

Review

Hill, Sarah. 2016. *San Francisco and the Long 60s*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 978-1-6289-2421-3 (pbk). 357 pp.

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San Francisco does not always compete for status with the world's major pop and rock capitals, but it has been enshrined in some significant songs—an unusual blues piece by Jesse Fuller, heartfelt crooning from Tony Bennett, and the 'pop-psych' anthem of Scott McKenzie, from Los Angeles, which, in 1967's 'Summer of Love', advised young people travelling to San Francisco to adorn their hair with flowers. As Sarah Hill relates, however, in this splendid history of those times, McKenzie's song revealed clearly the tensions between the 'commercialism of Los Angeles' and the 'authenticity' of San Francisco—and it also encouraged more young people to take the Haight trip than could be catered for sensibly.

The overcrowding, lack of money and drug abuse that resulted led to what Morgan Shipley (2015) has described as the familiar 'declension narrative', with Haight Ashbury's Summer of Love becoming a winter of discontent. Unlike the familiar narratives, however, which try to close the story around late-1970, with events like the Manson murders, the Altamont Festival or Timothy Leary's prison escape, Hill offers us a positive version of the ongoing legacy of those times.

She opens with an exploration of the foundations of the Summer of Love, as found in the 1950s 'Beats', City Lights Bookstore and Ginsberg's *Howl*, before shifting easily into examining Robert Hunter's lyric for the Grateful Dead's 'Ripple' and establishing the unique poetic and countercultural basis for San Francisco's fame, which is expanded by Jerry Garcia's foundations in America's folk roots. All of these strands led to the city's summer in the sun.

Her 'Short 60s' are defined by the 'psychedelic experimentation' of bands like the Dead, and cover the years from the early Trips Festival in 1965, to the famous Haight Street 'Death of Hippie' ceremony in October 1967, with 'LSD as a central component'. Her 'Long 60s' are exemplified initially by a typically careful interpretation of songs at the turn of the 1970s, but extend beyond that point, not merely

musically, but in terms of the legacy of activism and alternative lifestyles, which did not collapse once that extraordinary decade ended. One example is the life of Hugh Romney, or 'Wavy Gravy', who featured in the film *Woodstock* as a member of the Hog Farm, and, Hill suggests, has since been: 'A living reminder that the long 60s are viable ... the charitable work that he has done, quietly, individually, and in his larger collective, is a continuation of the ideals of the short 60s' (311).

Hill describes fun as a 'central value of the times' and 'Wavy Gravy', a professional clown, is the living embodiment of how 'play' in its broadest sense contributed to those times and their legacy—'playing music' of course, but in Richard Neville's (1971) terms, conjoining 'Play' with 'Power' in a project to transform more than just popular music. In this respect, Hill examines how exploring Eastern religions contributed to changes in lifestyle alongside the political activism of Jerry Rubin, and the Black Panthers, or the day-to-day pragmatism of the Diggers. She brings these tales into today, arguing that 'the long 60s are about letting history breathe in everyday life' (45).

Hill's history is organized chronologically, moving through the whole decade of the 1960s, while the specific period from 1965–1969 is interspersed with deeper analyses for each year of particular songs. It is a delight to see the musical tale go beyond the familiar rock bands to incorporate the work at the city's 'Tape Centre' and of Terry Riley, Steve Reich and John Adams. The 'Long 60s' section offers four broad topics beyond music, concluding with the Grateful Dead Archive and notes on more than 30 interviewees. With an exhaustive bibliography, this is a fine book which first complements and then goes beyond earlier works by Selvin (1995), Perry (1984) and others. I was well disposed to the title before I opened the book, and I was not at all disappointed. It is very well written, and whether you know this period or not, its comprehensiveness and its sense of legacy make it highly relevant today.

References

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