5 GettingPsyched

In 1938 Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann derived his twenty-fifth drug from
lysergic acid. He called it *Lsierg* *saure-dzithylamid*, abbreviated it "LSD-25,"
tested the drug on animals, and reported it to be a mild stimulant. Five
years later he accidentally ingested a tiny amount and experienced first-
hand its powerful effects. It distorted his sense of time; long events seemed
to pass in a flash and single moments became eternities. The drug un-
loosened his sense of self, melting it into the environment. And everything
in the room around him became fluid; the furniture appeared "in constant
motion, animated, as if driven by an inner restlessness."  

In 1957 a New Jersey psychiatrist coined a word to describe these sen-
sations: "psychedelic" (from the Greek for "mind-manifesting"). The term
cought on. Within ten years it was a household term that people used to
describe almost anything, from neo-expressionist paintings to strip
shows. And soon entire classes of music came to be known by a pharma-
cological name.

To appreciate the importance of this music, one should understand
how LSD-25 affected it. Some scholars question whether this can be done,
whether one can connect with any specificity the drug's effects and the
music's methods. A medical writer argues that "the psychopharmacolog-
ic properties of the hallucinogen did not directly produce the musical
forms." Two musicologists suggest that "psychedelic" traits in the music
do not depend on drugs: "The [psychedelic] system is perfectly structured

internally [with] no necessary connection to anything outside itself."  
Even Barry Melton of Country Joe and the Fish (a band often called psy-
chedelic) takes the same point of view: "Drugs may have had a lot to do
with the periphery... but not really a lot to do with the music itself." But
most rock musicians of the 1960s insisted then and continue to affirm that
LSD-25—commonly known as "LSD" or "acid"—directly shaped their
music. Psychedelic music, says one, was meant as "an LSD session with-
out the use of drugs." Another explains that LSD "opened you up to a
whole new set of musical values." When we see what those values are, we
discover that "psychedelic" is in some ways the flip-side of "garage"—su-
perficially different but inseparable.

As the 1950s closed, newspapers and magazines began to promote LSD as
a new wonder drug. Two major articles set the tone. One, a feature article
in Look magazine, glowingly recounted how LSD transformed actor Cary
Grant, giving him the inner peace he had sought his whole life. Another,
in This Week magazine, explained that LSD "has rescued many drug
addicts, alcoholics, and neurotics from their private hells—and holds
promise for curing tomorrow's mental ills." The public praise continued
into the early 1960s, when two best-selling books and virtually every
major magazine celebrated LSD as a psychotherapeutic miracle.

In this period "LSD" made its first appearance in music. A surf group
named the Gamblers issued a single entitled "Moon Dawg" in 1960; its B-
side bore the title "LSD-25." The title had none of the connotations it
might later have had. The authors of the tune, Sam Taylor and Derry
Weaver, read it in a magazine and thought it sounded good—like many
other abbreviated high-tech titles adopted into surf music (e.g., the Ma-
jectics' "X-13," the Tornados' "7-0-7," the What Four's "Gemini 4," the
Challengers' "K-39," and Dick Dale and his Deltones' "My X-KE"). And like
so many surf records, this B-side was a simple, passionately played instru-
mental in twelve-bar blues form. The title connoted nothing about the
musical content, but only demonstrated that the name "LSD" was being
assimilated into mass culture.

In 1964 the word "psychedelic" appeared for the first time on a record.
The previous year a New York-based folk duo, the Holy Modal Rounders,
recorded a version of Leadbelly's oft-covered "Hesitation Blues." Their
version included this new final verse: "Got my psychedelic feet in my psy-
chedelic shoes; I believe, Lordy mama, I got the psychedelic blues."
When the record came out in early 1964, few understood the word “psychedelic.” One folk artist who learned the song from the record rendered the word “cycle-belly,” later realizing the mistake. In 1964, despite years of positive publicity, the tide of opinion about LSD turned. Newspaper reports blamed the drug for dangerous psychoses and accidental suicides. In late 1965 the federal government banned LSD distribution; Sandoz Laboratories, the drug’s original maker, recalled all existing supplies. Nevertheless, in June 1966, psychiatrists announced at a national conference in Berkeley that they were “losing control” of LSD. The drug had gone underground: people were producing it in kitchen labs and selling it as private entertainment.

In the fall of 1965, before the LSD ban went into effect, writer Ken Kesey and a few friends—the so-called “Merry Pranksters”—sponsored a series of “Acid Tests” in the San Francisco Bay Area. These were free-form symposia where the participants took LSD in order to enhance their experience of music, dance, experimental films, lighting effects, and recitations. One feature of the Acid Tests was the "Psychedelic Symphony," a name the Pranksters had used since 1964 for the performance of improvised LSD-oriented music. Anyone could and did perform in the "symphony," including members of the Grateful Dead, the house band of the Acid Tests. All instruments were welcome, but the ensemble regularly included an old Hammond organ and the Pranksters’ "thunder machines," large noisemakers assembled from auto parts, piano strings, and the like. The result, according to Tom Wolfe, sounded like "atonal Chinese music." In January 1966, Kesey co-sponsored a sequel to the Acid Tests, a three-day event called the "Trips Festival." It featured the usual mix of media, including slide projections, Native American dances, readings from Beatles songs, and music by the Grateful Dead, the Psychedelic Symphony, and the San Francisco Tape Center. The program for the festival called it "a new medium of communication & entertainment," adding that "maybe this is the ROCK REVOLUTION." The event proved so successful that its producer, Bill Graham, began a series of weekly sequels at the Fillmore Auditorium.

Graham’s Fillmore shows and others like them throughout the Bay Area featured music by the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Jefferson Airplane, the Great Society, the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Love, and the 13th Floor Elevators—a Texas-based band that in August 1966 issued the first rock album to call itself "psychedelic": *The Psychedelic Sounds of the 13th Floor Elevators*. Its liner notes unabashedly explained that the record celebrated the potential of man “to chemically alter his mental state[,] restructure his thinking and change his language.” But the music on the record—like that of all the San Francisco groups—was not so much a new language as an amalgamation of dialects. Its fuzztone guitars and stereotypical chord progressions echoed garage rock; but its frequent minor keys, twangy guitars, and deep reverberation sounded like surf music. Although the group’s lead singer sang with garage-rock aggression, the backing vocalists sang smoothly, like folk singers. The album’s strangest special effect, a constant quavering hoot, was actually an amplified bluegrass jug. Most of the songs were a standard form and length (about three minutes); but "Roller Coaster" consisted of a five-minute, pseudo-Middle Eastern dirge in the aeolian mode.

The stylistic mix of the 13th Floor Elevators exemplified the "San Francisco sound," which, because of its context, became virtually synonymous with "psychedelic music." It was an eclectic style that a local underground newspaper called "the first head music we’ve had since the end of the Baroque." This style derived largely from Beat culture folk music, since the local music scene was increasingly populated by singers who had emigrated from Greenwich Village in the early 1960s—Dino Valenti, for example, who had not only transplanted "Hey Joe" to the West Coast but had also brought civil-rights-oriented songs like his own "Get Together" into the burgeoning hippie culture. To this folk style were added the traces of garage rock and surf music mentioned above as well as influences from outside American popular music: Middle Eastern music (a commonplace in the international milieu of the San Francisco Bay Area), and certain jazz and classical music that had been influenced by it as well, particularly that of John Coltrane and Karlheinz Stockhausen. In the early 1960s Coltrane had issued a series of exotic jazz albums, including *My Favorite Things* (1960), consisting of four long arrangements of showtunes, and *A Love Supreme* (1964), in which Coltrane developed all the material from a small chant motive. These records emphasized minor modes and long, organic improvisations modeled by Coltrane after the solo playing of sitar player Ravi Shankar. Some of Coltrane’s later, freer recordings derived largely from his own use of LSD, in which he claimed to perceive “the interrelationship of all life forms.” The rising generation of psychedelic musicians imitated Coltrane directly. In 1966 the Paul Butterfield Blues Band issued a thirteen-minute long pseudo-Coltrane track entitled "East-West." The Doors based the middle section of their 1966 song "Light My Fire" on Coltrane’s version of "My Favorite Things."
same year, in the Byrds' "Eight Miles High," Roger McGuinn played a solo guitar opening that not only imitated Coltrane's style but literally quoted the principal motive from Coltrane's "India." "James Guraly of Big Brother and the Holding Company explained: "I thought that if you could play guitar like John Coltrane played the sax, it would be really far out. That's what I was trying to do—of course nobody understood it, especially me." Many other guitarists took on the veneer of Coltrane simply by emphasizing minor keys and modes—heretofore rare in rock 'n' roll, except for surf music instrumentals.

Internationally famed as an avant-garde electronic composer, Stockhausen had begun to draw on multicultural music in his recent works. During the 1966-67 school year, as a visiting professor at U.C. Davis and guest of the San Francisco Tape Center, he became something of a local musical celebrity. In 1967 reviews of Stockhausen records appeared alongside reviews of rock records in the Bay Area-based Rolling Stone magazine. The juxtaposition suggests how beloved Stockhausen was among local rock players. Indeed, in assessing musical influences on the San Francisco sound, Darby Slick of the Great Society mentions Stockhausen in the same breath as Coltrane. And rock musicians experienced his influence indirectly via the Stockhausen-inspired "A Day in the Life" on the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967).

In the spring of 1966 British musicians had also begun to grapple with the influence of psychedelic drugs. In April the Pretty Things issued a record entitled "E.s.d."—a word-play on the British abbreviation for pounds (£), shillings (s), and pence (d). The music was conventional rock and the lyrics alluded more to money than drugs. But the meaning of the shouted lyrics "I need L.S.D." was clear to the initiated. In October the Yardbirds' new single "Happenings Ten Years Time Ago" was promoted as "psychedelic"—fittingly, since the group had exploited minor keys, sitars, and Middle Eastern chant in their records since 1965. In December the Yardbirds recorded a brief, minimalist instrumental entitled "L.S.D.," but did not release it. As 1967 opened, the British rock newspaper Melody Maker invoked the term for the first time, applying it to two groups, Pink Floyd and the Move. Both of these groups played at free-form "happenings" and "freak-outs," events that, like Kesey's in San Francisco, mingled lighting effects, music, and spontaneous theater pieces. As it turned out, both groups rejected the term psychedelic as applied to their music. Pink Floyd explained that "there isn't really a definition for the word. ... It's something that has all taken place around us—not within us." The Move was more blunt: "Psychedelic music is a load of . . . . . And we get quite nasty to anybody who calls us psychedelic." Of their recent single "Night of Fear" one group member remarked, "I'm instructed to say it's all about LSD but to tell you the truth, I haven't a bloody clue what it's all about." The Beatles' profoundly influential Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (released June 1967) contained the song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," which many not surprisingly took as a reference to "LSD." Upon the album's release, Paul McCartney indirectly promoted psychedelic music by publicly admitting he had taken LSD and that it had illuminated his music-making. Several prominent British musicians quickly retired; Graham Nash of the Hollies complained that "those who use the [hallucinogenic] stuff should know better. ... It's doing a lot of harm to the entertainment industry." Even McCartney's fellow band member George Harrison insisted that psychedelic drugs were only a crude method of achieving what could better be had through Eastern religious practices. "If you're really hip, you don't get involved with LSD," Harrison said in September 1967. Nevertheless, the Beatles' music of that period seemed to demonstrate to the world the virtues of LSD-inspired music.

By late 1967 the word "psychedelic" already suffered from overuse. Virtually every rock band was calling itself—or allowing itself to be called—"psychedelic," no matter what the band's actual style or whether its members used drugs. An executive at Elektra Records worried that the word had become one which "will do for pop music what the hootenanny did for folk. I think it will ultimately destroy anything good that has been coming out of it."
floors to lamps seem to bend, as "familiar forms dissolve into moving, dancing structures," objects become liquid, "dripping, streaming, with white-hot light or electricity," as though the "substance and form" of the world were "still molten."4 Music that is truly "psychedelic" mimics these three effects.

On the simplest level, dechronicization lengthens songs and slows them down. Psychedelic groups retarded the beat, a practice easily perceived in cover versions. Vanilla Fudge's 1967 remake of the Supremes' "You Keep Me Hanging On" is typical; it converts the Motown tempo of \( J = 128 \) to a relatively ponderous \( J = 85 \). That kind of slowing could in itself dramatically lengthen a song. But psychedelic musicians often went further, attaching long instrumental introductions and codas or inserting long solos or "jams." That is, they treated a rock song like a jazz chart, a starting place for a series of improvisations that explored the implications of the basic material. Thus, the beat in Quicksilver Messenger Service's recording of Bo Diddley's "Who Do You Love" is slightly slower than that of the original; yet their version lasts twenty-five minutes—more than ten times the length of the original.

There were also practical reasons for psychedelic groups to slow and lengthen their songs. Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead recalls that "a lot of the early [psychedelic] bands were just a collection of friends, some of whom could play instruments, some of whom couldn't."23 The technical deficiencies fostered expansive, open-ended forms. Darby Slick puts it bluntly: "At first, all we could play was free-form jams."27 Many groups, even when they knew actual songs, seldom knew enough of them to play a full set unless they lengthened them. That had been the case with the Yardbirds, according to drummer Jim McCarty: "We used to play these all-nighters, sometimes three hours a night and we didn't have that much material. So we used to spread it all out and do these tempo changes and go into long free-form passages just to make the numbers longer."28 Similarly, Iron Butterfly guitarist Erik Braunn recalls that they kept lengthening their psychedelic anthem "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" "because we didn't have enough material for a whole set."29 When recorded, the song lasted over seventeen minutes.

The substance of what was being played also fostered dechronicization. In music one experiences the passage of time largely according to the disposition of musical events; quasi-hypnotic repetition and the absence of musical goals change the sense of time-passage dramatically. Many lead guitarists in psychedelic bands improvised in chain-link fashion, repeating ideas immediately, but varying the end of the idea in order to lead into a new idea, and so on. Beneath such non-directional solos, bassists often played ostinatos. The undirected solos and endless ostinatos led the listener into what Jonathan Kramer calls "vertical time," a near stasis in which change and anticipation are minimal.30

Groups could personralize their music by changing their idea of ensemble—which in turn changed the musical texture. Heretofore, a player in a rock group assumed the role either of lead player or accompaniment player, foreground or background. But psychedelic drugs, as one musician said, "allowed you to get together as a group without being competitive."31 That lack of instrumental competition made LSD-oriented groups emulate the textures of free jazz, which sometimes approached a kind of "democratic counterpart."32 In 1966 Jerry Slick described succinctly the new psychedelic ideal of texture: "We've got too many people playing the same notes in the same range with the same rhythm. If we can play more like counter-point, and in different ranges, our sound'll get a lot bigger."33

But psychedelic musicians depersonalized in a more profound way, by turning up their volume and drenching their sound in artificial reverberation. One user said that on LSD, "I suddenly 'knew' what it was to be simultaneously a guitar, the sounds, the ear that received them, and the organism that responded."34 Some bands imitated that effect by dissolving the barrier between music and listener: they played through stacks of amplifiers at extraordinarily high levels, making listeners feel the vibrations of their instruments instead of just hearing them. (This was especially striking to folk-music oriented listeners, who scarcely had heard music through amplifiers at all before.) The result was, in Sheila Whiteley's words, a "drowning of individual consciousness."35

Yet hallucinogens also often made sounds seem far away. One user described the depersonalizing effect of that: "You hear the music [as if] way down in a cavern, and suddenly it is you who is way down in the cavern. Are you now the music, or is the music now at the mouth of the cavern? Did you change places with it? and so on?"36 Mimicking this LSD effect, psychedelic groups used huge amounts of electronic reverbation (previously associated with surf music) or simply recorded in the halls where they usually performed—the Fillmore Auditorium, for example. In surf music the artificial reverberation had connoted vast, overwending oceanic spaces.37 In psychedelic music the reverberation suggested enormous interior spaces. When groups both turned up the volume and add-
ed reverberation, they made the music sound both closer and farther away at the same time. Which is precisely the sort of depersonalizing paradox that some Native Americans described in their use of hallucinogens: "That which sounds far away... [also] sounds as if it were very near."747

More than anything else, psychedelic music dynamized musical parameters previously stable in rock. Psychedelic drugs transformed fixed shapes into shifting shapes. In turn, psychedelic rock activated the music's essential form, harmony, timbre, articulation, and spatial deployment.

Rock 'n' roll musicians generally used simple, well-established forms, most commonly twelve-bar blues or thirty-two-bar song form (i.e., two verses = 16, bridge = 8, return of verse = 8). The music, generally dance-based, tended to sound uniform—it denoted contrasting sections with new chords and drum patterns, but not with new tempi or drastically different styles. By the mid-1960s, however, some groups expanded the bridge section of the form into a truly contrasting one. In 1965, for example, the Yardbirds released "For Your Love," whose bridge differs completely in instrumentation, tempo, and texture from the opening and closing sections. Meanwhile, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention recorded a song in 1965, "Help, I'm a Rock," which actually includes at least four movements, one of which is reprised in the album's following song, "The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet." Neither the Yardbirds nor the Mothers referred to psychedelic drugs in these recordings, but many listeners assumed as much from the title of the Mothers album—Freak Out.

Some San Francisco-based groups continued the elaboration of form, making multi-movement songs and changing their beat divisions and tempi from section to section. For instance, in their instrumental entitled "Section 43" (1966), Country Joe and the Fish juxtapose three discrete sections, each joined by a pause or a held organ chord: the A section, containing a moderate-speed guitar melody in 4/4, moves abruptly to a B section in a much slower, compound meter; the brief C section is a transitional, quasi-music hall guitar riff. The overall form is A-B-A'-C-A''-B'.

Groups as diverse as the Beatles, the Mothers, and Quicksilver Messenger Service did similarly. They segued individual songs in such a way as to make a whole album side become a single track; in concert they played successive songs at random, without pausing from one to the next. Many lesser-known groups followed suit, realizing that a band could "psychedelicize" a song at the macro level by simply juxtaposing disparate sonic blocks. Recordings from 1967 by groups such as Teddy and His Patches, Bohemian Vendetta, Opal Butterfly, and the Bougaloue contain songs that juxtapose widely contrasting sections or that insert foreign passages into otherwise consistent songs. Even the mainstream group the Buckinghams released a routine pop song named "Susan" (1967) into which the producer, James Guercio, inserted thirty seconds of orchestral sound mass and collage.86

Some artists dynamized their harmony by adding chromatic neighbor, appoggiatura, and passing chords. Several groups embellished the tonic chord of a song with the Neapolitan chord (II) as an upper neighbor, adapting the jazz technique called "side slipping" (sliding the "real" harmony up or down a half step and then back). Thus, Jefferson Airplane's "House at Pooneil Corners" (1968) consists almost entirely of an oscillation between i and II.87 Some also used the Neapolitan as an appoggiatura to the tonic—as in the Great Society's " Arbitration" (1966), the Doors' "The Crystal Ship" (1966) or Jefferson Airplane's "Crown of Creation" (1968). Some groups used chromatic passing chords to make the harmony seem to slide. In their hit "Incense and Peppermints" (1967), for example, the Strawberry Alarm Clock dynamizes the harmony of the standard "Gloria" progression of garage rock ([I-VII-IV-I]). After converting the progression to dorian (by making the tonic minor), they interpose between tonic and subtonic a minor chord built on the leading tone ([ii-VII-IV]). Many other chromatic sliding effects appear in the music of Pink Floyd. For instance, in "Astronomy Domine" (1967) the verse begins with a very strong I to VII (not I-VI) motion; the harmonic transition between verses consists entirely of major triads sliding in half steps from IV down to VII.

Psychedelic groups also exploited the guitar's tone-bending potential, realizing that, as Sam Andrew (Big Brother and the Holding Company) said, "unlike a piano, the guitar had all these microtones, and it was definitely made for psychedelic music."88 But instead of merely bending the strings with the left hand, they frequently made the guitar pitches slide with a vibrato arm (or "whammy bar")—an arm that, attached to the guitar's bridge, allowed the player to tighten and relax the tension of the strings with the right hand. Introduced on banjos in 1929, vibrato arms had first appeared on electric guitars in the 1940s. During the 1950s some electric guitarists used them to imitate the glissandi of slide trombones (Chet Atkins) or bottleneck guitars (Ike Turner).89 The most important proto-psychedelic use of vibrato arms, however, was in the surf music of instrumental groups like the Ventures. These groups routinely used vibra-
to arms to make lower-neighbor embellishing tones or to slide whole chords down and back a half-step. In the aesthetic of surf music, the small glissandi evoked the sound of the Hawaiian guitar and also suggested the undulation of ocean waves. Psychedelic musicians realized that the same technique could suggest the “mind-bending” experience of LSD.

More than other guitarists of his time, Jimi Hendrix fully exploited the vibrato arm. As a left-handed guitarist he played his right-handed Fender Stratocaster “upside-down,” which left the vibrato arm above the strings (normally it was below). This configuration allowed him to press down the vibrato arm with his forearm while he was playing. Moreover, he had his vibrato arms altered so that he could play glissandi as large as three whole steps or more.

Such large glissandi, sometimes spread across a measure or more, transformed the whole structure of guitar harmony. Hendrix used the vibrato arm to turn single notes or chords into chains of glissandi whose speed and width varied continually. The effect became not so much a changing harmony as the dynamic refraction of a single note or chord through a fluid lens.

Some psychedelic players intuitively dynamized harmony with dysfunctional root motion. Sam Andrew explains: “We were able to [go] from C to F without worrying about any kind of transition chord. We could play it first with the animal mind, and then later analyze it.” More often, groups used chromatic medians to dynamize harmony, making the tonality either seem to float or to gravitate to two different tonal centers. Chromatic medians had appeared in garage rock—I-III, for example—and in the music of the Beatles, who often followed a V/V chord with a IV. But psychedelic musicians removed the chords from their diatonic or tonal context. One group especially fond of chromatic medians was the Doors, who were apparently influenced by the chromatic medians in the opening of “Neptune” in Holst’s The Planets. The verse of their hit “Light My Fire” consists only of an oscillation between A minor and F minor chords, seeming to hover somewhere slightly removed from the song’s principal key (D, as clarified by the chorus). Consider also Iron Butterfly’s “In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida” (1968). The song, in D minor, contains a bridge replete with strong non-functional chromatic medians; alternating G major and E major chords, then A and F major chords, and finally a double chromatic median—an emphatic B major chord moving directly to a D minor chord.

Larger-scale chromatic median relationships could create a sense of two tonal centers, a “double-tonic complex” (to borrow Robert Bailey’s phrase relating to certain late romantic works). Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit” divides its polarities between two keys—A major (in the chorus and bridge) and F major (in the verses). These two keys are deployed in a pseudo-flamenco manner. “White Rabbit” dwells extensively on an F major chord, embellished by an upper neighbor chord (G major), which eventually passes up to an A major chord that is then tonicized.

The motion from the bridge to the final verse strongly reinforces the song’s sense of dual tonality: the bridge, completely diatonic to A major, ends with an A chord, jarringly followed by six measures of an F major chord.

The Doors’ “Strange Days” contains an even more overt double-tonic complex, split rather evenly between E and G. The first half of each verse uses only I and IV of E minor; the second half uses I and IV of G minor. (An F major chord separates the two halves.) The chorus consists of the progression G-B-B-F-E (all major chords)—which seem to function, respectively, as the tonic of G major, the dominant of E major, the mediant (i.e., relative major chord) of G minor, and the Neapolitan and then tonic of E major. The instrumental break that divides choruses from verses reprises this progression (G-B-B-F; three times), then returns to E minor for the beginning of the next verse.

LSD also fostered polytonality. As Paul Kantner explained, playing music while on LSD is “not really conducive to acting functionally together with other people in the right key ... because people just wander off in other keys.” But a few groups purposely simulated that kind of harmonic independence. As early as 1965 the Terrazzo Brothers (later the Mystery Trend) played a polytonal song called “Cashah.” The keyboardist recalls that “the lead guitarist put the guitar one fret off, so he’d be playing in one key and I couldn’t transpose, so I’m playing in another key and the other guitar player is playing in his own key. So the song was actually being played in three different keys. Complete cacophonic bedlam and [the audience] loved it!” In its recording “Illusions of My Childhood—Part Two” (1967) Vanilla Fudge plays “Ring Around the Roses” in three different keys simultaneously. Not all polytonality was quite so blatant. The Bees recorded a psychedelic twelve-bar blues, playfully called “Trip to New Orleans” (1966). Throughout the verse all of the group simultaneously alternates major and minor versions of the same triads each measure. But in the instrumental break the harmonica player continues in the original key of D, while the rest of the ensemble plays a whole step lower.

All of these examples flow from a general “wrong note” aesthetic of
psychedelia. As Hendrix ingenuously describes it, psychedelic (or "freak out") technique consists of "playing the opposite notes to what you think the notes should be. ... It's like playing wrong notes seriously, dig?" One can hear that exemplified in the work of one of Hendrix's psychedelic mentors, Arthur Lee. After hearing Bacharach's "My Little Red Book" in the Woody Allen movie *What's New Pussycat?* (1966), Lee arranged it in "wrong-note" style. He completely shifts the relation of melody to chords in the song's opening, adds chromatic neighbor chords, and occasionally divides the melody and harmony so as to create disturbing half-step clashes, as if the voice and accompaniment had veered into separate keys. (A similar half-step clash appears in the Doors' "Light My Fire," about which more later.)

*In 1966 Timothy Leary proposed a plan for a "hallucinatory art." The first step, he said, was for the artist to take a hallucinogenic drug that would lead him "into a kaleidoscopic flow of direct energy—swirling patterns of capillary coiling." Second, "in order to communicate his hallucination" the artist needed to have "access to energy-transforming machines which duplicate the capillary flow." Psychedelic rock became the perfect vehicle for this kind of art. Rock musicians could take "energy transforming" devices from the past and present of popular music, try to "duplicate the capillary flow," and effectively liquefy many sonic parameters.

Guitarists used the "wah-wah" pedal to dynamize the tone of the instrument. As early as the 1920s jazz trumpeters had embellished their solos with the "wah-wah" effect of fanning the cup of a sink plunger in front of the instrument's bell. Chet Atkins adapted the effect for guitar in his "Boo Boo Stick Beat" (1959), playing chordal riffs through a volume pedal whose volume circuit he replaced with a tone control circuit. In the mid-1960s some companies introduced pre-made "wah-wah" pedals. Popularized by Eric Clapton in *Cream*'s "Tales of Brave Ulysses," (1967), and "White Room," (1968) and by Hendrix (the *Electric Ladyland* album, 1968), the wah-wah pedal became a psychedelic mannerism—something that made guitar tone sound, in Hendrix's words, "like something is reaching out."

Rock singers dynamized their voices in various ways. Using vocal techniques borrowed from jazz, Grace Slick often modulated from one vowel sound to another or merged vowels with consonants—as in the word "be" in the first line of "Somebody to Love" (1967), which she sings across a glissando and gradually melds into the "L" of the following word, "lies."

Engineer Al Schmitt reports that she also tried other, more exotic means to dynamize the sound of her voice: "She would turn her head from left to right to create weird but interesting nasal noises. On other days she would keep changing her position from left to right in front of the microphone to see what changes she could create in her own tonalities." Most singers, however, used electronic manipulation to dynamize their voices. John Lennon sent the amplified sound of his voice through a revolving Leslie organ speaker in "Tomorrow Never Knows" (1966)—creating a dynamic whooshing sound that was copied in subsequent recordings by the Beatles, Family, the Grateful Dead, and others. Some added echo effects to do electronically what Sean Bonniwell and others had done physically, dynamizing the words at phrase endings: "play-yay-yay-yay," for example, in the Lemon Pipers' "Green Tambourine" (1967), or "sou-wow-wow-wow-wnd" in Big Brother and the Holding Company's "Light Is Faster Than Sound" (1967).

Guitarists used feedback to dynamize both tone and pitch. In the opening to "I Feel Fine" (1964), the Beatles had converted feedback from a transient flaw of amplified music into a timbre modulating device: McCartney plucks the A string of his bass and Lennon deliberately allows sympathetic feedback from his guitar. Hendrix uses feedback similarly for the opening of "Foxy Lady" (1967), only louder and longer, turning feedback into a kind of psychedelic fanfare. Such feedback fanfaring also appears at the beginning of songs by Jefferson Airplane and Steppenwolf. Some guitarists dynamized their solos by holding a climactic pitch with their left hand and using feedback to simmer it from one timbre or overtone to another. Hendrix further embellished this kind of feedback. He would strike a single string, approach the amplifier, and swing his guitar in front of it (to vary the feedback) while bending the string with his right hand and playing the vibrato arm with his left.

In 1966 the Beatles' producer George Martin reversed the direction of the vocal track tape for the last verse of the song "Rain." Other groups soon followed his example, backtracking one or more tracks of their recordings. Backtracking conveys a "psychedelic" sound because it changes the decays of notes into attacks, an effect resembling what one LSD user described: the drug made things seem "as if the essence of the underlying idea were struggling or pressing, rather, to reveal itself."

The new attacks of backtracked music seemed more like coagulations, still "molten" and "dripping," to borrow Leary's words. Guitarists could dynamize their articulation with backtracking just as they had dynamized their tone.
with feedback (see especially Hendrix's "Are You Experienced?" 1967). And Moby Grape and the First Edition used solo backtracked guitars as other groups had used feedback—for psychedelic fanfaring at the beginning of songs. 24

In 1959 recording engineer Larry Levine inadvertently discovered a sound effect that would become a psychedelic cliché. By superimposing two identical dubs of the same material played at minutely different speeds, he got a composite sound that seemed to "whoosh" like the air plowing of a jet airplane. (This sound dominates the resulting Toni Fisher recording, "The Big Hurt.").25 Beginning in 1965, the Beatles used a variant of this technique to give a chorific effect to their vocal tracks; the technical name their engineers gave it was "automatic double tracking" or "ADT.".26 In "Blue Jay Way" (1967), George Harrison took the ADT so far out of phase as to surpass the eerie effect of "The Big Hurt.".27 Other rock musicians began using the same effect, which became known as "phasing." Some of the occurrences of phasing were inadvertent—as was the case with Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction.".28 Some groups used phasing to make a general hallucinatory impression, as in the Small Faces' "Itycoo Park" (1967, on the words "I feel inclined to blow my mind" and "It's all too beautiful"). Eric Burdon and the Animals, however, used phasing to text-paint the very specific image of a jet plane in "Sky Pilot" (1968). Hendrix used phasing extensively, saying that it resembled the "underwater sound" he had heard in his "dreams," presumably including LSD visions. His producer recalls: "I had been experimenting with phasing and its possible uses for Hendrix, and when I played the results for him he yelled, 'That's it! That's the sound . . . in my dreams.'".29 Hendrix later described phasing thus: "It makes a sound like planes going through your membranes and chromosomes." 30

Finally, some groups dynamized their recordings spatially by using stereo panning to make the sound glide between left and right speakers. Early stereo records of the 1950s had tried to recreate the "living sound" of the concert hall, with instruments positioned across a three-dimensional aural field. In the late 1950s several percussion ensemble records featured responsorios between instruments separated into their respective stereo channels. (This was called "ping-pong sound.").31 In the early 1960s a few bands finally used stereo panning as a novelty, an effect called by one label "the exciting new illusion of sound in motion.".32 Against the background of these recordings—and with the stimulus of Stockhausen's electronic compositions—psychedelic musicians often panned their music across stereo channels. Records by the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, the Mothers, and Hendrix all abound with the technique, sometimes in free-form "collage" pieces.

Feedback and phasing had been flaws of the past; wah-wah, backtracking, and stereo panning had been novelties. But all of them became fundamentals of "hallucinatory" art in music. Psychedelic groups consistently pushed their music through a host of "energy transforming machines" that began with no drug connotations but came to acquire them. One LSD user remarked that the drug made phenomena seem as if they were "programmed to go through synapses that make patterns on everything."33 In dynamizing their raw sonorities psychedelic groups symbolically sent their music through electronic synapses that made patterns everywhere.

* * *

Here then is how one might best use the word "psychedelic" to describe a rock style. "Psychedelic" is extremely loud, reverberant, contrapuntal rock, slowed in tempo, unstable in harmony, and juxtapositional in form. What is more, to be truly "psychedelic" at least some of the music's parameters must go through devices that create "molten" shapes in timbre, articulation, and spatial placement. Psychedelic music dechronicizes and depersonalizes the listener through its excessive length, repetition, volume, and spatial depth. It then dynamizes the familiar forms, harmonies, and sonic details of rock through methods indebted to surf music, free jazz, musique concrète, and assorted technologies. In these ways, the free-wheeling multi-leveled ornamentations of psychedelic music enable rock to explore its most primal impulse: to become like the world Albert Hofmann discovered, inhabited by objects that are "in constant motion, animated, as if driven by an inner restlessness."

And in that respect, psychedelic music parallels the activism of the garage bands. Garage rock celebrated activism through sheer speed and a sense of restlessness—but always confined within narrow limits. Garage rock was largely a matter of musical treadmilling. But the restlessness of psychedelic music was that of a quasi-Baroque embellishment of every parameter.

Psychedelic rock also provided a counterpart to the antagonism of garage rock. Garage rock showed contempt for the trappings of middle- and upper-class society, partly through music that defied conventional notions of pure tone, proper diction, and strong harmonic progressions. Psychedelic rock was more subversive, using new forms, unusual chord
progressions, sophisticated technology, and novel gadgets to undermine the conventions of popular music and, implicitly, of the whole cultural environment. Psychedelic musicians even attacked the short-lived conventions of rock music, dynamizing them for all subsequent generations of rock musicians.86

An early promotional photo for the best known of the Pacific Northwest garage bands, Paul Revere and the Raiders, whose hits featured the "post-Holly" vocal techniques of Mark Lindsay (far left). (Neal Skok Archives)