Most of them played fiddle. It was no professional thing. It was just entertainment.

DSP: Right. Like playing BBQ’s or playing around the house.

JM: Uh huh.

DSP: So was Charlie one of the first in your family to play, or did it go back further to your great grandfather and such? Was there a whole history there?



JM: Yeah, I think his father played some because the fiddle I've got, that was his fiddle that was used on the Bristol Sessions. I've got the only fiddle that still exists that was used on the Bristol Sessions. And his father had given him this fiddle so it has been in the family for that many generations. So I don't know how old it is but it is a real nice fiddle! It's a real nice instrument. A lot of people say "Hey, this is a real great fiddle you have here!" (laughter)

DSP: Well it has all that character and mojo to it!



JM: Yeah, they tried to get me to donate it to the museum in Bristol that's about the music and the Bristol Sessions and everything but I said, "Well, I'm still using it!" I use it on stage because of the history with it and I've used it on the Grand Old Opry and I told them that this was my grandfather's fiddle and it was used on the Bristol Sessions and I go out and play a tune on it...but ah, all I can say is that Nashville is a funny bunch. Unless you are a superstar and have something great going, it is hard to get them to work with you on things you know. But ah, it's one of those things that we live with in Nashville!

DSP: Yeah, it's an old story I think.

JM: Yeah, Nashville is a booming place for music. There are so many people playing...There is a saying going 'round that there are so many bands in Nashville that they have to wear badges to keep from

looking at each other. (laughter)

DSP: I love it! Well, competition...they say it makes you stronger! So, 1927....I'm thinking...isn't that the year the Grand 'Ole Opry first got it's name and really got started at WSM?



JM: Yeah.

DSP: So it is kind of interesting...1927 being such a watershed year for both your grandpa and the Grand 'Ole Opry.



JM: Yeah, a lot of interesting things came out back then. Well, the Carter Family was one of the first groups that came from that area where I was born. In fact, they were raised within 8-10 miles, I guess, from where I lived in Virginia. So, we all came from the same area there.

DSP: Huh! Did you see them play around at all?

JM: Yeah, the first show I saw was the Carter Family.

DSP: There you have it, the first show!





JM: Yeah, I went to one of their shows at a little schoolhouse where they didn't have electricity and they just had a colored little lamp for lighting and I paid 10 cents to see the show!

DSP: Wow! And 10 cents was probably a lot of money back then.

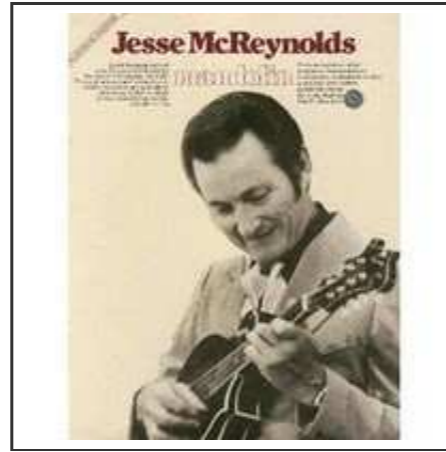
JM: Yeah! (laughter)

DSP: You talk a lot about the fiddle and how that was the main family instrument back then. So, did you feel pressure to have to pick it up as your main instrument? How did you get to the mandolin?



JM: Well, I tried to play fiddle some 'cause all my uncles played it and that was the main family instrument and then I got to my brother-in-law's and he had a little mandolin and I got to play on it and listen to a few people in the community that played mandolin. And then I got to hear it used on the Grand 'Ole Opry with Roy Ackruff, and Bill Monroe came along a little later, and that got me really interested in mandolin. It was so much easier to play than the fiddle! Well, firstly, I started singing and it's hard to be a lead singer and play the fiddle! (laughter) It is a little awkward, but some people do it. But, I never did try to accomplish that.

DSP: So, it's interesting...if someone "Googles" you, of course, one of the first things that comes up on you is "cross-picking" and how you are synonymous with cross-picking and that you invented it. That comes up all the time...well, that and random stuff like the fact that you played on a Doors record!



JM: Well, that was an interesting thing. We used to have this little joke when we traveled on the road a lot. We'd be in some motel someplace and when the phone would ring we would say, "that's Hollywood calling!" So I was at my mother and father's home in Virginia when the phone rings and the operator says "this is Hollywood calling for Jesse McReynolds" (laughter). And I thought... now, who is this?? Someone is pulling a joke on me! Well, sure enough, this one was real!

DSP: Who was calling? Was it the manager or Jim Morrison or who?

JM: No, it was Paul Rothchild.

DSP: Ah, right, Paul Rothchild...their producer.

JM: Yeah, he was their producer.



DSP: What did he say? How did he approach it? "I've got this crazy rock and roll band and they want a famous bluegrass picker on it?"

JM: No, actually, he said "we are doing a recording project out here that we decided we need a mandolin on." And he was wondering if I was interested in coming out to do it and he gave me the details about getting me out there and where I would stay and if I wanted to bring a fiddle player with me. And he sent me the tickets, but actually, I didn't know who I was gonna play with until I got out there!

DSP: Oh really!

JM: Yeah!

DSP: Well, you might not have done it if you knew! (laughter)

JM: Ha! Well, I probably would have still done it. But yeah, I got out there and found out that it was the Doors that I would be playing with.

DSP: Were they in the studio when you did your overdubs?

JM: Some of them were...a few of them were coming in and out. There were quite a few people there. This overdub session lasted probably 2-3 hours. It was a simple thing I did but it was one of those things they wanted to do right. Paul kept saying "you did it good, but let's try it one more time" and that was about the 30th or 40th time that he said that! It was interesting because I, of course, hadn't tried to play that type of music before.

DSP: Well, in talking about this Jerry record, you actually have a great history of cross-over projects. That Doors "Soft Parade" record being one of them, but you also did that "Berry Pickin'" record of Chuck Berry's stuff in the mid-60's right? How did that one come about? Did you know Chuck?

JM: No, that one came about through Epic Records...ugh, Bill Shirl was producing us at that time and he actually came from the rock and roll era and he didn't know much about country music and we were actually the first bluegrass band that he ever tried to produce. The first thing we tried with him was a truck driving song called "Diseal on my tail."

DSP: That was your first top 20 hit, right?



JM: Yeah, that was the first time we went from bluegrass to country. And we had the gospel thing, oh, "Country Church" so he'd come up with different types of ideas. And I think the guy that worked for the publishing company, Chuck's publishing company, lived in Nashville and evidently he had pitched his idea to Billy before, or some other artists including Flatt and Scruggs. So he pitched it to us and we said "Sure, we'll try it." He gave us a whole bunch of Chuck Berry records. The first one we did was "Memphis." We said we would go in and try one number and see what happens and we put down "Memphis" and he brought in all the personnel that worked at the record company and they were just knocked out by it! (laughter)

DSP: Which is interesting because just the year before, in '64, you and your brother Jim were inducted into the Grand 'Ole Opry right? So, I imagine there might have been some old-timers that were...how do you put it? "Put off" by you doing this?

JM: I'm sure there were. Nobody came up and put us down to our face but at that time there was a lot of racial tension going on in the South you know, and we were livin' in Alabama at that time. That was before we moved back to Nashville. We got quite a few

unfavorable comments by people in the South about it because of what was going on racially at that time. But, even so, it still was a great record for us. I still get a lot of requests for it.

DSP: Well, you know, that is how you changed popular music, you know? You look back on it and you look at these contributions you've made, and they might seem subtle at the time, and you might not be thinking they are having a major impact, but you were crossing over and influencing tastes. I mean, you probably never thought you'd be talking about the Doors session or a Chuck Berry cover record 45 years later, but here we are! I mean, even the Grand 'Ole Opry, I bet the folks there probably didn't get it.

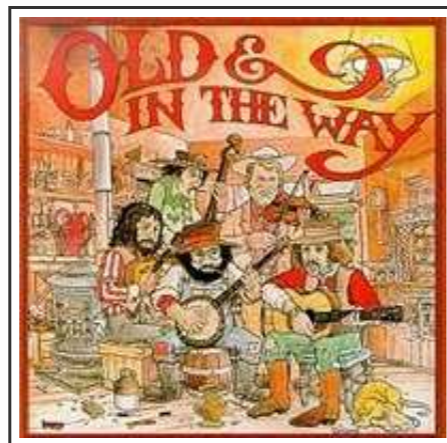
JM: Oh yeah. I gave a copy of the Pickin' record to the managers of the Grand 'Ole Opry, cause they had 2 managers, and I gave a copy to one of them and saw him a few weeks later and asked him how he liked the record. And he said "Well, I haven't listened to it. I haven't had time yet." And so I gave a copy to the other manager, and he said "Did you give a copy to Steve?" who was the other manager. And I said "Yeah, I gave him one, but he never did listen to it. So I'm giving you another one, so now you have 2 of them!" I don't know if they ever did listened to 'em or not! (laughter). So, I went out to do the Opry recently and I go out on stage and say "I'm gonna play some numbers from my latest CD, a Tribute to Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead songs" and people were lookin' at each other and...



DSP: Scratching their heads....

JM: Yeah..scratching their heads and they are going..."No.... he's kiddin. He must be kiddin'!" And I go out and do "Black Muddy River" and I got a standin' ovation from it and the management at the Grand 'Ole Opry finally buckle down and say "that was good, you know?" (laughter) It's one of those things...I think Nashville will eventually catch on.

DSP: So in talkin' about Jerry...It's one of those things that you probably didn't know about Jerry and the Dead until much later, but when you look back and...well, actually, you knew Vassar Clements, right? So, you probably knew about Old and In the Way LP when that came out, right?



JM: Oh yeah. Vassar Clements worked with us...before he did that record he worked with us. He did quite a few recordings with us for several years. And, in fact, he was a friend of mine and we lived close together and me and him used to jam together a lot. Down in Georgia we both lived in this trailer park..side to side...so that was our past time, just sittin' around and jammin'.

DSP: So did ever talk about that band and playin' with Jerry?



JM: Oh yeah. I would see him every now and then in Nashville and he would always come around saying he wanted to get the band together with me and do some recording, but we kept putting things off like that and it never happened. I did know about Jerry, 'cause see, a lot of the places we played, we did a big show out of Austin, Texas one time and I don't know what year it was but it was when they were goin' really big, the Grateful Dead. It was a big festival. And we got to play through their big sound system! (laughter)

DSP: How was THAT? (laughter)

JM: Oh, that was a blast!!

DSP: I can just picture your mandolin cranked up to 50,000 watts up there!

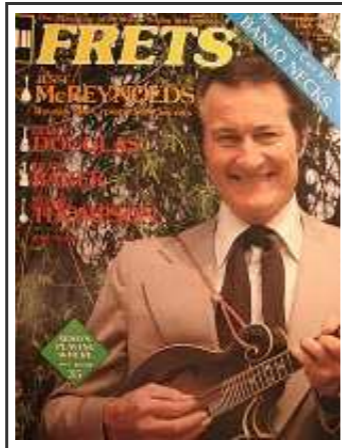
JM: Oh yeah, it was great to be on something like that. But, the band wasn't there that day as they weren't there yet, but the crew was there though cause they had to set up. So I think Jerry and them weren't going to be there till a few days later since it was such a big

festival. It was a whole week of music.

DSP: It's one of those things... you look at this project now and I have a feeling this record is gonna keep picking up steam. It's like a slow train that will keep picking up steam.

JM: It's nice that way sometimes!

DSP: Well, more and more folks are gonna get turned on by it and then they will get turned on by your musical history and I just think it's fantastic. You know it is bitter sweet 'cause you just know Jerry would have been so excited and would have loved to have played on this, and play with you at the Grand 'Ole Opry.



JM: Oh yeah, I'm sure he would have. Well, David Nelson, he came in and worked on the record and I put him on the Opry and we sang together. And that was the first time Grateful Dead songs had been sung on the Opry I guess!

DSP: David must have been scared out of his....pants. (laughter)



JM: Yeah, it was a little bit different for him. But word came out in the press... "Did David Nelson wear his headband on the Grand Ole

Opry?” And I said “Sure!” And he’d done his thing and it went over great.

DSP: That is awesome. And Sandy Rothman. He’s an old friend of Jerry’s and a partner of his. He played on this disc as well, right?

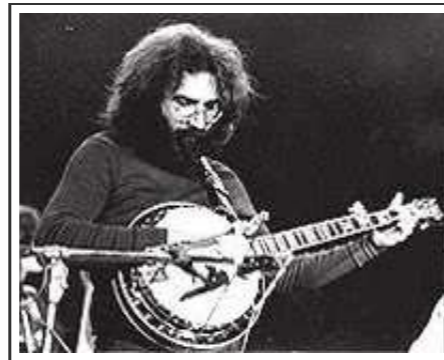


The Black Mountain Boys, L-R: Scott Hambly, Jerry Garcia, Sandy Rothman, Geoff Levin, 1964

JM: Yeah, Sandy had a lot to do with me getting into this project to start with. So, he and David and Stu Allen. He came along and he was working with Dark Star I think at that time. Actually, I had the pleasure of working with Dark Star (Orchestra) a few weeks back here in Nashville.

DSP: Oh great! How did that go?

JM: Oh great! It was one of those things where I had my mandolin with all their sound system and they are about as loud as the Grateful Dead was! (laughter) And we went down and rehearsed 2-3 songs that I was going to do with them and they said “We’ll turn down when you come out” but they got the system down enough where my little mandolin was blasting through those microphones! It was really great. I couldn’t believe it was with a crowd like that you know. It was one of those crowds where they don’t have seats. They just stand up out there and cheer. I was thinking “Are they gonna like these songs or not?” Cause I was doin’ the slower ones like “Black Muddy River” and I did “Standing on the Moon” and then I did “Alabama Getaway” but they knew how to play those tunes right and it went over great. That was a real thrill to get to do something like that.



DSP: Well, its weird cause that band... it’s fascinating to me that one

band can replicate another band and actually get a massive audience and sustain a great career and get great press and just make some great music and I think it is the power of the Grateful Dead songs that make that happen. And of course, half of that is (Robert) Hunter and part of this record that is so cool is this collaboration you did on “Day by Day” with him. You did that collaboration long distance, right?

JM: Yeah, I never have met Hunter. I hope I get to meet him out there at the Rex Foundation show out there.



DSP: Did Hunter talk to you about the approach he wanted you to take musically, or did he just send you the lyrics, or did he just give you carte blanche and say “Do what you want!”?

JM: Well, when I talked to him on the phone the first time, I was congratulating him on all the great songs and he said “I got a lot of great lyrics,” he said “but would you be interesting in putting some music to some of them? I would like to send you some.” I said “Sure!” So he sent me 3-4 songs and with “Day by Day”, I got to listen to the words and I had no idea if he had a melody in mind or if it was a poem or what, so it was more in line with songs that I’ve always done. I put 2-3 melodies to it and finally picked one that I could do with my band and the trio and everything. We have really gotten some good compliments on it so far. And I think Robert is happy with it. I guess he would tell me if he wasn’t!



DSP: Oh, it’s fantastic. And it gives me hope because it sounds like you guys might be able to finish off a couple other tracks down the line.

JM: Yeah, I hope we can.

DSP: Looking at this record, it’s funny because I come from the camp of “fanatical Deadheads” so I can think of another 13 great Dead

songs you should do. I should talk to (your wife) Joy and maybe we can get the next CD lined up for you!! (laughter)

JM: Oh yeah, if you have some ideas... you have my email address, don't you?

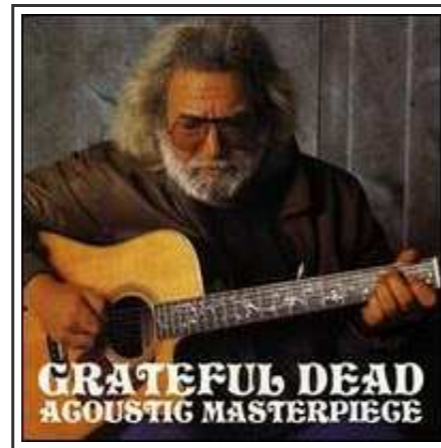
DSP: Actually, I don't...



JM: (Jesse gives me his email address) And you know my web page address, right?

DSP: www.jimandjesse.com! I know that one! OK, yeah, I'll send on some ideas and I'll send Joy some Dead tapes while I'm at it!

Although you are probably so sick of the Grateful Dead at this point!



JM: Oh no!! It's their arrangements and... you know we leave that Grateful Dead XM channel on all day on the TV...day by day and night by night, you know! (laughter) And it never gets old because you never know what arrangement they will play on the next song!

DSP: Right, it is always different!



JM: And some of the acoustic things that come up... some of those songs go way back... songs like “Going Down the Road Feelin’ Bad” and of course, “Deep Ellum Blues”, that song goes way back to my childhood. It is surprising... some of the songs they actually do are folk / hillbilly songs. They used to call them that you know. He (Jerry) had no limit to what he would do.



DSP: It’s interesting because a lot of Deadheads first got turned on to bluegrass through Jerry’s Old and In the Way project. They also got turned on to blues, and country music...they would never have known who some of these early guys were without the Dead. Well, you have traveled around the world and have been an envoy of American music. What is your impression of American music today? To me, it has become so commercial and I’m just not a fan of a lot of it. For instance, I prefer to listen to your grandfathers recordings! (laughter)



JM: Yeah, the music has gotten too commercial for me really. When we started out, I wanted my music to speak for itself. The whole thing now has just gone too commercial. It is amazing what you have

to do. I have a friend who drives a bus for Toby Keith I think, and he says that it costs him a million dollars to set up a show!



DSP: Yeah, that is crazy. Well, sponsorship has changed. You and Jim had some history with sponsorship with Ford Trucks and Martha White Flour back in the '50's, but those were necessary to even do the TV shows, right?



JM: Oh yeah. Television is what kept us going. Otherwise, we wouldn't have gotten on the Grand 'Ole Opry 'cause we were on when it opened up in South Georgia and North Florida 'cause we were the first band down there and they put us on. And it was amazing how it went over. So we had no problem getting a sponsor. We had sponsors come to us and say they wanted to sponsor our show. Back then, there was no video tape so it had to be live. So, Martha White came down lookin' for a band in that area and we happened to have a show there with the station. We were actually sponsored there by a mobile home company. (laughter) So, Martha White comes in and co-sponsored us and they started taking guest artists to the Grand 'Ole Opry then put our name in for membership if they ever wanted a band. So, a couple of years later, they had us on there!



DSP: Well Jesse, I could talk to you all day, but the last thing I want to ask you about is your daily regime because I know Jerry was known to always be practicing his guitar and could be very systematic about playing scales and so on. And of course, you are what...81 years old? But, you sound like you are 26! So what is your secret?

JM: Well, I tell people I'm going on 40-50... (laughter) To me, music is a thing that I keep climbing with. I'm still lookin' up! I feel like if I started 10 years ago, I would be working the same way. Cause I haven't gotten to the point where I say "Well, this is the time to slow down and take what I've done and put it in the archives and let it be history". But I don't want to do that. First thing when this project came up... it got me enthused to the point where I practice all the time. In fact, every day I get in here and work on these songs, trying to get them in my head so I won't have to read the words off the stand (laughter). So I'm getting them down pretty good that way.

DSP: Well, the disc is amazing and on behalf of all the Deadheads out there, I want to thank you because this is a real treasure that you have given people. For years, people will be enjoying this music and we really hope you will do another couple of CDs of the Dead's music.



JM: Oh yeah, I'm lookin' forward to doin' more things. People say what is your next project going to be and jokingly, I say "Well, it could be Michael Jackson or Elvis Presley." (laughter) But, there is so much material with the Grateful Dead, and this one has done me so well, that I say, "I think I'll stick to this!"

DSP: Yeah, I think you can squeeze a few more out of the Grateful Dead.



JM: Well, I tell you, I got my first feel for it about 3 month ago at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. In the middle of the show, I came out and said “Well, I’m gonna do a couple songs here. Jerry Garcia was a great musician and I got an album here, a tribute to the Grateful Dead”. And evidently, there were a lot of Deadheads there because I did two songs from that album and I was sold out! The record company had sent some advance copies down there and by the time I got to the record table they were gone!! It was amazing what a response I got from that! I told someone today in fact, that by next year there will be about 5-10 other bluegrass bands playing Grateful Dead songs!

DSP: Well, it is a real hoot to talk with you and I look forward to meeting you at the Fillmore and hearing you in action!



JM: Well, I’m looking forward to being there and I think David will be there, so it will be interesting to work with him again. And, of course, Peter Rowan will be there working with his band too. So, it looks like it will be a real variety of music. I’m really lookin’ forward to it.

DSP: Well, you will be in the heart of the beast... the middle of San Francisco at the Fillmore! You can’t get more Grateful Dead-land than that!

JM: Well good!! I will do my best then!

DSP: Alright Jesse, thanks so much for taking the time to talk with Dark Star Palace and we’ll see you down the road.

JM: OK, you take care then. I look forward to being there. It won’t be long...



For this week's **Tape of the Week**, we will be streaming a wonderful acoustic (and electric) set by the Dead that has David Nelson contributions on it. The Dead had quite a few acoustic shows in '70 that were just smokin'. They hit gospel, folks, blues, roots and country tunes like no others. This show is one that has evaded many a collection, and it should be in there aside 5/15/70, 2/12-14/70, etc. Enjoy!

- **5/1/70 (Acoustic Set w/ David Nelson)**

Set 1 (Acoustic)

Deep Elem Blues
I Know You Rider
Monkey and the Engineer ->
Candyman
Me And My Uncle
Mama Tried
Cumberland Blues
The Race Is On
Wake Up Little Susie
New Speedway Boogie
Cold Jordan
Uncle John's Band

Set 2

Drums ->
Not Fade Away
Hard To Handle
Cryptical Envelopment ->
Drums ->
The Other One ->
Cryptical Envelopment
High Time
Turn On Your Lovelight

Until next time at Dark Star Palace.....

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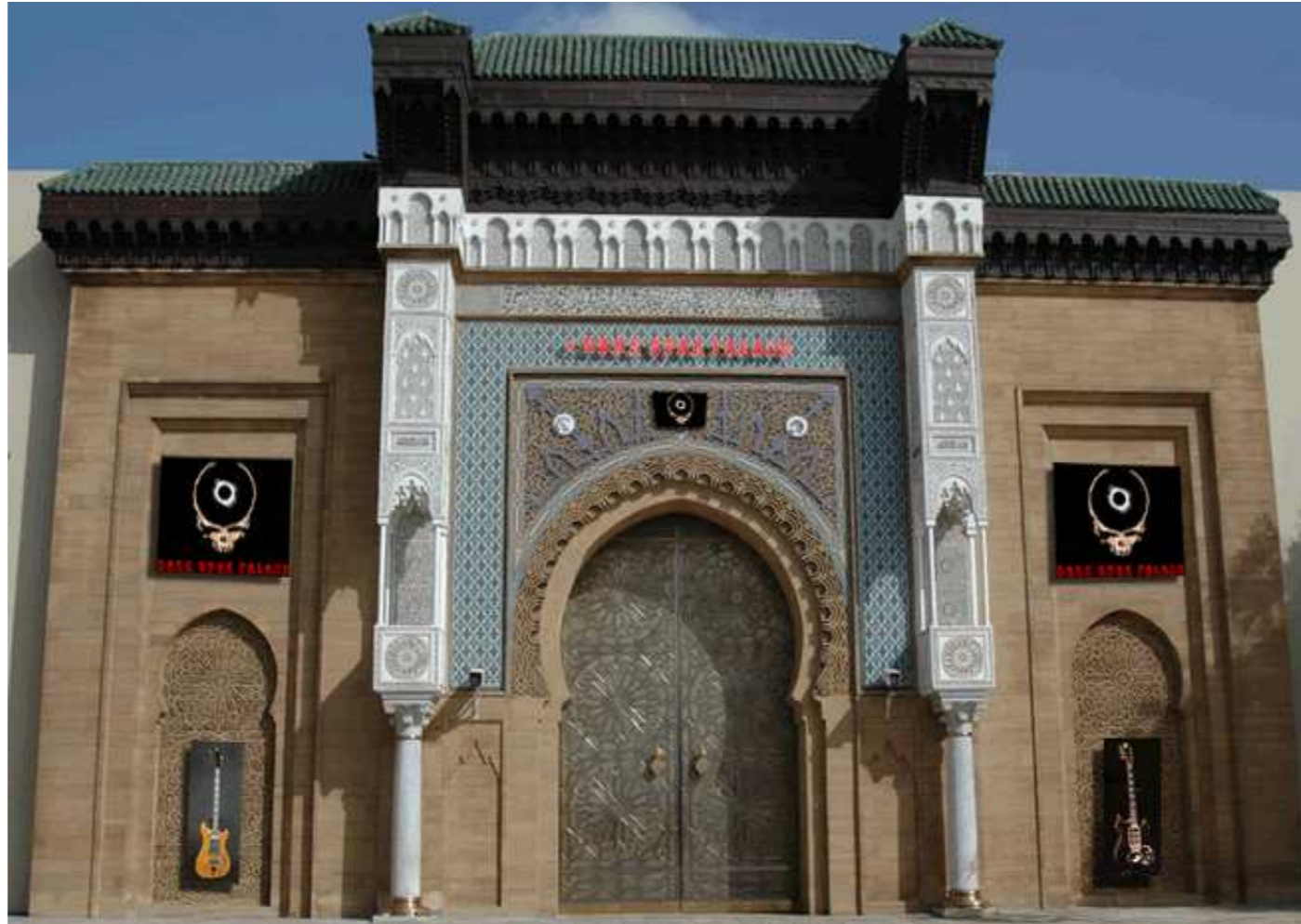
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