

FFanzeen: Rock'n'Roll Attitude With Integrity

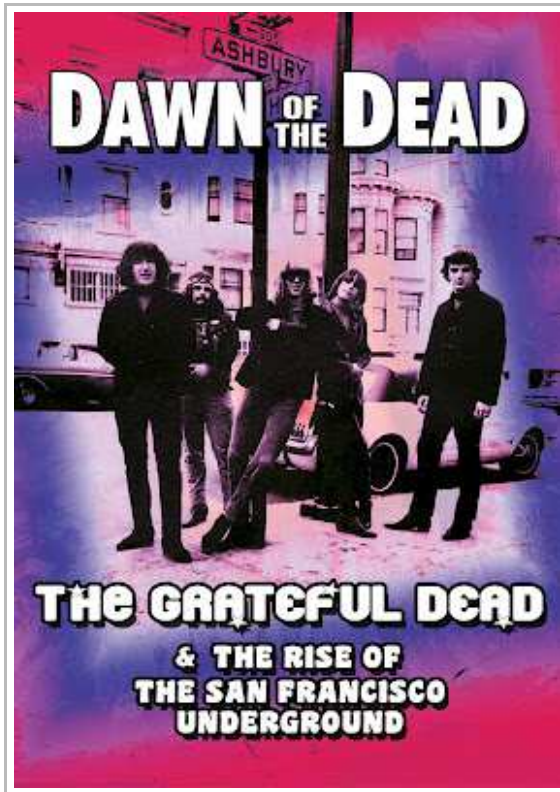
Through the writings and photography of Robert Barry Francos, a view of the arts and culture, including everyday life.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2012

DVD Review: The Grateful Dead: Dawn of the Dead

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Images from the Internet



Dawn of the Dead: The Grateful Dead & the Rise of the San Francisco Underground

Executive Producer: Rob Johnstone

Narrated by: Thomas Arnold

Sexy Intellectual

138 minutes, 2012

Chromedreams.co.uk

MVDvisual.com

It is not often that Chrome Dreams (CD) takes on a single American band to be the subject of one of their long and detailed documentaries, but it is hardly surprising that they picked arguably the *most* iconic rock group of '60s, The Grateful Dead. For nearly two-and-a-half hours, the viewer gets not only filled in on their history, including prior to the Dead's formation, but there are tons of clips of songs, music videos and concert footage throughout their career. As usual, CD spares no expense of royalties to give as complete a picture as is reasonable.

As sources for information, there are some of the standard CD cadre

Blog Archive

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DVD Review: The Grateful Dead: Dawn of the Dead

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About Me

Robert Barry Francos
Currently living in Saskatoon (email at RBF55@msn.com for address). From 1977-88, I used to publish a print version of a music magazine in New York called FFanzeen, which dealt with the wide-ranging independent music scene. I also photographed many bands from the period (and since). Now I write this blog, and have a column at jerseybeat (dot) com (slash) quietcorner (dot) html. And the beat goes on.

[View my complete profile](#)

[Some of my photos](#)

of historians and biographers of the San Fran scene, such as David Gans, Richie Unterberger, Robert Christgau, and especially the CD omnipresent Anthony DeCurtis (not meant as a dis). But as I have said in earlier reviews by the company, they have become so much better at getting some of the people who were actually there, rather than only second-hand knowledge writers. Some include Peter Albin (Big Brother and the Holding Company), Mike Wilhelm (the Charlatans, who were the pre-Grateful Dead band), Kenn Babbs (one of the few remaining original Merry Pranksters, who included Ken Kesey, Tom Wolfe, Neal Cassidy, and the rest of the dosing gang), Rock Scully (the Dead's Manager, 1965-85), and even GD member Tom "TC" Constanten (keyboardist, 1968-70).

Of course, the story of the Grateful Dead is not just about the Dead, but rather the scene they help initiate in San Francisco (as the title states), which included the likes of Janis Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Jefferson Airplane, and even Jimi Hendrix (though he was originally from Seattle, he was considered part of the SF scene). Many of these musicians are represented by clips, such as Hendrix's "Wild Thing" at the infamous Monterey Pop Festival, and Quicksilver's "All I Ever Wanted to Do (Was Love You)," but this is mostly about the Dead.

There is a wealth of material in the world about the Grateful Dead (GD), one of the most recorded and analyzed bands in the history of modern music (possibly matching even Dylan or the Beatles). This leaves lots of juicy material for CD to choose from, and they pick quite a number of sources, which, of course, is great. Sure, no clip is more than, say, a minute in length (kind of ironic considering the GD are known for songs that could literally go on for hours), but considering the sheer amount they cover, and that they choose a lot of rare live clips, makes this a getter, whether you're a fan of the band or of the scene (I'm more of the latter).

Along with the music, films and historical narration, there are also bits of interviews from over the years. For example, Jerry Garcia discussed dancing and acid in 1993, one from Phil Lesh that same year describing major labels as "robber barons," and Bob Weir in 2009 describes how he is just interested in music, not politics.

Whether one is a fan of the band or not is kind of irrelevant, because they were at some many of the important touchstones of the era, including the Acid Tests, the Trips Festival, Bill Graham's concert reign (they show my fave clip of Graham, which is a fight between him and the Charlatan's Mike Wilhelm, who describes the incident in the present on this DVD), Haight-Ashbury, the Monterey Pop Festival, and so on. Their presence was key to what we know as the pharmaceutically induced Love Generation.

Again, I would love to see more women interviewed on these histories, perhaps people on the scene, groupies or ex-wives? There is also very little about the many deaths surrounding the band, such as Ron "Pigpen" McKernan and Keith Godcheux. As this delves into the pre-GD period, what is also missing, in my opinion, is about the post-GD. For example, there is Garcia's teaming with bluegrass musician David Grisman. Then again, perhaps I'm asking for too much considering how *much* history this actually does cover well.

The bonus is called "Ken Babbs and Walker T. Ryan: Fell in the

[Jersey Beat magazine](#)

[Life and Blog of Gary Pig Gold](#)

[Lethal Dose by Donna Lethal](#)

[Blitz! Magazine: Mike McDowell](#)

[Tom Bingham's blog](#)

[G-Mole: Bruce Farley Mowat](#)

[Suburban Voice: Al Quint](#)

[Blog of Lance Strate of General Semantics/Media Ecology Association](#)

[Who Really Cares blog of Craig Davison](#)

Crack," in which Babbs (on trombone) and Ryan (guitar) do a talking blues about Ken Kesey. Interesting and a bit bizarre, yet still fun.

Bonus Video:

Posted by [Robert Barry Francos](#) at [12:01 AM](#) 

Labels: [1960s](#), [Bill Graham](#), [Chrome Dreams](#), [FFanzeen](#), [Grateful Dead](#), [Haight-Ashbury](#), [hippies](#), [Janis Joplin](#), [Jimi Hendrix](#), [Merry Pranksters](#), [Robert Barry Francos](#), [San Francisco](#)

Reactions: interesting (0) cool (0) informative (0)

No comments:

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