

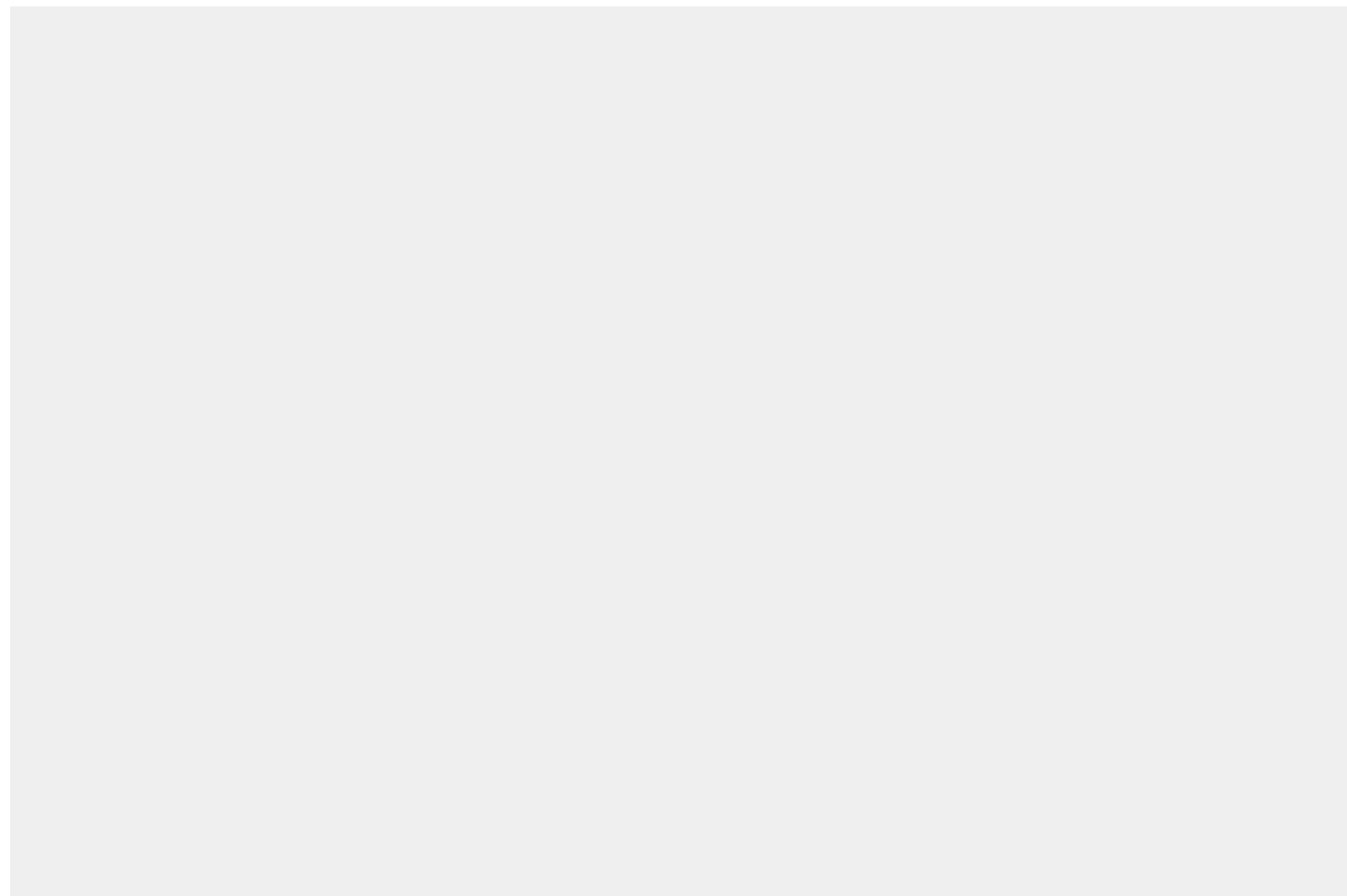
MUSIC

The Untold and Deeply Stoned Story of the First U.S. Rock Festival

How the Doors, Byrds and nearly 30 other bands, a pack of Hells Angels and a lot of drugs made history at Fantasy Fair & Magic Mountain

BY JASON NEWMAN

JUNE 17, 2014



The Byrds perform at Magic Mountain Music Festival. HENRY DILTZ

ON JUNE 10TH and 11th, 1967 — one week before the Monterey Pop Festival and two years before Woodstock — tens of thousands of Bay Area music fans converged on the Sydney B. Cushing Memorial Amphitheatre on Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California, for the first U.S. rock festival. Conceived as a promotion for the KFRC 610 AM radio station, the Fantasy Fair and Magic Mountain Music Festival featured more than 30 acts, including the Doors, Jefferson Airplane, the Byrds and Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band, as well as a group of Hells Angels and an “acid doctor” to mitigate bad trips. Arguably, the festival was the true start of the Summer of Love, and this is its previously untold story.

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Since it was overshadowed by Monterey Pop, Fantasy Fair has been largely forgotten (only snippets of film exist from the fest, and virtually no audio has survived). But to many of the artists and fans who were in attendance, it remains a pivotal moment of the counterculture takeover. Rolling Stone spoke to more than 40 artists, organizers and attendees to piece together the secret history of this landmark festival.

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A NEW WAY TO BE

Steve Brown (Fantasy Fair attendee): The Be-Ins were the seed of the big outdoor get-togethers of people enjoying music.

Tom Rounds (Festival co-producer, KFRC program director): There had been a long series of hip community events put on in Golden Gate Park, including the Human Be-In. [The Grateful Dead's drug "chemist"] Owsley Stanley flew overhead and dropped LSD into the crowd. They gobbled it up.

Jorma Kaukonen (Jefferson Airplane): The concept of doing free shows for people really made a lot of sense to a lot of San Francisco bands like the Dead, us and Big Brother. We were all spiritually on the same plane. There's never any thought of making money off of it. It's just what we did.

Chris Darrow (Kaleidoscope): KFRC were very understanding of what was happening and they went out of their way to play new and cool music. This was an extension of the Love-In in Los Angeles and the Be-In. We'd show up to a park and there'd be bands playing all day long. Everyone just showed up to these things and played for free.

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Larry Taylor (Canned Heat): People would get together in a big park and listen to music and hang out. I played music in the Fifties and I remember wearing cummerbunds, plaid jackets and uniforms. All of a sudden, that was trash. I got into American Indian beads and pants with hand-painted psychedelic stuff on it. I haven't really worn a suit since. [Laughs] It came together out of nowhere. All of a sudden it just became this...thing.

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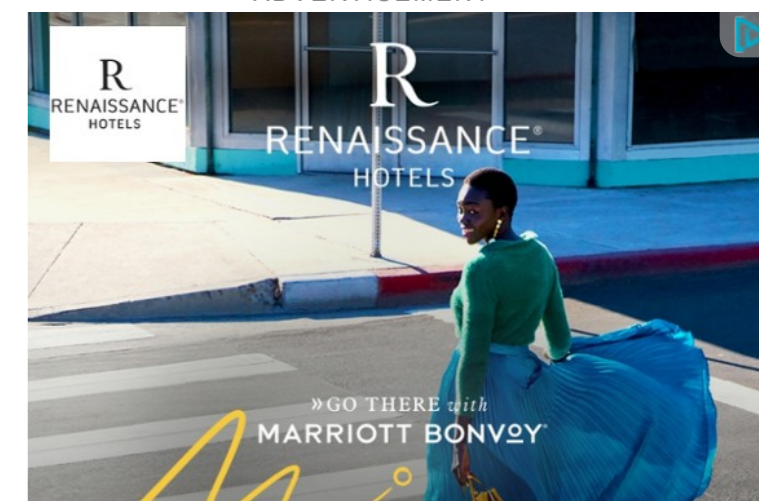
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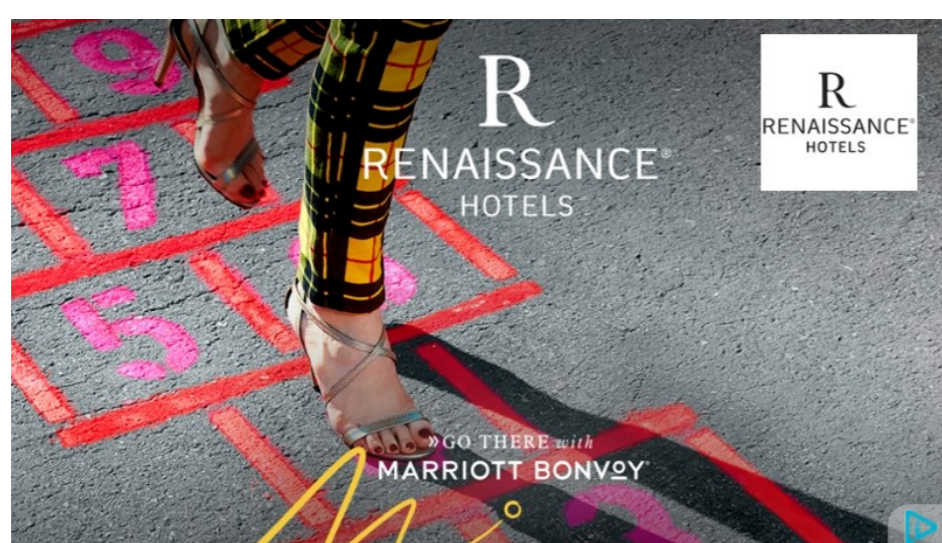


Maria Muldaur (Jim Kweskin Jug Band): The portent of things turning into rock festivals was when Dylan first played electric at Newport [in 1965]. This felt like a continuation of the vibe and energy that was created with the Newport Folk Festival. The “alternative lifestyle” — the hipsters, the jazz aficionados — were already drawn to Newport, but things were a little more buttoned-down and straight. There were still vestiges of the Fifties.

Brown: KFRC was getting spooked that [rival San Francisco DJ/station manager Tom] Donahue was really starting to make a new scene out of radio in San Francisco. This was KFRC trying to catch up on the game and be cool by promoting this event.

Taylor: You also had venues like the Fillmore and Avalon, which had three different bands every night, all with different styles. So [a festival] was like transporting that to an outdoor setting.

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Rounds: KFRC presented numerous shows at the Cow Palace in Daly City south of San Francisco. The shows were getting more confrontational with the audience trying to leap onto the stage, which was the atmosphere when the Rolling Stones came to town. I said to the KFRC music director, as we watched beefy security guys throw teenyboppers over the barricades, “We really need to stop doing this and go outside because it won’t be a confrontation or armed warfare. And there won’t be a barrier between the audience and the performers.”

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THE FESTIVAL TAKES SHAPE

Rounds, who passed away earlier this month, began to conceive the festival shortly after the Human Be-In, deciding early that nearly all of the proceeds would go to local child care centers. The festival was originally scheduled for June 3rd and 4th, but was pushed back a week due to bad weather. Tickets were \$2 for the weekend.

Rounds: KFRC was one of the leading news organizations, so the news guys were friends with a lot of the California legislators and got direction from the politicians on how to obtain a license and do something like this. The Marin County board of supervisors was aghast at the idea of hippies storming across the Golden Gate Bridge to lay waste to their wonderful lifestyle in Marin. They put so much pressure on the state that they revoked the license once, but the major California politicians that held sway over this local community reasoned with them and said, “Hey, come on guys. This is a nice thing that celebrates all the wonderful values of the Bay Area artistic community and tourism.”

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Mel Lawrence (Fantasy Fair co-producer): My M.O. was that I was as crazy as any hippie, but I had short hair so I could talk to corporations and cops. That did me very well, particularly when I did Woodstock.

Michael Lang (Co-creator and promoter, Woodstock): Mel and I hit it off and he stayed and became Woodstock's operations manager. Mel was very practical and very creative and very well organized. He was just very unflappable, which was essential. [Laughs] And very creative in his approach to things.

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Rounds: We relied on leaders from the hip community in Haight-Ashbury to guide us, so we stayed on their side. Even though it was a commercial radio station sponsoring [the festival], it was a charity for the Hunters Point Child Care Project, which gave it this quaint "bill of health" with people who were liberal.

Lawrence: It was Tom's idea to do a benefit show. So I said, "Yeah, let's do it over two days, but how are we going to put that many people and cars up a mountain?" I had to think of a way to get people up there and we did this bus thing where we parked everybody down in Marin County in various parking lots and bussed them up the mountain. I was the logistics guy; fences and shitters and that kind of thing.

Rounds: Booking bands was the easiest part of it, because KFRC being the Number One Top 40 radio station in San Francisco had the total support of the record promotion guys. Anybody playing in the Northern California area made sure that they visited the outdoor theater on Mount Tam as long as it was not a conflict with anything they were booked to do. The outdoor theater had no lighting, so the festival started at 8 a.m. and had to be over by 6 p.m. So we didn't compete with the local promoters if their bands were playing at night.

THE HELLS ANGELS IN EDEN

Lawrence: I get this call from a Hells Angel named Milan Melvin and he said, "[Hells Angels Oakland branch founder] Sonny Barger wants to talk to you. They want to go to the

festival." I said, "Sure. Have him come in." "No no no. We gotta go over there." So he parks his Harley outside of the station and out I go and say, "You want me?" We bike over the Bay Bridge to go to Oakland and I'm at the Hells Angels' headquarters. They were known to be rough and bad, but we smoked a joint and he was nice.

Joel Selvin (Attendee, Author): The Hells Angels were always the saving grace in those days. Long before Altamont, they were the security guards at the Be-In to handle all the lost children.

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Lawrence: Sonny says, "This is going to be a big show and a lot of my guys want to go. But we can't leave our bikes because people screw around with them and try to tip them over." I said, "There's no parking up there, but bikes don't take up much room. I've got to negotiate with the Highway Patrol about this." He said, "If you let us bring our bikes up there, we'll keep the peace." The next day I went to the CHP and I told them what's up and they were okay with it. It was the Summer of Love, you know?

Rounds: They were not hired. It was their turf and we needed their support. I don't think it was our intention to use them as security, it was just our intention to have them present to be fearsome. [Laughs] It was totally non-confrontational, just them being there said, "Okay, there's law and order."

John York (The Lamp of Childhood/the Byrds): There can be a really ominous cloud over those guys, but they have to be in that mood. During the daytime, it was sunny and beautiful and there's hippie chicks dancing around. Nobody wants to have that dark cloud. That kind of violent reaction has to be stimulated by something like Altamont. There, the sun was down and there was a feeling in the air. If that element isn't around, they're just guys who like to work on their bikes.

The Rolling Stones' Disaster at Altamont: Let It Bleed

Roger McGuinn (The Byrds): We probably had some enhancements going on, so there was an altered state of consciousness. But they were all very gentlemanly. There was no precedent for them to be violent with normal people and we had no fear of them. They were pretty cool.

Billy Davis, Jr. (The 5th Dimension): I stayed away from them. We had heard a lot about them and when you're hearing about people that are dangerous and you should stay away from . . . I gladly took them up on that.

CLIMBING MOUNT TAM

“Country” Joe McDonald (Country Joe and the Fish): We worked the day before and the day after in Seattle. There was a heliport on the seashore in Berkeley off the freeway and the other end was in Sausalito. I remember [Country Joe and the Fish guitarist] Barry Melton in the helicopter taking LSD and then we landed there and we had to get up to Mount Tam.

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McGuinn: You could either take a bike with a Hells Angel or a bus and the bike sounded like more fun. I remember riding up the hill on the back of a Harley with one of the Hells Angels. I took my guitar out of the case and put the strap over my shoulder.

McDonald: The LSD was starting to work and the Hells Angel guy who took Barry up on the back of his motorcycle introduced himself as Broke Dick. He said his name was Broke Dick because he was always falling off his motorcycle and breaking his dick.

Barry “The Fish” Melton (Country Joe and the Fish): Broke Dick! That’s right! It was scarier than all get out. There were school buses going up and down the mountainside. There’s nothing like driving down the center line on a motorcycle with a bus going one way and a bus going the other way and a foot of clearance on either side.

Penny Nichols (Singer-songwriter): I used to open shows for Janis Joplin and she invited me to come to the festival with her. She was going up there with the Hells Angels and they were going to ride up to Mount Tam on their bikes. I was intimidated by the whole Hells Angels thing and I had just signed a record deal, so instead I went up with my manager in a black limo, stoned.

Kaukonen: I had my guitar in my hand and there was no way to drive up to the stage. So I’m walking and walking and going, “If I planned on going on a hike, I probably would’ve worn different shoes.” I walked all the way up.

Radley Hirsch (Attendee): You could hear the bikes coming up the hill when they brought Jefferson Airplane up.

Kaukonen: My bandmates got rides and I’m still jealous [Laughs]. I’m going to write a letter now to the local [Hells Angels] chapter.

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After scaling the mountain, the festival’s attendees were welcomed by a giant inflatable Buddha balloon and two stages. On the main stage, six 14-foot-tall banners, each displaying a different astrological sign, were set up in a row at the back of the stage. One hundred yards away, the Valley of Dancing provided a smaller stage where forgotten local bands like Joint Heads of Staff and Harbinger Complex could perform. Akin to Bonnaroo and Coachella, the festival offered artistic installations and family-friendly activities alongside the music. Attendees could swing on giant tires and slide on strips of cardboard down a toboggan slope made of wet straw. Vendor booths with names like the Weed Patch and Hocking Valley Trading Co. — transplants from their regular locations in Haight-Ashbury — sold beaded necklaces, anti-Nixon buttons and water pipes, while food was provided by outlets such as Good Karma Health Food.

Lawrence: Since it was going to be a festival, we felt it should have a festive attitude towards it and have art and booths where people can buy things.

Stanley Mouse (Poster designer): Because it was Magic Mountain, I felt the image I used was magical, but it ended up being heavy-handed. It scared people and was rejected. I thought it was a cool picture and think it was some kind of Babylonian myth. It was pretty standard for festivals to use those kind of pictures on posters as a central image and then build the poster around it.

Jack Casady (Jefferson Airplane): The fair part was based on the Renaissance Fairs where people dressed up in costumes for period pieces and they had jugglers, acrobats and people reciting old poetry. It was part of the whole attraction of the festival; of having various talented people in their community able to express their talent in so many different ways.

Terry Costales (Attendee): I was working for a company called Sticky Wicket Candle Company. The owner got a booth for the festival and I was supposed to make and sell candles. As soon as we touched down, okay, I'm at the booth, bye — there's music and sunshine and dope. The candle owner fired my friend and I after the weekend, but it was worth it.

Rounds: The Fantasy Fair part was so participatory because people went to get involved. It wasn't a bunch of people sitting in stadium chairs in an indoor environment. It was outside and became the theme that we were looking for; just to get everybody really involved in the trippiness of the whole thing.

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Lawrence: There was this guy called the Hawk. I get this call at the station. "I'm The Hawk and I parachute into places and I want to parachute into that show." And I said, "Oh wow, okay," and I talked to Tom and we didn't want to tell any authorities or anything about it, but I said, "You're on and you should be on when the 5th Dimension perform 'Up, Up and Away.'" He just parachuted right into the place."

THE FANTASY BEGINS

The lineup reflected the era, a time when AM and FM existed in a bizarre confluence, with KFRC airing underground groups alongside more popular artists. Similarly, at the festival, mainstream acts like Dionne Warwick shared a bill with underground psych rock groups like the Chocolate Watch Band, and the folk of Tim Buckley and the Lamp of Childhood (fronted by future Byrds member John York) mingled with the blues-rock of Canned Heat and the Sparrows (whose members would change their name to Steppenwolf and record “Born to Be Wild” a few months later). It was a quasi-accidental mish-mash that foretold the intentionally disparate lineups of future festivals.

500 Greatest Songs of All Time: Steppenwolf, “Born to be Wild”

David Mahler (Attendee): There were a lot of people like me going out and having their first hippie rock and roll experience. There was a lot of long hair and girls with flowers in their hair.

Casady: You could have sunny days on Mount Tam but it could just as easily be engulfed in fog. They got lucky with a perfect day.

Kaukonen: It was one of those magical days that made you say, “I have to move to the Bay Area” before you realize there’s only like 14 of those days a year.

Bill Champlin (Sons of Champlin): Just about everyone in the Bay Area, at some point, had something to do with the show. We had the 8 a.m. slot, but you’re talking about musicians, so 8 a.m. is still last night.

Kaukonen: The musical community in San Francisco was different than today. There was a real artistic community that existed. To get together at a local festival was really like a big block party. I did Bonnaroo once and I didn’t get that feeling. Almost everyone knew each other and at that time, so early in the Summer of Love, a lot of outsiders hadn’t really started to come in from around the country. We all just went to each other’s shows.

Casady: This was the first time we realized that this many people would come to hear this kind of music.

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Rodger Collins (Artist): When they told me all the rock stars that were going to be there, I said, “Oh man, I want to be right in the middle of that!” It turned out to be San Francisco’s version of Woodstock, just a lot smaller. Still, there was people as far as I could see.

Ted Wyssinger (Artist): Magic Mountain was our first tour stop. Sly Stone and I went up there together, but he wasn’t performing. He just came to hang out. I remember talking to the other artists about their hopes and dreams and how rich and famous people were going to be. There was a lot of aroma in the air.

P.F. Sloan (Singer-songwriter): That weekend was fascinating musically because the Doors were still considered second-rate Rolling Stones. The Byrds, as big as they were, were just beginning to break out of being second-rate Beatles.

Kaukonen: I heard the Byrds open for the Stones before the Airplane got together, so I’d been a fan for years. So for me, it was like, “Wow, man, we’re playing with the Byrds.” That was a big deal.

McGuinn: That was a weird time for the Byrds. Unfortunately, [Byrds member] David [Crosby] was having trouble getting his songs on the album. He was discontent with the band and he’d been hanging out with Stephen Stills. It was just a matter of time before it all exploded. Even during the beginning of recording [the group’s 1968 album] Notorious Byrd Brothers, there was a lot of friction. For Magic Mountain, it was like, “Let’s just do this gig and do as good a job as we can.”

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York: We didn't have a drummer, so one of the guys who was working on the stage crew came up to us minutes before we were about to play and said, "Do you guys need a drummer?" and we said, "Oh man, that would be cool." He had no idea who we were; he just recognized that we were four guys on stage with guitars and a bass but no drummer. We said, "Yeah, you can play, do you have any sticks?" "No." "Well, why don't you go back to the dressing rooms and see if someone will loan you some sticks?" There were no drummers in the dressing room so he cut the legs off a coffee table and played with these huge sticks. He didn't know the songs. He just listened to the music and played. And no one was upset with what he sounded like.

McDonald: We hadn't been at it long enough for this to be "just another gig." The whole scene was still brand new. There were a lot of local bands on the bill that didn't become famous, but it shows you how viable the scene was that it could produce all of those acts within a small time period.

Creed Bratton (The Grass Roots, The Office): We weren't that thrilled to go to San Francisco. We were looked down upon because we weren't the original Grass Roots [lineup]. We did a Love-In right before the festival and [producer] Kim Fowley was the MC and I remember him saying, "Here they are, these aren't the original Grass Roots. They're like a bogus cover band. This is bullshit, guys, but if you want to listen to them, go ahead. I'll be back later." Thanks, Kim. Such a sweet man. So we played Magic Mountain, but we had that stigma of being "L.A. musicians" who usurped the San Francisco band that had that name.

Sloan: I was a songwriter and my record label really didn't want me out there in the public. The label thought if I knew how popular I was, I'd want more money. I was literally destroyed three months later. The label told me to sign away everything I'll ever earn and earned and sent out word that I was persona non grata. They wanted to destroy me and this kind of music. They thought Bob Dylan was an idiot and a communist.

No act was more impacted by the festival than Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band. The group was still three months away from the release of their debut album Safe as Milk, but they were already fixtures in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Magic Mountain was supposed to be a simple warm-up show ahead of Monterey Pop. It ended up memorable for all the wrong reasons.

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John "Drumbo" French (Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band): We were right on the verge of a big breakthrough. Bob Krasnow, our manager, said, "Just to make sure you're ready [for Monterey Pop], a week before, we'll fly you to San Francisco to play Fantasy Fair." We'd rehearse every day and the band was sounding really good. Don [Van Vliet, aka Captain Beefheart] was doing what he usually did, which was not rehearsing and trying to write new songs. Don had taken a lot of LSD six months earlier and because of all that, he started thinking about his body all the time and became a horrible hypochondriac. He kept thinking he was having heart attacks and driving to UCLA Medical Center. He liked his car too much to let anybody else drive, so he'd drive it himself while "having a heart attack." As we're taking the bus up [to Mount Tamalpais], Don decided to open up [the band's set] with a jam that nobody knew called "Maybe That'll Teach Ya." I had to explain to [guitarist] Ry [Cooder] that we're going to do a song we've never done before and he looks at me like I'm out of my mind. We got through the first song but when it came to the second song, Don completely froze. I see Don turn around, panicked, and walk off the back of the stage like there was no drop and fall off. We finished the song and left and I saw Ry pack up his guitar saying, "I got better things to do." He couldn't put up with this nonsense.

French: Don turned to me after the show and said, “I had an anxiety attack. I was looking down at this girl [from the stage] and her face turned into a fish and bubbles came out of her mouth.” He was having an acid reoccurrence.

Jerry Handley (Captain Beefheart & the Magic Band): It was a shame that that happened because it would’ve changed the course of the band. With Ry gone, we had to reorganize and we just couldn’t find another combination of Ry and [guitarist] Alex [St. Clair Snouffer]. There was never a better combination than those two. We would’ve killed them at Monterey. It was real disappointing. Don was a hard guy to get organized and when you bought into Don being your singer, you bought into Don’s idiosyncrasies. And he had plenty of them.

100 Greatest Guitarists: Ry Cooder

French: I was only 18 at the time and later on, it dawned on me: That was really the end of my music career. After that, it was all a struggle. Don blamed Ry for ruining his career, but I don’t think Don ever really realized that he ruined his own career that day.

UNDULATING LOVE JELLO

Lawrence: We also thought about how we were going to handle people that freak out on acid. You had to either have doctors or a “Freak Out tent” like we had at Woodstock. So we brought in Dr. Bill.

Rolling Stone’s Essential Woodstock Coverage

Rounds: [Dr. Bill] was a resident at Mount Zion hospital and led a group of four or five other doctors who were set up in a tent. They had Thorazine ready, because that was what you injected into people who were having a bad trip.

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Champlin: When they call it Magic Mountain, it’s not just a joke. All of us in Marin County who ever took LSD took it on that hill.

Art Reznick (Salvation): Everybody was doing acid, if nothing else. It was San Francisco in the Summer of Love, for Christ’s sake. After all the drugs and shit, man, I don’t even remember playing.

Teddy Stewart (Salvation): It was drugs, sex and rock & roll. That’s what it was all about.

I remember I had really bad asthma that day, so I probably just took a bunch of drugs.

Sloan: Before you got on stage, there's Owsley, the Purple Pope, and he asks you, "Do you want the sacrament?" So you stick out your tongue and BOOM! And he says, "Give it about seven minutes." He was a loving chemist. I was told that I started a song that I had written called, "Karma (A Study of Divinations)" and apparently, that song went on for 24 minutes, including a six-minute bass solo. I remember none of this. I do remember the entire audience turning into this undulating love jello.

Bratton: Because of marijuana and LSD, mostly, we felt like we were on the cutting edge of this paradigm shift in human consciousness. You could feel that. It was obvious that everyone was going to see the hypocrisy that was out there and see through all the bullshit like we did and make it all fair and equitable for the citizens of the planet. That still hasn't happened.

Brown: I don't call it Fantasy Fair. To me, it was the Magic Mountain festival. I had already had enough LSD and smoked enough pot to already have the fantasy. They didn't need to advertise that.

(Below: Footage of the Crowd at Fantasy Fair and Magic Mountain Music Festival)

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Footage courtesy of Steve Brown

FUNKY SUN GROPEs

The hippie lifestyle was still a few years from becoming a mass movement, and the Fantasy Fair crowd was a mix of numerous cliques. The original San Francisco Chronicle reviews noted the appearance of "teeny-boppers with their inevitable flowers" alongside "bizarre hippies from the Haight-Ashbury and T-shirted fraternity boys from Cal."

Michael Collins Morton (Attendee): I was 13, so it was my first experience with the whole "counterculture" thing. One of the things that I was aware of at the time was that it was all young people. When I saw the Beatles or the Beach Boys, the audience was young but you were aware that [the show] was put on by middle-aged adults who didn't care about the music. But this event felt different; it was by young people for young people. You could really make a case that that weekend was the beginning of the Summer of Love.

Sloan: For me, it was like *Wizard of Oz*. All of a sudden, the world is in color. 30,000 people? Stoned out of their minds? Enjoying music? Loving one another? And you get to play for them?

Muldaur: People would twirl around and all the chicks in their bedspread dresses were doing what we called the “funky sun grope.” It was a real vibe of peace and love. All was well, and all was joyous.

Stephan Miramon (Attendee): It was a community feeling that was absolutely perfect.

Selvin: It was high school kids who were playing at being hippies.

Marsanne Mazza (Attendee): We saw people fucking in sleeping bags. I was young, so I didn’t know, but I remember my mom pointing and laughing at the couple.

Marilyn McCoo (The 5th Dimension): People were playing R&B on the R&B stations and pop on the pop stations, but this was a festival where there was a mixture of artists, which was unusual. It was exciting to be in the middle of that type of energy that we had been hearing about.

Sloan: I remember [Fifth Dimension singer] Florence [LaRue] telling me, “What are we doing here with all these white people?”

Davis, Jr.: That was our first time performing for hippies. I didn’t have much experience with hippies at the time. I got caught up with the hippies and the flower people and they were passing joints around. And all of a sudden, one hit my hand. How did that get in my hand? I started feeling really good.

MIXING AND MINGLING

*With the absence of any formal backstage area, there was virtually no divide between fan and musician. Janis Joplin, two months before her studio debut with *Big Brother & the Holding Company* was released, hung out on the grounds with her friends in the Hells Angels. Sly Stone, then best known as a DJ on San Francisco’s KSOL 1450 AM, took a break from recording *Sly and the Family Stone*’s debut to check out the scene on Mount Tam. While the *Grateful Dead* were gigging for the first time in New York, Owsley Stanley stayed behind to bless any willing artists with LSD.*

staged behind to bless any willing artists with LSD.

Barbara Losel (Attendee): I was 15. I remember watching the Doors and then just seeing them leave the stage and lay around on the grass with the crowd after they did their set.

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Hirsch: Yeah, that was crazy to see the Doors just sitting on the grass eating their lunch. There was no real “backstage.”

Lawrence: We didn’t have an artist entertainment area or VIP or anything. The artists just mingled with the crowd because it was a different vibe then.

Sloan: A lot of the artists would just go off with fans and sit under a tree and smoke a joint. But the next week [at Monterey], artists were sheltered from any interaction with fans whatsoever.

Jon Sagen (Stage Manager): Months before, we bought an old Mercedes bus that Lufthansa used to ferry pilots and crews to their planes. I parked it backstage at the festival and it became a dressing room and a place artists could go to if they wanted to be left alone.

York: Usually you don’t go out to the audience at these things, but I remember just strolling around listening to some of the music. I remember listening to Dionne Warwick and thinking, “God, she is so talented.”

Davis, Jr.: Man, I was out there mixing and mingling. I wanted to dance with folks.

Morton: There was absolutely no security. It was a plain wooden stage with no fence around it. We walked around to backstage and all the musicians were hanging out. The first thing we saw was David Crosby and Grace Slick sitting on the back of a pickup truck. Not having been to many concerts at 13, I didn’t know what to expect, but even then, I remember thinking, “Wow, this is amazing.” It was the hippie thing of no barriers or boundaries.

Mahler: There were no cops. I went to high school dances that were more heavily chaperoned.

Casady: When you weren’t on stage, you became part of the audience. You weren’t separating yourself as the “glorious performer.” You were considered part of the community as the audience was considered a big part of your life as a musician. There was a mutual respect. People were really trying to put their best energy into this thing called “the community.”

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Kaukonen: When we played shows in the Bay Area, we weren’t just performers, we were part of the audience. I remember just going out front to see the Doors play that day. I didn’t walk around the front of Woodstock, but I walked around at Magic Mountain. I don’t think you could’ve done that even two years later.

The Doors’ eponymous debut album had been released five months prior to the festival, but despite a month-long weekly residency at the Avalon, this would be the first time many in the audience saw the band perform.

Miramón: I remember waiting for the band and hearing the scrambling of a Harley engine and seeing Jim Morrison brought on stage on the back of a motorcycle by the Hells Angels.

Hirsch: You couldn’t take your eyes off of Jim. They didn’t have a headline spot, but they were phenomenal.

Paul Carlson (Attendee): I promoted concerts and took the Doors on their first tour of Bakersfield, Fresno and Sacramento when they were just a frat boy band out of UCLA. When they did “Light My Fire” [at Magic Mountain] the place was mesmerized. Everybody just

they did “Light My Fire” [at Magic Mountain], the place was mesmerized. Everybody just stopped whatever they were doing.

York: I remember seeing the Doors and thinking it was more theatre than music. Jim was like Hamlet or Macbeth; he’s created some kind of a character that generates this energy where people want to see what happens next.

Brown: Morrison had a freakish kind of stage presence compared to what we were used to seeing. They put on a show that had a much different element than any of the San Francisco bands.

Mahler: Morrison was young and slim and throughout the festival, they were the band everyone was talking about. They went from this cool band from L.A. to being right at the edge of being a phenomenon.

Mazza: I was 7 and got to walk up to the stage when the Doors were singing “Light My Fire.” Even to this day, being that close to [Morrison] is my claim to fame. The energy in the crowd — I’m getting chills right now just talking to you about it — was unreal.

500 Greatest Songs of All Time: The Doors, “Light My Fire”

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Sagen: The only asshole I ran into the whole time was Jim Morrison. I’m up there on the stage getting set up for the Doors and there’s this guy on the stage while I’m trying to get stuff moved around with my team. I walked up and said, “Sorry, man, but could you please vacate the stage until we get set up? We got the Doors coming up next.” He looked me straight in the eye and said, “I *am* the Doors” and just stared at me. It was so arrogant. Everyone else was like, “Let’s be friends.”

Selvin: Morrison was *shit-faced* drunk and there were these two poles on the corner of the stage that held lighting. He was swinging around it. One minute he was there, the other, he wasn’t. He fell off the stage about 15 feet, but came back and finished the song like nothing happened. He was *really* drunk, and that was odd because we were all high and very tuned in to what we called “Juiceheads,” people who drank. They were looked down on. Bad consciousness.

(Below: Footage of the Doors at Fantasy Fair and Magic Mountain Music Festival)

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Footage courtesy of Steve Brown

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Brown: I shot some amateur footage of the Doors with my camera. Oliver Stone contacted me when Val Kilmer was preparing for [the 1991 film] *The Doors* and wanted to see performances of Jim. Val studied my footage from the band's Magic Mountain set to see some of Jim's moves.

One week after Fantasy Fair, the music world looked 130 miles south to Monterey, California, where producer/impresario Lou Adler and the Mamas and the Papas' John Phillips were producing the Monterey Pop Festival. The festival attracted Jimi Hendrix, the Who and Otis Redding, among many others. Helped by the 1968 release of the Monterey Pop concert film, the festival quickly became one of the era's most enduring musical events. Rounds, too, hired a film crew to document Magic Mountain, but nearly all of the footage has been lost and virtually no audio of any of the performances exists.

Lawrence: My crew worked hard at putting up scaffolding, building and decorating the stage, putting up all those concession booths, et cetera. When Adler and Phillips came up to see our festival, they asked, "How did you get all this done? Would you bring them down to Monterey?" So we went down there and did the same thing.

Lou Adler (Monterey Pop co-producer): I don't know what Mel's talking about. I never went to the festival. If we had any conversations, it would've been about getting promotions on the station for Monterey. John and I didn't have any direct hiring of the people that built the stage. I'm not putting it down, but Monterey wasn't looking at Mount Tam and saying, "Let's do that, but do it better." Nobody ever said, "They're doing this at Mount Tam, why don't we do that?"

Casady: [Fantasy Fair] felt the most at home. Monterey was more something that came out of Los Angeles with big-time promoters.

Brown: These guys were coming up to exploit the whole scene and pump it up for the music industry by doing this “big deal” thing. They felt that they would set the landmark for what would be as far as commercial entertainment for rock & roll. That was looked down on [in San Francisco]; it was more about the audience bonding with the bands.

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Sloan: The Fantasy Fair fest was Tahiti. The Monterey Pop was Death Valley. Picture all the colors of Tahiti where your mind’s getting blown and it’s, “Oh my God, look at those colors.” then Monterey, it’s, “Oh my God. Is that dust coming in? Are there any flowers here? This place is a dust bowl with barbed wire fences.” The beauty of the Fantasy Fair was that it was so innocent. It was the best of the love generation and it happened naturally and harmoniously. The Monterey Pop Festival was the first business aspect of it. “We’re going to make a lot of money.” You could see the dollar signs in their eyes.

Adler: P.F. Sloan is harsh about everything that’s happened to him in life. A lot of people think that Monterey was beautiful, including all of the artists there.

Nichols: Magic Mountain was a weekend that symbolized how we were and how we felt at the time. By the time Monterey comes around, now we’re all feeling self-aware of how important we are.

Darrow: Monterey was the beginning of the end. Until that time, it was all West Coast and easygoing. After Monterey, all the guys I knew who were so laid back were thinking about their royalties and getting big cars.

Adler: Magic Mountain was the closest thing to Monterey, but the difference between us and them was that Monterey was the first *major* rock festival. It was the Monterey *International* Pop Festival. It just took it to a different level. But the idea that they pulled off two days of a lot of music — not necessarily historical or breakthrough music — but a lot of different genres, that’s great. It didn’t influence the way we did Monterey, but it certainly deserves a place in the history of music and music festivals.

Selvin: It was in a sense a little bit anomalous, and that’s because these people weren’t connected. They weren’t part of that scene. As hip as they were for Top 40 guys, those cultures were still discreet at that point. In the coming months, Top 40 would become more underground and the underground would become more Top 40. But at that point, there was

underground and the underground would become more Top 40. But at that point, there was no underground radio outside of San Francisco. So it was a very advanced, little underground culture, and these guys were dabbling in this underground they weren't really quite hooked up with.

Lawrence: I think the basic thing was a consideration for the audience and realizing that there were other options than just sitting them down in a seat and watching a show. And you had to care for their welfare because you're the promoter. We came out of the Magic Mountain experience and brought that over to Monterey, Newport and the Miami Pop Festival in 1968. The same crew from the Miami Pop Festival went up and did Woodstock.

Lang: [Fantasy Fair's] reach was limited in terms of the impact it had, except for those of us who took it in as brain food and for that, it planted seeds.

Nichols: It was a real communion. It was the essence of the experience of being in San Francisco at that time. There was so much going on with bands getting signed and people moving around and we were all so young then. It was like a little moment captured in time; a moment where everybody stopped rushing around, getting their deal together or going to Europe and we were all there together at the top of that mountain. And we were all really stoned.

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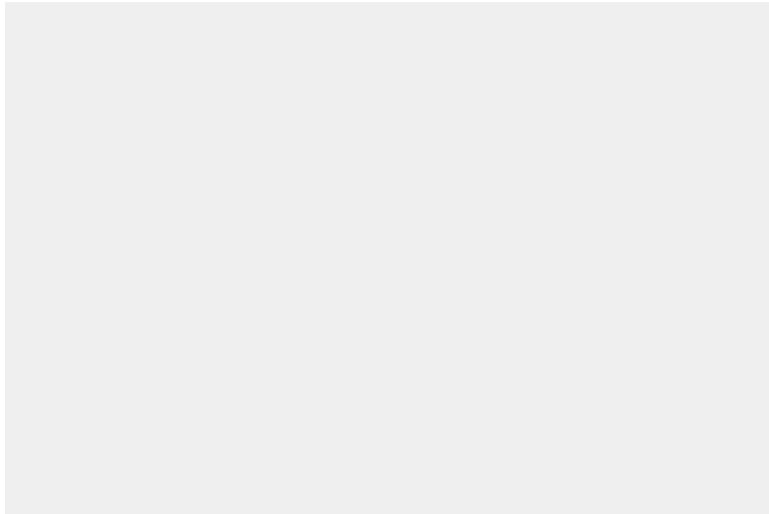
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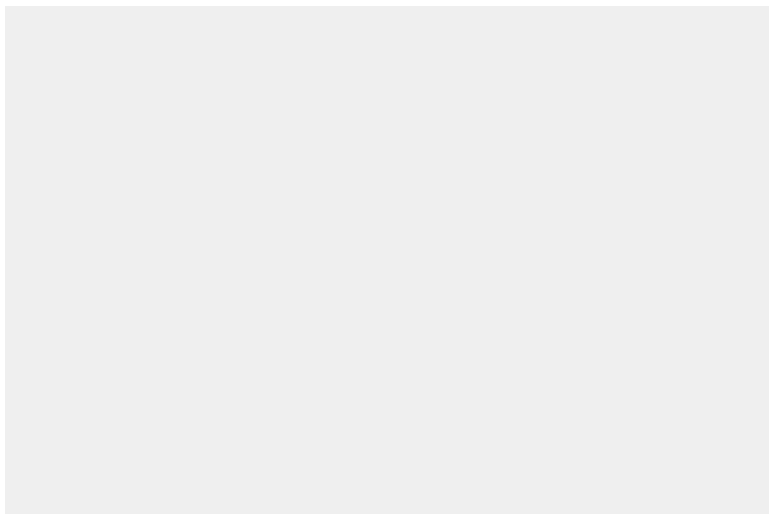
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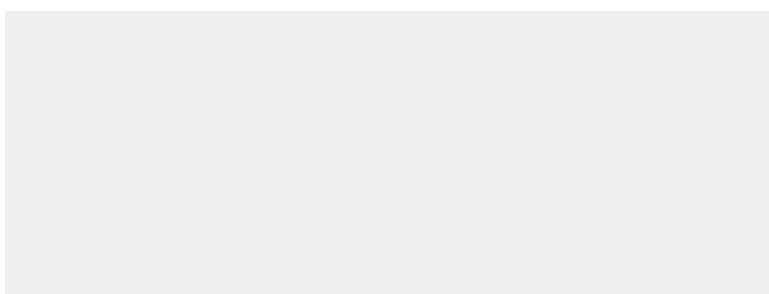
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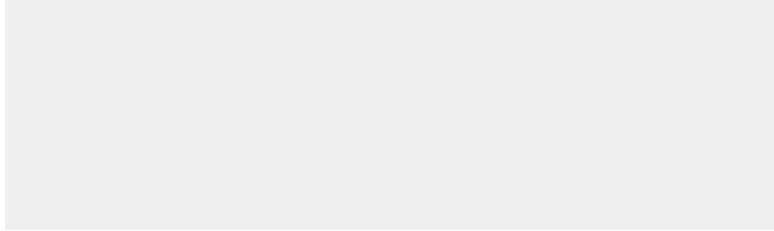
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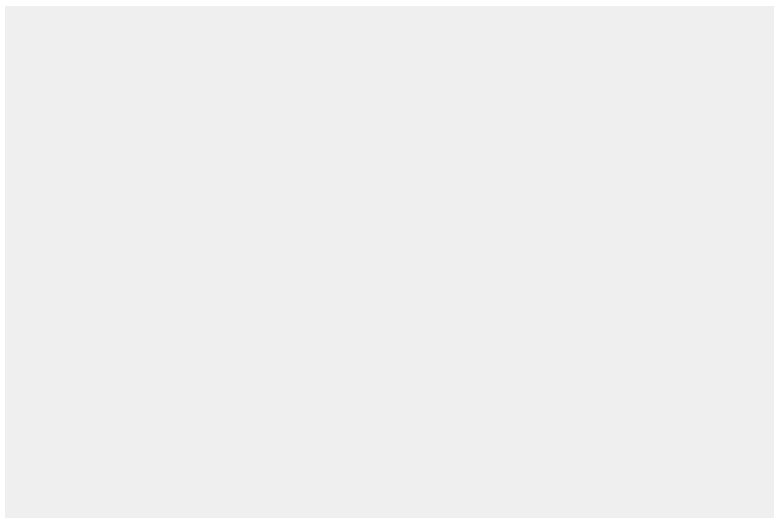
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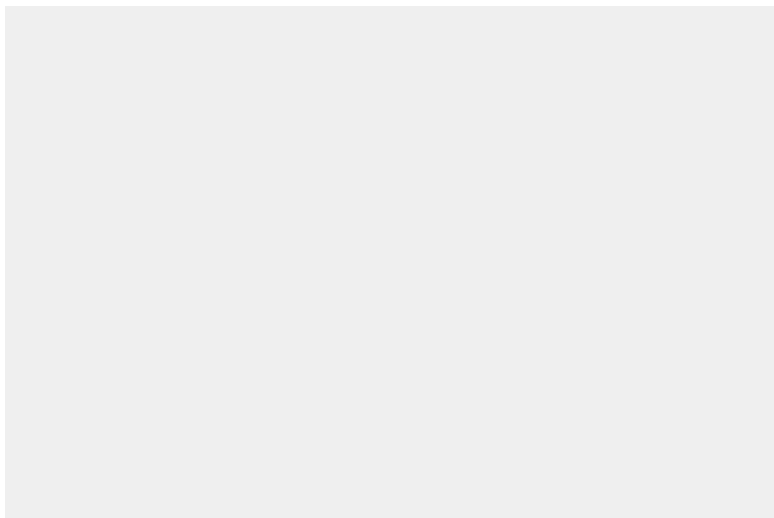
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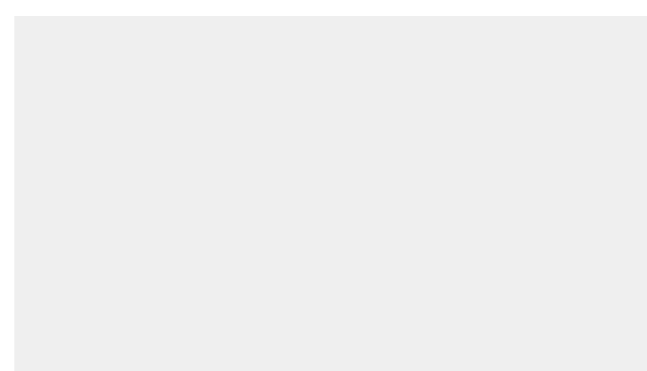
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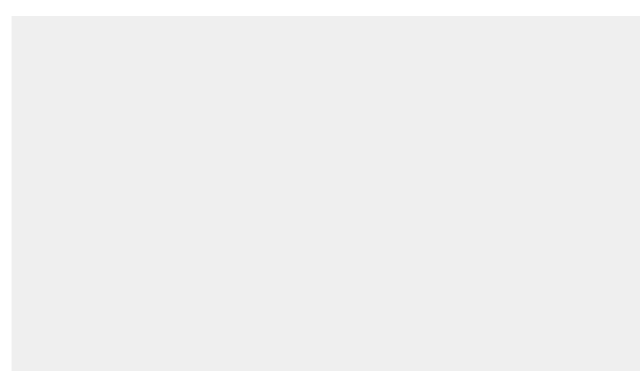
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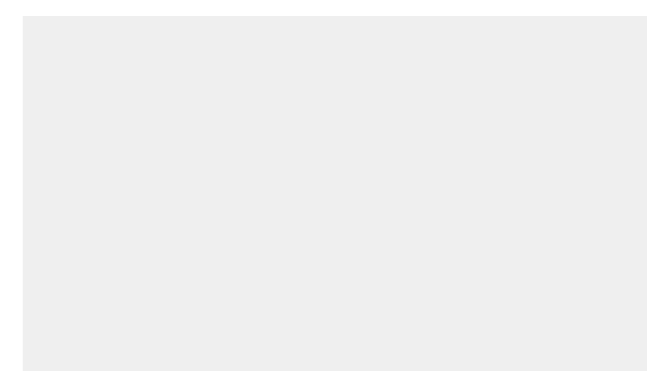
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