

UGLY THINGS



THE MAGICIANS

Out to make it in New York's rock'n'roll world



JEFFERSON AIRPLANE

First bass player Bob Harvey



The Magicians

OUT TO MAKE IT IN NEW YORK'S ROCK & ROLL WORLD

They were under contract to Columbia Records and Koppelman-Rubin Associates, and they had the support of every resource in the Columbia Broadcasting System, including WCBS-TV. Everybody was on board and expectations were high. Seatbelts were buckled ... ready for the rocket to blast off.

By Walter Roland Moore



(Photo: Sandy Speiser)

It's Sunday, February 13, 1966, 6:30pm. WCBS-TV, the CBS television affiliate in New York City, is broadcasting *Eye on New York*, their weekly 30-minute documentary series on life in the city. This week's episode is unprecedented: entitled *Four to Go*, it would offer an intimate look at the lives of a New York rock 'n' roll band. It was perhaps the first time in American television that rock 'n' roll was treated to 30 minutes of personal documentation. The broadcast was almost two years to the day since the Beatles formally launched the British Invasion of America with their February 9, 1964, appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. And it was 18 months ago that *A Hard Day's Night* broke ground by documenting the behavior of a band offstage.

Inspired by *A Hard Day's Night*, *Four to Go* begins with a radical sight and sound: four young men—all with hair covering their ears and foreheads—running down the middle of a busy street in midtown Manhattan, defying traffic ... and the law. We hear a raw rendition of a Bo Diddley classic: a drum solo with a spontaneous jungle beat is joined by chugging, syncopated guitar chords, while a growling, soulful voice informs us, "I walk 27 miles of barbed wire, I wear a cobra snake for a necktie. Who do you love?" The sight of the four musicians was radical because long hair in public was still an anomaly at the end of 1965, especially when combined with wide-wale corduroy, turtle-necks, and high-heeled boots—the antithesis of still prevalent cardigan sweaters and loafers with white socks. In the workforce, any deviation from conservative dress was taboo; and public school dress codes dictated that men's hair could not extend below the top of the ear or the top of the collar—a code enforced nationwide until the spring of 1969. In the majority of the country, long hair sightings were as rare as UFOs, and they predominantly identified the very small percentage of musicians who adopted the British Invasion's aesthetic.

On television, there were many opportunities for the public to view the new long-haired British Invasion bands and their American counterparts, but the exposure was limited to performance. Since 1956, Dick Clark hosted *American Bandstand*, showcasing popular entertainers lip-syncing their hits to an audience of teenage dancers. By 1965, television shows with a similar format were abundant in cities throughout the country. Los Angeles had *The Lloyd Thaxton Show* (1964-66), one of the first to forecast the coming of the Beatles in late 1963 with tales of mop-topped Liverpudlians performing in cages to avoid a maelstrom of adoring fans; *Shivaree* (1965-66) and *Hollywood a Go Go* (1965-66) both featured go-go dancers. Cleveland, Ohio, had *The Big Show* (syndicated as *Upbeat* in early 1966); and New York had *The Clay Cole Show / Clay Cole's Diskotek* (1959-1967). Nationally, ABC aired *Shindig* from September 1964 to January 1966, while NBC aired *Hullabaloo* from January 1965 to April 1966—both shows featured choreographed go-go dancers.

For insights into how these musicians actually behaved offstage—in their kitchens, sitting by swimming pools, driving their cars—we

had to turn to teen magazines, including *Teen* (1954-2009); *16* (1957-2001); *Dig* (1955-1964); *Teen Screen* (1959-1971); *TeenSet* (1964-1969); *Flip* (1964-1973); and *Tiger Beat* (1965-2019); to name a few. But these publications focused on wholesome, staged settings with popular mainstream acts: the Beatles, Paul Revere & the Raiders, Herman's Hermits, and a host of pre-British Invasion acts, such as the Righteous Brothers, Jan & Dean, and Paul Petersen. *Hit Parader* (1942-2008) was one of few publications to offer in-depth profiles on musicians, but with few details outside of the stage and studio.

For film and television in 1965, there were several noteworthy productions intent on exposing more than mere lip-synced performances, and eliminating the mystery of how these

musicians actually lived and behaved off stage.

- On April 26, 1965, documentary filmmaker DA Pennebaker began filming Bob Dylan in Europe—driving in cars, walking streets, meeting with fans; drinking, smoking, typing, and socializing in hotel rooms—as well as performing. To be titled *Don't Look Back*, its 96 minutes of behind-the-scene Dylan would not be released until May 17, 1967.

- Also in April 1965, a 30-minute TV show that documented the fictional antics of a folk-rock band was sold to Screen Gems. Casting commenced in September, with production beginning in spring 1966, but *The Monkees* would not premiere on NBC until the following September.

The Magicians, 1966.
L to R: Jake Jacobs, Alan Gordon,
Garry Bonner, John Townley.
 (Photo: Sandy Speiser)



- A short film on the English R&B band the Pretty Things was planned in late 1965 and began shooting in January 1966. Combining zany, Chaplinesque antics (also inspired by *A Hard Day's Night*) and club performances, the 13-minute film, entitled *A Day in the Life of the Pretty Things*, showcased the Pretties' music, but without dialogue or commentary. It was released in a single London theater in spring 1966.

- The one significant 1965 broadcast occurred on October 19 with David L Wolper's 60-minute TV documentary, *Teenage Rebellion*. A two-minute segment featured the Bushmen, a rock and roll band from Cleveland, Ohio, driving in California in a van—the wind from the open windows blowing their long, unruly hair into their faces. They spoke of their dreams and commitment to music; at a rest stop, they changed into stage clothes and combed their hair before performing live to a small auditorium crowd in the desert town of Lancaster.

There are numerous other examples, and by late 1966, rock 'n' roll bands of every genre would start revealing more of their private personas on TV variety shows, specials, dramas, comedies, feature films, and documentaries, including director Peter Whitehead's unreleased 102 minutes of the Beach Boys cavorting in 1966 throughout London before performing live at the Hammersmith Odeon.

But in February 1966, the landmark broadcast was *Four to Go*, and as the narrator informs us, "Their names are Alan Gordon, John Townley, Al Jacobs, and Garry Bonner. Together, these four are out to make it in New York's rock 'n' roll world. They call themselves the Magicians."

The Magicians were the subject of the documentary for good reason: they were destined to "make it." They were under contract to Columbia Records and an influential team of managers and record producers, and they had the support of the entire Columbia Broadcasting System. As producer Bob Wyld recalls, "Everybody was on board, and the expectations were high. We all had our seat belts buckled, ready for the rocket to blast off."

Chapter 1: THE BIRTH OF THE MAGICIANS

If there was one catalyst in the formation of the Magicians, it was Bronx-born Bob Wyld. At 16, he discovered Elvis Presley's very first television appearance on the January 28, 1956, broadcast of *Stage Show*, a music-variety series hosted by big band leaders Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. After Elvis performed "Shake, Rattle and Roll," "Flip, Flop and Fly," and "I Got a Woman," Wyld decided he wanted a career in the music business.

Within the year, he formed a quartet, the Rhythm Rockers, with Johnny Serrano and Bobby Flynn, and recorded a cover of Buddy Holly's "Oh Boy," printing a few copies on their own Satin Records. After a short stint with Trans American Distribution selling records

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Bob Wyld and John Townley.
Columbia Studio A,
December 1965.
(Photo: Sandy Speiser)

to retail stores and jukebox operators, Wyld got a job as a song plugger for music publisher Archie Levington, pitching demos of Archie's songs to record companies. Within a few years, his position would evolve into the management of Levington's entire publishing operation.

Levington built his publishing empire in Chicago in the '40s and '50s with Studio Music Co, Midway Music Co, Monarch Music, and multiple labels to distribute his published songs. He was married to Fran Allison, the star of the TV puppet show *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, which ran from 1947 to 1957. Levington's offices at 157 W 57th Street were located across from Carnegie Hall in the heart of music publishing and recording in Manhattan.

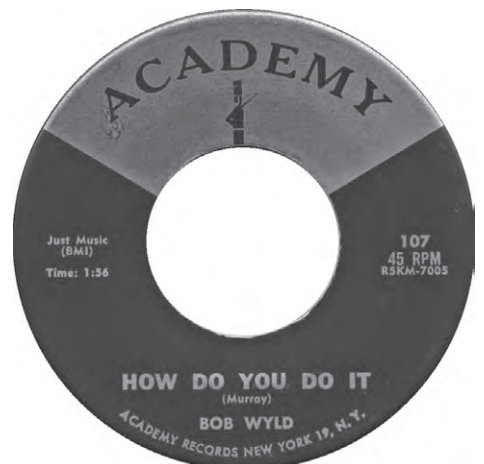
The majority of Wyld's demos and finished recordings for Levington were recorded by bouncing tracks with two mono machines at the small Dick Charles Recording Service in room 210 at 729 7th Avenue. Opened in 1954 by former ABC radio director Dick Charles, it was one of the best demo studios at the time with an excellent reputation—and by the late '60s it would be one of the first studios to offer eight-track recording. "They had Art Polhemus, Bill Szymczyk, and Gary Kellgren—three of the best recording engineers in the business," says Wyld. (In 1967, Kellgren would build the world-renowned Record Plant Recording Studio.) Dick Charles was the preferred studio for Screen Gems and such songwriters as Neil Sedaka, Neil Diamond, Gerry Goffin and Carole King, and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil. According to Wyld, "songwriters produced demos at Dick Charles often with just piano and vocals just to demonstrate a song's appeal to the artist it was written for."

Dick Charles was part of a tight network of recording studios that comprised the bulk of the New York recording industry. There was A&R Studio 1 (112 W 48th); Mira Sound (145 W 47th); Associated Recording Studios (723 7th Avenue). A few blocks north: Stea & Phillips Enterprises (781 7th Avenue); World United (1595 Broadway); Bell Sound Studios (237 W 54th); Regent Sound Studios (25 W 56th); Atlantic Studio (1841 Broadway at W 60th), and Columbia's Studio A at 799 7th Avenue, and Studio B at 49 E 52nd. (Columbia's third studio, 30th Street, aka The Church, was a former Armenian church further south at 207 E 30th.)

Also nearby were the industry's two publishing and songwriting factories which together housed over 300 companies: 1619 Broadway at 49th Street (The Brill Building, with its famous musicians' hangout/restaurant, the Turf) and 1650 Broadway at 51st Street, which also housed the Allegro Sound recording studio in the basement. On 48th Street and 7th Avenue stood Music Row—a city block with over a half-dozen guitar and instrument stores that included the world-famous Manny's Music.

In early 1964, Wyld formed Academy Records with Levington and wrote, produced, and performed the label's first release, "Roses Are Blooming" b/w "How Do You Do It." Wyld then teamed with Wayne Storm, a singer, songwriter, and actor from Montana who moved to New York in 1963 to audition for the role of Conrad Birdie in the motion picture adaptation of *Bye Bye Birdie*. Wyld produced the folk-rock-inspired "I'll Do Without You" for Wayne and Gary (Wayne Storm and Gary Oakes), and released it in April 1964 on Levington's new Media Records—the only record released on that label. Wyld and Storm then co-wrote "Good Good Lovin'"—a mix of Buddy Holly and Merseybeat—and then recorded it under the moniker the Bandits. Wyld sold the master to Laurie Records who released it through their new Goal label.

As the folk duo Wayne Storm and Bob Wyld, they performed for six weeks at the Blue Angel nightclub on East 55th Street in March/April 1964, opening for Australian Rolf Harris ("Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport") just prior to the club's closing after 21 years. At the club, they were approached by music promoter Sid Bernstein, who two months earlier produced the Beatles' first US concert at Carnegie Hall. Bernstein offered the duo the opening slot on the Dave Clark Five's upcoming concerts at Carnegie Hall on May 29 and 30. They took it, and earned \$350 for performing four sold out



shows—two on Friday and two on Saturday. “When I got on stage for the first time,” says Wyld, “I yelled to the audience, ‘Hey, Dad, I’m playing Carnegie Hall.’”

After Wyld produced Little Jerry Williams’ composition “Hum-Baby” for Academy Records in February 1965, he teamed with Art Polhemus and formed Longhair Productions and Ananga Ranga Music Corp to produce, publish, and promote new artists. They would each focus on their expertise: Wyld would handle artist and business relations while Polhemus would focus on production and engineering. And they would share space in Archie Levington’s office on 57th St.

Wyld and Polhemus were a slick, handsome team. Wyld had a commanding presence with movie star good looks—a dead ringer for France’s Johnny Hallyday: his long, thick mane of blonde hair combed straight back; his fitted black suits matched with white shirts and skinny ties; his pointed-toe Beatle boots perfectly shined. Polhemus was a lean, intense, and concentrated complected; his chiseled jaw outlined by a thin, chinstrap beard and goatee—a manifestation of his Beat, counterculture roots.

Longhair’s first production in May 1965 was a Wyld and Storm composition for MGM records: “Hello Blues (It’s Me Again)” with Wyld and Storm performing as Sticks ‘N Stones And Strings ‘N Things.

The End of Mitch Miller’s Reign at Columbia

In the summer of 1965, Wyld and Polhemus turned their attention to Columbia Records. Since 1950, the head of the label’s A&R (artists & repertoire) was band leader Mitch Miller. He was responsible for discovering and signing new talent and supervising artistic direction and promotion. Miller is credited with the label’s success with such artists as Barbra Streisand, Tony Bennett, Doris Day, Rosemary Clooney, and Johnny Mathis. Though he is blamed for Frank Sinatra leaving the label for Capitol in 1953, Miller insisted in a 2004 interview that “history will verify this, but at the time, Sinatra was down on his luck.” During his 15 years with Columbia, Miller’s disdain for rock and roll was notorious, and it resulted in his refusal to sign Elvis Presley in 1955 and the Beatles in 1963.

By mid 1965, Columbia’s only noteworthy rock and roll acts were Bob Dylan, the Byrds, Paul Revere & the Raiders, and Simon & Garfunkel. But Columbia was about to change: on March 24, MCA president Lew R Wasserman announced that Mitch Miller had joined MCA as an executive in the company’s Creative Division. Miller’s reign at Columbia was over.

As the Columbia Records Group began its move from 799 7th Avenue to join the CBS Broadcasting Network at their new corporate headquarters at 51 W 52nd Street—a 38-story building referred to as “Black Rock”—the label’s president, Goddard Lieberson, appointed Clive Davis as administrative vice president and general manager. Davis’s first assignment: renew Bob Dylan’s contract and open the door for the “new rock.” And Longhair Productions



stepped into that door, embraced by an A&R department eager to discover new talent.

In July, Wyld and Polhemus entered the Dick Charles studio and recorded Steve Karliski and Mimi Roman performing “Yes, Mr Peters,” a country ballad Karliski wrote with Larry Kolber that was a #1 hit on the country charts for Roy Drusky & Priscilla Mitchell in May. The recording sold quickly to Columbia, and Longhair followed up in August with another Columbia sale, the soul standards “If You’re Gonna Love Me” (written by Wyld and Polhemus with Wayne Storm) b/w “Gotta Funny Kinda Feeling” (written by Wyld and Polhemus), performed by Regina, a 16-year-old Cher lookalike they discovered in Brooklyn. “Columbia loved her,” says Wyld. The September 25th issue of *Cash Box* picked the single as a “Best Bet” with the blurb, “Look for healthy reaction to this commercial side by Regina. Lark steps up and fires off an attractive, multidance ballad offering that should stir up excellent reaction.”

While Wyld and Polhemus waited for the two singles to chart, they searched for more talent to deliver to Columbia.

Wyld & Polhemus Search for the Magic

A warm night in August 1965 and that search for new talent gave birth to the Magicians. At 7:00pm on a Friday, Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus took a 54-block walk down 7th Avenue from their office on 57th Street to 3rd Street in the heart of Greenwich Village.

Their first stop was the Metropole Cafe at 725 7th Avenue at 48th Street, just several blocks from Times Square. Featuring big band and traditional jazz since the 1940s—from Dizzy Gillespie to Gene Krupa—the club formally ended its jazz policy in June and introduced R&B and Top 40. The massive marquee spanned the entire sidewalk and was visible from blocks away; the name of the club in bold, Gay ‘90s lettering on three sides, illuminated with hundreds of flashing, chasing light bulbs. Through the glass wall entrance, you could see the bands performing on stage in front of a mirrored, elevated runway with go-go dancers.

From the sidewalk, Wyld and Polhemus heard a hard-rocking, guttural version of the R&B classic “See See Rider” and walked up to the glass doors. “The singer had the voice of James Brown and the look of a mod Gene Vincent,” says Wyld. They went inside, watched the rest of their set and were blown away. “We had to sign them,” says Wyld, “and get them on record.” They pitched the singer, who politely declined since the band had a commitment to record with another producer. The singer was 20-year-old Mitch Ryder, his band was the Detroit Wheels, and on December 11 they would enter *Billboard*’s Hot 100 with the Bob Crewe-produced “Jenny Take A Ride” on New Voice Records.

Greenwich Village

At 14th Street, Wyld and Polhemus cut over to 6th Avenue and walked east on 8th Street, past a lineup of retail stores—books, clothing, records, shoes—and the Eighth Wonder, a popular discotheque with Top 40 bands and go-go dancers that was owned by nightclub impresario Trude Heller and her son, Joel, who operated the club. (Trude’s eponymous hotspot was just several blocks away on 6th Ave. at 9th St.)

They passed the Bon Soir, the basement club where Barbra Streisand launched her singing career in 1960, and turned right on MacDougal Street, observing Washington Square Park on their left with its towering arch and central fountain that hosted hootenannies on the weekends. “I remember hearing the distant sounds of bongos and tambourines as we passed,” says Wyld.

They walked past 4th Street and stood for a moment at the corner of 3rd to observe the spectacle that was Greenwich Village: a crowd of locals and tourists filled the sidewalks of the narrow, two-lane street, lined on both sides with four- and five-story buildings, all erected circa 1900 with decorative cornices and wrought-iron fire escapes—a visual mix of 19th century Europe, Bourbon Street, and a carnival midway—but with an overload of underground music and culture.

To their right on 3rd was the Night Owl Cafe,



The Night Owl Cafe in the sixties, looking west on 3rd Street.

its name in gold letters on a canopy that extended across the sidewalk, the hand-cut letters on its marquee listing the Bloos Magoos, the Jagged Edge, and the Strangers. Tony Pastor's, a gay bar, was further down the block. And across the street was the Zig Zag Cafe, followed by the Heat Wave, the Four Winds, and the Village Purple Onion.

Looking down MacDougal, the endless row of canopies, signs, and banners announced myriad attractions. On the west side of the block, the corner was occupied by Greenwich Village Pharmacy, followed by the Caffe Reggio (opened in 1927); the Swing Rendezvous, a lesbian bar soon to be replaced by Manny Roth's "new" Cock 'N' Bull; the Player's Theatre (future home of the Fugs); and Manny Roth's Cafe Wha?, a former horse stable where a flight of stairs took you down to a basement club where Bob Dylan launched his career in 1961.

Beyond the canopy was the Minetta Tavern, the 1937 steak house frequented by Ernest Hemingway and Dylan Thomas. Across the street, the Gaslight Cafe (1958-1971), the Kettle of Fish (1950-1987), and Izzy Young's Folklore Center (1957-1973)—legendary havens of Beats, folk singers, and stand-up comics—from Kerouac and Lenny Bruce to Richie Havens and Dave Van Ronk. The attractions continued as far as the eye could see—to Bleeker Street where the Cafe Borgia and Cafe Figaro occupied the east corners. A left turn would take you to the Cafe Rafio, the Village Gate, the Cafe Au Go Go, the Bitter End, and more.

But Wyld and Polhemus walked east on 3rd Street past the towering 10-foot banner hanging over the entrance to Rick Allmen's Cafe Bizarre, a beatnik coffeehouse with poets and folk singers that opened in 1957. In December, Allmen would hire the newly formed Velvet Underground, but quickly fire them for their annoying, droning noise—but not before Andy Warhol dropped in to discover them.

Tex & the Chex

After passing the Village Music Hall where pre-Spoonful Steve Boone and Joe Butler played with the Sellouts, Wyld and Polhemus were ready for a drink. They passed Googies, the popular watering hole for many musicians at 237 Sullivan Street, and stopped at 82 W 3rd, a small three-story building from 1910 that housed the ground-floor Club Cinderella, formerly a jazz supper club in the '30s, '40s, and '50s that was frequented by Frank Sinatra and Mae West to catch performances by Billie Holiday and Thelonious Monk. But in 1965, the talent was Top 40.

That night, the band on stage was Tex & the Chex, an incarnation of the interracial Brooklyn doo-wop group formed in 1960. The original band featured lead singer Rodney "Tex" Bris-

tow, one of the group's two black members, Irwin Kashansky (1st tenor), Steven Schatzberg (baritone), and Raymond Cruz (bass). The group's premiere 45 single, "I Do Love You" b/w "My Love," was released on Atlantic Records in August 1961. It took 18 months (February 1963) to release the follow-up single, "Watching Willie Wobble" b/w "Be on the Lookout for My Love" on Newtown Records. A final 45, the Jan & Dean-inspired "Beach Party" b/w "(Love Me) Now," was released in June 1963 on 20th Century Fox.

All of the singles failed to chart, and by summer 1965 the only resemblance to the original band was lead singer Bristow, who also supplied keyboard backing on a new Farfisa Compact. The doo-wop originals were replaced by Top 40 covers with new members Mike Appel on guitar (playing a 1962 Fiesta Red Fender Stratocaster he purchased new at Silver and Horland on Park Row in Manhattan), Everett Jacobs on Fender Precision bass, and Alan Gordon on drums.

In addition to Club Cinderella—where they would perform six 30-minute sets a night—the band was booked regularly at the Metropole Cafe and the Eighth Wonder, with jaunts to the Lido Beach Club on the south shore of Long Island. Dressed in Beatle boots and matching collarless jackets (adapted from a Pierre Cardin design and popularized by the Beatles in early '64), the band covered the Beatles' "Ticket To Ride," along with a heavy repertoire of R&B standards: "Papa's Got a Brand New



Bag" (James Brown), "Walkin' the Dog" (Rufus Thomas), "Ooh Poo Pah Doo" (Jesse Hill), and a high-energy favorite, "You Can't Sit Down" (the Dovells).

Wyld and Polhemus were impressed with the band, and their personalities: Tex was outgoing and conversational, while Alan was a comedian, cracking one-liners and announcing women's lingerie sales on the third floor (a talent honed while working as the in-store announcer at Korvettes department store in Brooklyn). "They were talented, and tight," says Wyld, "but we didn't see commercial potential. All covers. No originals." But their opinion changed when drummer Alan Gordon announced an original song he wrote called "An Invitation to Cry." The song opened with a high-pitched guitar riff and moved into a soulful, minor-key waltz—with a haunting harmony suggestive of "Go Now" by England's the Moody Blues, which had reached #10 in the US in the spring.

When the band finished a set, Wyld and Polhemus approached Gordon and pitched him on doing a demo of "An Invitation to Cry" with the band. They emphasized their track record and strong connection with the new regime at Columbia, where they had two acts already on board. "Let's get everybody together for a meeting at our office," said Wyld, "and discuss our plan and how we can make this happen." It sounded good to Gordon and he agreed to work it out with the band.

I'm the Drummer ... and the Rhythm Gets to Me

Alan Gordon ... a lanky frame moving to the beat, as secret swatches of hair loosen behind his ears, ready to emerge from a doo-wop cocoon and embrace the new mod.

Bob Wyld saw Alan Gordon as "a lean mean rhythm machine, possessed of high energy. He was bright, creative, and able to make up songs on the spot. He was always joking, and when he laughed, it was a high-pitched cackle that could be heard above all others in the room."

Alan Gordon was born in Natick, Massachusetts, on April 22, 1944, and moved to Brooklyn one year later. From an early age he displayed an instinct for percussion. At 10, he took drum lessons at Wurlitzer Studios on 42nd Street in Times Square, and later studied with drummer Cozy Cole who had a #3 hit in 1958 with "Topsy II." At age 12, Gordon formed his first band, Flash Gordon & the Rockets, and began writing songs in his head while playing the drums and riding the subways: "I do my great, you know, some great writing on the subways... where all the noise and the chains rattling, because I'm the drummer and the rhythm ... gets to me."

In early 1964, Gordon attempted to sell the songs he wrote by knocking on doors at the Brill Building and 1650 Broadway. He was hired as a songwriter for \$25 a week for Hal Webman's We Three Music, which Webman co-founded in 1958 after careers as reporter/editor of *Billboard* (1946-1952) and *Down Beat* (1952-53), and two years in A&R at Coral/Decca

Alan Gordon.

(Photo: Sandy Speiser)



Records (1956-58).

At We Three, Gordon wrote his very first recording with staff writer Jimmy Curtiss, "I Ain't Gonna Make It Without You" (the B-side of Ritchie's Adam's "Every Window in the City"), released on Congress that August. Gordon teamed with staff writer Jimmy Woods and wrote three songs for the Jive Five that would be released in early 1966: the 45s "Main Street" and "In My Neighborhood"; and "I Remember When," a track from the LP *I'm A Happy Man*. And then Gordon and Woods wrote "An Invitation to Cry."

It was while Gordon was working at We Three that he met Chex guitarist Mike Appel in the spring of 1965.

Life Before Balloon Farm: Mike Appel

Native New Yorker, Mike Appel was born in Flushing, Queens on October 27, 1942, and began playing the guitar at 14. At 16, he formed his first band, the Humbugs, and recorded an album of 12 demos at Bell Sound Studios on 54th Street, resulting in the release of a single in October 1960, "How Dry I Am" b/w the Appel-penned "Thirsty" on the Studio label, a division of 20th Century Fox. A second single, the instrumental "Brand X," was released on Fields Records. Changing their name to the Camelots, they recorded "The Chase" for Al Silver's Herald-Ember Records, the label of the Five Satins' hit "In the Still of the Night."

After a steady stream of high school dance bookings, the Camelots moved up to theaters, opening for the likes of the Marvelettes, Little Peggy March, Freddy Cannon—even Link Wray. In July 1963, they released a second instrumental, "Charge" b/w "Scratch"—both written by Appel—on the Comet label. The 45 went nowhere, and the impending British Invasion put an end to the band.

Appel took his talents to the Brill Building and 1650 Broadway, writing songs and playing guitar on demos for LF Music, Dutchess Music, EB Marks Music, H&L Music, and Lotus

Records. By early 1965, he was spending his evenings playing guitar with Tex & the Chex. Within a few months, the band's married drummer dropped out; and when Appel ran into Alan Gordon during a visit to We Three Music, he pitched Gordon on joining the Chex. For Gordon, joining the band was an opportunity to keep his drumming skills tuned and hopefully test his songwriting with a band. But there were no prospects for success: Tex & the Chex were nothing more than a Top 40 cover band despite an occasional Gordon original thrown in.

But all of that was about the change.

Recording "An Invitation to Cry"

Alan Gordon arranged with Mike Appel, Everett Jacobs, and Rod Bristow to meet the following week at the offices of Longhair Productions. The group waited for each other outside 157 W 57th Street on a weeknight after 6:00 pm. The 14-story building offered an impressive introduction to Wyld and Polhemus. A former residential building, it now featured glass entry doors, a 20-foot lobby with marble floors and walls, and elevators with modern aluminum doors.

The office Longhair shared with Archie Levington was down a hallway on the first level and up several steps. Inside the office, the first door was rented by Budd Hellawell (Budd Productions), a record promoter who worked with Brian Epstein in November 1963 to push the Beatles' "She Loves You," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," and "Please Please Me" in the US market. It was Hellawell who put Sid Bernstein in touch with Brian Epstein to book the Beatles at Carnegie Hall. Down the hall, past secretary Mary Gleason's reception space, was the door into Archie Levington's office, which he shared with Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus. It was a big, impressive office with modern art on the walls and a long custom-made table with telephones at opposite ends for Levington and Wyld. Decor included a piano, couches, chairs, and shelving filled with acetates, record players, and reel-to-reel tape recorders. Doors opened into a closet, a full bathroom, and an adjacent room with another piano and a guitar amplifier.

Tex & the Chex entered the office and were impressed. Wyld and Polhemus laid out their plan: Longhair would finance a four-track demo recording of the band's original song, "An Invitation to Cry," at Regent Sound Studios with everybody performing in good faith.

"We told them we were optimistic we could land a deal with Columbia," says Wyld, "at which time Longhair would put together a production, publishing, and management deal for the band. All the band had to do was put in a few hours recording time. They had nothing to lose and everything to gain."

Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus booked an evening recording session at the end of August at Regent Sound Studios at 25 W 56th Street. The studio was opened in 1958 by Bob Liftin, a former CBS audio engineer for radio soap operas and live television. Within two years, the studio was producing an estimated 10% of

the records on the *Billboard* Hot 100. A four-track facility with a Scully multitrack machine, Regent's soundproofed 36x26-foot main room with 16-foot ceilings could accommodate up to 50 musicians. "The studio and the control room were fully equipped," says Wyld. "Grand piano, vibraphone... even the first plate reverberation unit, the German-made EMT." Introduced in 1957, the EMT 140 was a 600-pound, 4x8-foot wood frame with a steel plate suspended between thin tubular frames. It was a significant space-saving option for echo chambers that studios built in basements and stairwells.

The session for "An Invitation to Cry" started at 7pm and would last approximately three hours. Mike Appel was on his Stratocaster; Everett Jacobs on bass; Alan Gordon on drums; and Rod Bristow on lead vocal and Farfisa organ.

"Artie had the nuts and bolts of recording down," says Appel. All vocals were recorded in the open room with Neumann mics but without isolation booths. Background harmony vocals featured Appel, Gordon, and Bristow. "My harmony voice was the loudest of the three of us," says Appel. Gobos (portable walls), an industry standard, were used to separate instruments and prevent sound leakage between microphones.

The four-track recording included a live instrumental backing track—guitar, bass, organ, drum; a lead vocal track; background vocals/harmony; and lead guitar overdubs. The background vocals and guitar received the heaviest filtering through the EMT reverb.

After a short A minor guitar lead at the 17th fret, the song opened with distorted A5 chords on the 5th and 6th strings, which Mike Appel said was not accomplished with a Maestro Fuzz-Tone, the commercially available fuzz that Keith Richards used on "Satisfaction." "That deep guitar sound in the intro and elsewhere was just accomplished by playing low notes on the guitar and running those low notes through the EMT," says Appel.

The song was a 3/4 waltz, and Appel claims that "Artie Polhemus wanted me to do this kind of waltz-muted guitar line, but it didn't hit me as rock 'n' roll and I said I didn't feel it." On his approach to the song, Appel says, "My guitar solo was based somewhat on Keith Richard's solo from 'Heart of Stone' and the mood of that song."

The session ended before midnight with minimal takes, and it accomplished much more than a demo: they had a completed master on their hand; a finished product. And in the next few days, Polhemus would finalize the mix. "Our plan was to move quick. Get it to Columbia by the end of the week," says Wyld.

"We Didn't Have a Band!" — Bob Wyld

A week after the recording of "An Invitation to Cry," Bob Wyld played an acetate of the song at an evening meeting in Longhair's office with Alan Gordon, Mike Appel, Everett Jacobs, and Rod Bristow. Everybody agreed it was a great recording. Longhair was ready to take the master to Columbia. But first, they wanted to sign contracts with the band.

Garry Bonner:
(Photo: Sandy Speiser)



Wyld and Polhemus proposed a complete package of services with standard industry compensation for Longhair Productions: (1) production of all recordings (5% of wholesale sales—to be shared 50% with the band); (2) publishing of original material through Longhair's Ananga Ranga Music; and (3) personal management of the band (15%)—a service Longhair emphasized as essential for cultivating and marketing the artistic vision of the band and protecting their interests in all transactions. Bookings would be handled by an outside agency for a standard 10% of performance fees.

The individual services and the combined percentages of the package required a major commitment from the members of the band. This was a serious business proposition, with serious obligations.

Alan Gordon was on board. "An Invitation to Cry" was his song and he had a head full of songs he wanted to record. But Alan was alone: one by one, the other three members unexpectedly balked, refusing to commit to a contract.

Mike Appel was faced with the threat of being drafted in the Vietnam War. "I had passed my physical and was about to be hauled off to the Army," says Appel. "My sister told me there was a reserve unit out in Huntington, Long Island—a United States Marine Reserve Unit—that was looking for some new recruits. I ended up opting for the Marines because it was only for six months, followed by monthly meetings, but I would not be going to Nam."

The contract demands forced Everett Jacobs to confront the reality of his career goals: he simply did not want to pursue a career in rock and roll. He played bass with the Chex through the summer, but he had just returned to college for the fall semester. "Everett Jacobs was not meant for the entertainment business and he left for the straight world," says Appel.

Rod Bristow did not want to get locked into singing for a hard-rocking band doing the kind of music exemplified by "An Invitation to Cry." He wanted to pursue a solo career that was an

"The days of anonymous 45s were over ... The record labels wanted bands with a defined image and identifiable personalities they could promote along with the songs." - Bob Wyld

extension of his roots in doo-wop, soul, and R&B. He related to Stax and Motown—not the British Invasion, or folk-rock, or underground rock.

The recording session for "An Invitation to Cry" was chalked up to an evening of great music for Appel, Jacobs, and Bristow—and they had no problem leaving it behind and walking away.

Longhair Productions had a powerful song they believed could generate world-wide attention, but they didn't have a band. All they had was a drummer. "The days of anonymous 45s were over," says Wyld. "The British Invasion set a new standard for marketing and promotion. The record labels wanted bands with a defined image and identifiable personalities they could promote along with the songs."

Before the master of "An Invitation to Cry" could be shipped to Columbia or any other label, they at least had to replace Rod Bristow's vocal. "The lead vocal is the distinctive sound and personality of a recording," says Wyld. "With Rod gone and his vocal still on the master, any deal would be problematic."

Wyld called Wayne Storm, inviting him to the office to hear "An Invitation to Cry." Storm loved it, and Wyld asked for his help finding a new singer. Storm said he was at the World's Fair the previous weekend and saw a good-looking, soulful singer with a Top 40 band at one of the pavilions. He pulled a piece of paper from his wallet with the singer's phone number. His name was Garry Bonner.

A Voice of Hard-Rocking, Blue-Eyed Soul

Garry Bonner ... romantic, mysterious, and soulful; his long black hair a rockin' royal crown of perfection.

Garry Bonner was born on Staten Island, New York, in 1943. He grew up in Riverdale, the bucolic section of the Bronx along the banks of the Hudson River north of the Harlem River, and attended nearby DeWitt Clinton, an all-boys high school on Mosholu Highway in the Bronx. It was the largest high school in New York with 7,000 students. Noteworthy alumni included Burt Lancaster, Neil Simon, Sugar Ray Robinson, Stan Lee, James Baldwin, and hundreds more. In the early '60s, Clinton was also the school of such rock luminaries as Kiss guitarist Ace Frehley and the Blues Magoos' Ralph Scala, Ronnie Gilbert, and Emil "Peppy"

Theilhelm (Castro).

Bonner picked up guitar in his teens but excelled with his deep, soulful voice. In 1956, at the age of 13, he performed with Lewis Lymon (Frankie's younger brother) and the Harlem-based Teenchords at the 2,500-seat Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan's Washington Heights.

In 1962, Bonner joined the New York City version of the Squires, singing lead and second tenor with Peter Baralt (lead/first tenor), Bob Friedman (bass/baritone), and Arnie Magrner (baritone). The Squires were discovered at Greenwich Village's Cafe Wha? and within two days signed contracts and recorded a single, "So Many Tears Ago," for the Gee label. The session also featured renowned singer/promoter Richard Barrett on maracas, with Arlene Smith of the Chantels adding vocals.

In 1964, the Squires won "Amateur Night at the Apollo"—a tradition at the Harlem landmark since 1934—with a rendition of Billy Ward & the Dominoes' 1957 hit, "Stardust." Responding to the music industry's demand for more product, the Squires cut cover records of the Beatles, the Four Seasons, and other top groups for the Twin Hits label. For each recording, the individual members were paid \$5.

With the end of the Squires in early 1965, Garry Bonner moved on, growing his hair and dedicating his voice to hard-rocking, blue-eyed soul.

Bob Wyld called Garry Bonner and gave him a rapid-fire pitch on the golden opportunity that required immediate action. Bonner liked what he heard, and a meeting was set for the following day at Longhair's office.

"Sing us a few bars," said Wyld. Bonner sat quietly in the adjacent piano room of Archie Levington's office with Wyld, Polhemus, and Alan Gordon, then sang those few bars.

"We weren't sure exactly what song he was singing," says Wyld, "but it didn't matter. We were all blown away."

Wyld played "An Invitation to Cry." Bonner felt it, said he could relate, and belted out a few of the song's phrases with mournful, haunting emotion, a strong contrast to Rod Bristow's more joyful, spirited delivery. Bonner was the answer ... and he wanted in. After some coaching from Gordon on the nuances of the song, Bonner took an acetate and a lyric sheet home to prepare to record a vocal track in the next few days.

It took less than an hour at Regent Sound for Bonner to get the vocal down. The new track was mixed and a new master was ready for Columbia.

The Columbia Records Group move to "Black Rock," the new CBS headquarters, had reached fever pitch by late August 1965. Recording Studio A and fragments of the A&R department still operated out of 799 7th Avenue, and that's where Bob Wyld dropped off an acetate for "An Invitation to Cry." They anticipated an immediate, excited response, but they didn't hear a word for days. So they followed-up, repeatedly, until they got a response, but it wasn't what they wanted to hear: "We're going



The Ivy Three, 1960.
L to R: Artie Kaye, Charles Koppelman, Don Rubin.

tures in 1963, Koppelman was promoted to director of the new Screen Gems/Columbia Music.

In September 1964, the pair joined the publishing wing of Morris Levy's Roulette Records as vice presidents, consolidating Roulette's publishing holdings under Big 7 Music, and signing many young songwriters, including Chip Taylor, who would soon achieve fame for the Troggs' "Wild Thing" and Merrilee Rush's "Angel of the Morning." It was while cutting demos for Roulette at Dick Charles Recording that Koppelman and Rubin met the studio's engineer, Art Polhemus.

In April 1965, after seven months with Big 7, Koppelman borrowed \$80,000 from his uncle Leon Koppelman to form

Koppelman-Rubin Associates with Don Rubin. They opened offices at 1650 Broadway, where they worked in matching blue executive chairs at opposite ends of a crescent shaped, democluttered desk. They were acutely aware that the music industry's major labels were unable to maintain active artist and repertoire staff to respond to the changing tastes in new music—and they inspired confidence in the music industry's corporate ranks with their polished, conservative appearance: fitted dark suits and ties with neatly trimmed hair.

to pass." No details, no explanation. The same department that snapped up Regina and Steve Karliski and Mimi Roman without hesitation. But what was happening to the Regina and Karliski Columbia singles? Nothing. They hadn't made a scratch in the *Billboard* Hot 100 in the past 30 days.

Wyld and Polhemus considered their next move. They knew a lot of labels—there were even a half-dozen floating in the office they shared with Archie Levington. But they weren't the caliber of Columbia.

"Why don't we send it to Charlie and Don?" said Polhemus.

Chapter 2: KOPPELMAN-RUBIN ASSOCIATES, INC.

Charlie and Don were Charles Koppelman and Don Rubin. In 1965, they were both 25 years old, and their six-month-old music publishing, production, and management partnership had commitments to produce over 50 records.

They met in 1959 at Long Island's Adelphi University and formed a vocal trio, the Ivy Three, with Artie Kaye. In 1960, the group had a Top 10 hit on the Shell label with the novelty recording "Yogi," co-written by Koppelman and based on cartoon character Yogi Bear. Their three follow-up Shell singles, "Alone in the Chapel," "Bagoo," and "Nine Out of Ten," all failed to chart.

In 1961, Koppelman and Rubin joined Don Kirschner's Aldon Music at the Brill Building as songwriters, working in the company of Carole King, Neil Sedaka, and many other top writers. When Aldon Music sold to Columbia Pic-

ture in 1963, Koppelman was promoted to director of the new Screen Gems/Columbia Music. In September 1964, the pair joined the publishing wing of Morris Levy's Roulette Records as vice presidents, consolidating Roulette's publishing holdings under Big 7 Music, and signing many young songwriters, including Chip Taylor, who would soon achieve fame for the Troggs' "Wild Thing" and Merrilee Rush's "Angel of the Morning." It was while cutting demos for Roulette at Dick Charles Recording that Koppelman and Rubin met the studio's engineer, Art Polhemus.

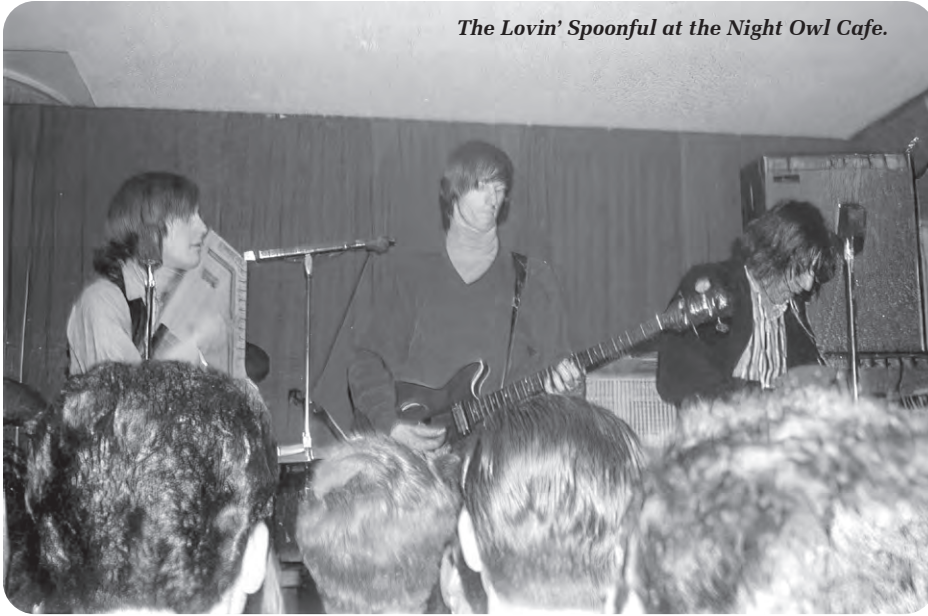
In April 1965, after seven months with Big 7, Koppelman borrowed \$80,000 from his uncle Leon Koppelman to form Koppelman-Rubin Associates with Don Rubin. They opened offices at 1650 Broadway, where they worked in matching blue executive chairs at opposite ends of a crescent shaped, democluttered desk. They were acutely aware that the music industry's major labels were unable to maintain active artist and repertoire staff to respond to the changing tastes in new music—and they inspired confidence in the music industry's corporate ranks with their polished, conservative appearance: fitted dark suits and ties with neatly trimmed hair. The K-R mission was to deliver product to the majors, and benefit from their substantial advertising, publicity, sales, and promotion budgets. K-R would hire in-house staff for their publishing (Chardon Music) and management divisions, while acquiring the recorded product primarily through outside producers. Within three months of their formation, Koppelman-Rubin announced major expansion programs and hired four regional promotion executives to work on the firm's first major recording: "Do You Believe in Magic?" by the Lovin' Spoonful on the Kama-Sutra label for distribution through MGM Records—a recording presented to them by Erik Jacobsen.

Eric Jacobsen and the Lovin' Spoonful

Erik Jacobsen was the force that launched the Lovin' Spoonful and created the foundation for the Magicians' ultimate alignment with Koppelman and Rubin.

Jacobsen was born in Chicago on May 19, 1940, and in 1962 formed the folk and bluegrass band Knob Lick Upper 10,000 while in Oberlin College in Ohio. They were discovered performing at the Bitter End by Albert Grossman, manager of Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul and Mary, who signed them and secured a record-

The Lovin' Spoonful at the Night Owl Cafe.



ing contract with Mercury Records for two albums in 1962 and 1963. But with 1964's British Invasion, Jacobsen abandoned bluegrass and moved into producing records with artists who combined folk with electric rock. In early 1965, while living on MacDougal Street across from the Kettle of Fish, Jacobsen befriended folk guitarist and Village native John Sebastian, whose band the Lovin' Spoonful was performing at the Night Owl Cafe. Jacobsen believed in the band and their commercial potential, and for good reason:

The Lovin' Spoonful were not ordinary. They performed folk, rock, blues, and jug band and gave a unique label to their hybrid sound: "good time music"—which became the media's hook for describing this new and exciting band. Their appeal was enhanced by a strong visual image: long hair covering their foreheads and ears; vests worn over broad-striped t-shirts and turtlenecks; wide-wale corduroy pants and jackets; pointed-toe boots with heels; and occasional floppy hats. And then there were John Sebastian's small, round, antique wire-framed eyeglasses—a norm-shaking, even eccentric old man look from decades past—a radical departure from the mainstream's bold, black horned-rim frames worn by the few musicians who had to wear glasses (e.g. Manfred Mann, Freddie & the Dreamers, and, in rare photos, John Lennon). And Sebastian took eccentricity a step further: in lieu of a guitar, he often played an autoharp—a grade school music class staple; such an odd, unconventional instrument for a rock and roll band; and he clutched it close to his chest, embracing it organically, effortlessly strumming out chords without even looking at what he was playing.

Sebastian was complemented by the zany, unpredictable Zal Yanovsky, a guitarist who engaged his entire body from head to toe in an animated attack on a Guild Thunderbird—an eye-catching, amoeba-shaped guitar few people had ever seen. Zal's unbridled, outstretched smile was constant and sat below a mop of bouncy black hair that partially covered his eyes. He looked like he might erupt into laughter at any moment—and he often did. Add

long and lanky Steve Boone on bass and matinee idol-looking Joe Butler on drums, and the Lovin' Spoonful had breakthrough visuals to add to John Sebastian's magic formula for Top 10 hits.

John Sebastian wrote "Do You Believe in Magic" during band rehearsals in the damp basement of the Albert Hotel in the Village on 23 East 10th Street where the band lived. The Albert was a notoriously noisy, dilapidated residence from the 1880s that offered cheap, transient housing for numerous struggling bands in the '60s: the Blues Magoos, the Butterfield Blues Band, the Mamas & the Papas, the Mothers of Invention, Lothar & the Hand People, Tim Buckley, the Gurus, Clear Light (with seven members living in two rooms), and Moby Grape, to name just a few.

Jacobsen loved "Do You Believe in Magic" so much he agreed to finance a demo session at Bell Sound Studios on W 54th Street. The first person to hear the demo was Jac Holzman, who founded Electra Records in 1959. He loved it and agreed to sign the band and release the demo as is—no overdubs. But Jacobsen and the band resisted: though Butterfield was signed to Electra, the label's stigma was folk—Judy Collins, Tom Rush, Phil Ochs—not rock and roll that appealed to Top 40 DJs.

While contemplating their decision, the Spoonful played the Cafe Bizarre in early '65 before taking up residency at the Night Owl Cafe, which on one fateful evening was visited by Charles Koppelman and Don Rubin. Like many other producers, including Phil Spector, they loved the Spoonful and believed "Do You Believe in Magic" could be a hit. With overwhelming hype and a conviction that they had the resources to secure airplay and stimulate record sales, Koppelman-Rubin signed the Lovin' Spoonful to a multifaceted contract. Jacobsen would remain the band's producer, and Kama Sutra would release "Do You Believe in Magic." But the band did not have a contract with Kama Sutra: Koppelman-Rubin did.

Koppelman-Rubin's contract with the Lovin' Spoonful was becoming standard executive

practice in the 1960's music business—a notable precedent being Albert Grossman and his comprehensive agreements with Bob Dylan—a 25% management commission and 50% of Dylan's publishing.

On July 24, a small two-column color ad appeared on the cover of *Billboard* next to the masthead with a photo (taken at the Night Owl) of the stripe-shirted Lovin' Spoonful with balloons, Zal's delirious smile in the foreground. Despite Erik Jacobsen's relevance to the band's discovery and production, the ad caption read, "The Lovin' Spoonful: Kama-Sutra Records is proud to present to the music industry the most exciting discovery of talent in the past 10 years. In their new release, 'Do You Believe in Magic,' Kama-Sutra 201, they have captured the true excitement of their sound. Discovered and produced by Koppelman & Rubin Associates."

"Do You Believe in Magic" was released on August 5 and a full-page ad appeared in the August 14 issue of *Billboard*. One week later, on August 21, the single entered the *Billboard* Hot 100 at #96. By the time Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus brought their master for "An Invitation to Cry" to Koppelman and Rubin in late September, "Do You Believe in Magic" was in the top 20, and would peak on October 16 at #9.

Koppelman-Rubin's contract with the Lovin' Spoonful was a blueprint, and it was ready for expansion with the band formerly known as Tex & the Chex.

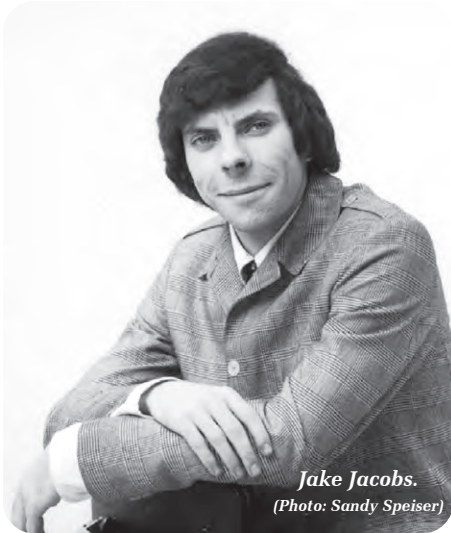
The Meeting with Charlie and Don

Art Polhemus made the call to Charlie Koppelman and told him they produced a master with strong hit potential, and he felt they could all make a deal. He confided they had been turned down by Columbia, but it had not been submitted to any other labels or prospects.

Within the week, Wyld and Polhemus attended a meeting at Koppelman-Rubin's office at 1650 Broadway with Charles Koppelman, Don Rubin, and two young producers in the K-R camp: Joe Wissert and Gary Klein (also the writer of Marcie Blane's 1962's hit, "Bobby's Girl"). Two secretaries took notes.

The first playing of "An Invitation to Cry" raised eyebrows. Everyone in the room was positive, intrigued. They played it again, and again. "After about the fifth spin, Charlie spoke for the team," says Wyld. "They were confident they could sell it to a label and offered to buy the master from us." K-R offered to pay Longhair Productions a fee for costs incurred in the production of the master with a 50% share of producer royalties on future sales. Longhair was fine with the deal and informed Koppelman they had Alan Gordon and Garry Bonner committed to signing Longhair's full-service production, publishing, and management contract, and their hiring of a new guitarist and bassist to replace Appel and Jacobs would be contingent on those terms.

"Koppelman smiled," says Wyld, "and advised us to move quickly on the hiring and be ready to record a B-side."



Jake Jacobs.
(Photo: Sandy Speiser)

"We Ran an Ad in the Village Voice"

Jake Jacobs ... an eccentric, electric incarnation of Our Gang's Butch ... dark, suspicious eyes, bulbous nose ... a newsboy cap that forced a black, hairy thatch of hair down and out.

Though Garry Bonner played guitar, his playing was rudimentary—basic chords only—and he was not comfortable playing the guitar while singing. Wyld proposed that Bonner fill the slot on bass, but Bonner was insecure about his ability to play bass. Wyld emphasized that all he was going to have to do is follow the guitar's chord progressions with single notes. "I told him if it doesn't work, we'll figure something else out," says Wyld. Bonner agreed, and went to 48th Street to shop for a bass and amp.

Two guitar players were needed to complete the band, but there were no immediate contacts in Longhair's circle, and there wasn't time to scout the clubs and coffeehouses to find them. "So we ran an ad in the Village Voice," says Wyld. "Guitarist Wanted."

Wyld, Polhemus, Gordon, and Bonner were all present at Longhair's office at 7pm for the audition of the first guitarist to answer the ad. The door opened, and an intriguing five-foot six-inch character stepped in and stood in the doorway. His wide, almost suspicious eyes panned the room, and everybody just stared at him, transfixed. His nose was bulbous and his lips were full, and he had an unruly thatch of black hair topped with a tweed newsboy cap. "He was a hardcore longhair," says Wyld, "the real thing." He had a guitar strapped to his side, pushed toward his back—a mid '50s Fender Esquire covered with hand-painted flowers—an unusual sight for mid '65. Before this character could even shut the door behind him, Alan Gordon yelled out in a high-pitched squeal, "He's in!" Everybody else sat quiet in agreement.

The guitarist introduced himself as Allan Jacobs. "But I told them everybody calls me Jake," says Jacobs. He removed his guitar—which he admitted to painting because he did a lot of art—and plugged it into the office's amplifier. He played a chord progression that combined fingerpicking with folk, blues, and R&B riffs.

Everyone was impressed. "His licks were tasteful and fluid, and he played with confidence" says Wyld.

Wyld played the "An Invitation to Cry" acetate. "I loved the song," says Jacobs, "and I told them I could handle the lead and I even played the double-stops in the opening for them."

Jake Jacobs was 22 years old at the time. He was born on December 3, 1942, in Brooklyn and raised in Mount Vernon, just north of the Bronx in New York's Westchester County. "I discovered my love of music in 1956 when I heard 'Why Do Fools Fall in Love?' by Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers on the radio," says Jacobs. He was 13, and his father bought him a cheap acoustic guitar and his neighbor, Guido Guitello, gave him lessons. "Guido put three chords into my head," says Jacobs. "E, A, and B7."

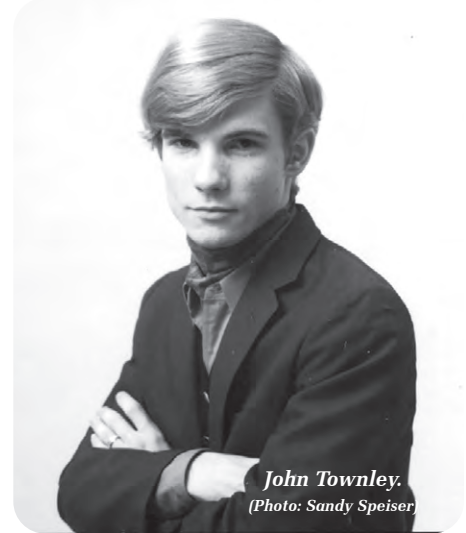
Jacobs joined vocal groups in Junior High School and High School, and started playing Woody Guthrie songs on his guitar. His early musical influences ranged from fifties pop and R&B—Nolan Strong & the Diablos, the Crows, Dion & the Belmonts, the Mystics, the Passions—to folk and blues artists as diverse as the Weavers, the Kingston Trio, Lead Belly, and the Reverend Gary Davis, from whom Jacobs took three guitar lessons. "Davis had a style like nobody," says Jacobs. "He was so funky and flashy. And he didn't mind making a mistake. He made it work for him. That was a big thing I learned from him."

In 1962, Jacobs dropped out of Rider University in New Jersey, moved to Greenwich Village, and attended the School of Visual Arts on East 23rd Street, where he met art director and folksinger-guitarist Andrea "Bunky" Skinner. She became his girlfriend and occasional partner in a folk duo that would eventually evolve into Bunky & Jake.

Prior to his audition, Jacobs was playing the coffeehouse circuit in Greenwich Village, doing 20-minute sets at the Four Winds, the Cafe Bizarre, the Cafe Wha?, and the Cafe Rafio. He bumped shoulders with all of the upcoming folk artists on the scene: Tim Hardin, Peter Tork, Fred Neil, Richie Havens, Stephen Stills. But money was tight. His only source of income was tips dropped into bread baskets that were passed from table to table in the coffeehouses. Though he had promising gigs with Mike Settle (who took off to Los Angeles to join the New Christy Minstrels) and Jim Tyler (who played banjo and mandolin in the Village ragtime ensemble, Max Morath's Original Rag Quartet), nothing panned out.

It was Jacobs' friendship with "Lefty" Baker that made the audition with Longhair possible. Baker was a member of the Bitter End Singers, a folk act of three men and three women being produced by Fred Weintraub, the owner of the Bitter End. Baker wasn't looking for a job—the Singers had just released their third Mercury album, "Through Our Eyes." Baker was set, but he knew Jacobs could use a break.

Wyld confirmed with Jacobs that he was "in," and mentioned they needed to audition another guitarist to complete the band. "I told them I could probably find them somebody in the next day or two," says Jacobs.



John Townley.
(Photo: Sandy Speiser)

The Proteg  of Reverend Gary Davis

John Townley ... an Ivy League angel, fallen, to the underground, where forbidden long bangs pound his face and conceal a mystic eye.

John Townley did not know Jake Jacobs, but he often saw him performing at the coffeehouses in the Village in 1965, and they accompanied many of the same artists, including David Cohen (Blue) and Peter Tork. "Jake was a recognizable face with his trademark newsboy cap, but he was a mystery," says Townley.

The day after Jacobs' audition with Longhair Productions, Townley was on 3rd Street across from the Night Owl carrying a guitar case, walking east from Ed Simon's Four Winds Cafe (133 W 3rd), a small, narrow coffeehouse wedged between the full sidewalk canopies of the Village Purple Onion (135 W. 3rd), an Italian restaurant, and the Heat Wave (131 W 3rd), a burlesque and soon-to-be-topless club.

Townley's main gig that August was playing electric guitar at the Four Winds with the Psychedelic Rangers, a trio with Jay Ungar on electric fiddle and Gypsy Wayne on "paint can" bass—doing old time music with maximum natural distortion. They played for tips (passed bread baskets) and to attract customers, they would often take their act onto the sidewalk and join the club's barker with the Beatle haircut.

Townley walked past the Zig Zag Cafe at 123 W 3rd, a coffeehouse he spent a month earlier in the year accompanying Dylan-inspired singer-guitarist David Cohen (to be renamed David Blue at the encouragement of Eric Andersen). The Zig Zag was owned by Betty Smyth (whose eight-year-old daughter, future singer-songwriter Patty Smyth, was often at the club into the night). "It was cramped, dark, and dirty," says Townley, "a 10-foot wide, railroad-style storefront." The five-story, 1900 building had 21 apartments and two street-level retail spaces.

The Zig Zag was not a popular Cafe and offered little more than overpriced coffee drinks. (The Quick Snack Bar next door offered Italian sausages, frankfurters, and hamburgers.)

Cohen's gimmick for getting customers into the Cafe was notorious: he stood in the doorway with a lighted stick of fire that he would swallow. "It was a true circus act, and David had it down, and it worked," says Townley.

It is at the Zig Zag that Cohen encouraged Townley to transition from acoustic to electric guitar. "It's 1965. Where's your electric guitar?" Cohen asked Townley. "David knew Dylan," says Townley, "and he knew Dylan's secret plan for Newport that summer—that he would go electric."

Jake Jacobs was across the street from the Zig Zag, walking west from the Night Owl Cafe. He saw Townley, waved, and ran up to him. Jacobs was well aware of Townley's reputation as a versatile guitarist who studied with the legendary bluesman Reverend Gary Davis. Townley's command of musical styles was extensive: folk (Appalachian, Irish, and English); blues (East Coast and Delta); country; ragtime; and gospel. At most of his coffeehouse gigs, Townley played a Guild F-40 Jumbo acoustic with a natural finish and a huge 16-inch lower bout that overwhelmed the diminutive five-foot three-inch, 110-pounder.

Jacobs asked Townley if he was up for an audition with an electric band expected to sign with a big label. Townley was game and they walked to the phone booth in front of the Greenwich Village Pharmacy at the corner of MacDougal and 3rd next door to the Night Owl. Jacobs made a call, and the audition was on. They walked past the Four Winds to the W. 4th Street/Washington Square subway station next to the playground on the corner of 6th Avenue. They took the A train to 59th Street and walked two blocks to meet Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus.

John Townley was 20 years old and living in the East Village with a wife and a six-month-old daughter. Born August 17, 1945, in Washington, DC, he spent his first two years in Fairfax, Virginia. In 1948, his parents bought a home in Rancho Santa Fe, California, where he became friends with Chris Hillman, the future bass player of the Byrds. Three years later, in 1951, his parents purchased a 56-foot sailboat in Port Lavaca, Texas. For the next two years, Townley read avidly as the family cruised the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean, and the entire East Coast before docking at Dinner Key Marina in Coconut Grove, Florida.

An extremely erudite child despite missing two years of formal education, Townley started school in third grade and skipped fifth grade completely. At age eight, he learned piano (Chopin, Mozart), but it was an experience he calls "a complete disaster." At nine, he found his calling on guitar, taking lessons from renowned jazz guitarist Harry Volpe at Coral Gables Music Store (previous Volpe students included Al Caiola, Tony Mottola, and Joe Pass).

Townley discovered his musical direction in 1960 when he saw the Reverend Gary Davis perform at the Second Fret club in Philadelphia—the same Davis who inspired Jake Jacobs. "My jaw dropped," says Townley. "I was entranced. His guitar played itself." Davis was born in 1896 and was renowned as one of the



The Magicians, New York City, September 1965.

L to R: John Townley, Alan Gordon, Jake Jacobs, Garry Bonner. (Photo: Henry Parker)

most skilled gospel and blues guitarists despite limited recordings. Davis was living in New York, and Townley was determined to study with him.

Townley moved to New York in March 1963 and checked into the Earle Hotel (a companion to the Hotel Albert) at 143 Waverly Place in the Village. A 1902 hotel-turned-flophouse for musicians, artists, and writers, it was Dylan's first New York residence in 1961. Townley was immediately robbed of a tape recorder and his two acoustic guitars, a Gibson J-200 and an Epiphone 12-string. He left the Earle and moved throughout the Village—from Sullivan Street to St Marks Place—with a variety of roommates that included folksinger Peter La Farge.

Reverend Gary Davis was giving guitar lessons in his South Bronx apartment for \$5, and for the next year Townley became a regular student. "He was my total influence, even when not playing his style," says Townley.

Though rooted in New York, Townley spent 1964 moving around Washington, DC, Miami, and up and down the California coast, where his roommates included Dino Valenti, Barry Hansen (Dr Demento), and David Crosby, who was living aboard the Sausalito ferry-turned-café Charles Van Damme.

In October 1964, Townley married Gilma Ramirez (daughter of Gilberto Ramirez, the controller of Puerto Rico). In 1965, they returned to New York, and Townley revisited the Village's club circuit—the Cafe Wha?, the Cafe Rrafio, the Gaslight Cafe—playing solo; as a duo

with Peter Tork or Jeff Gerber; and sharing bills with Fred Neil, Vince Martin, and the Holy Modal Rounders, to name a few.

The offices of Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus were a wondrous contrast to the depressed settings of the Four Winds and the Zig Zag. Townley took the guitar out of its case: it was a 1958 Gibson Les Paul Gold Top that previously belonged to John Sebastian. "I bought it at Manny's for \$90 right after John traded it in," says Townley.

Townley plugged into the office's amp and broke out a series of thirds and sixths and arpeggios with flashes of ragtime. Jacobs said he could work with his sound and they would be great together doing double leads. Wyld was impressed: "John was music. He could play Bach and 'Rock Around the Clock.' He was the most sophisticated of the group, and he would add a charm and competitive edge to the Magicians." Wyld offered Townley a position in the band, and Townley accepted: "I liked them, Bob and Art. They were both enthusiastic. Positive. Sincere. They would be fun to work with."

Koppelman-Rubin Make the Sale

A week later, Charlie Koppelman called Bob Wyld to inform him that he sold the master of "An Invitation to Cry" to Columbia Records—and to the same representatives who turned down Wyld and Polhemus just a few



The Magicians, September 1965.
L to R: Garry Bonner, John Townley,
Alan Gordon, Jake Jacobs,

(Photo: Henry Parker)

weeks before. Capitalizing on the escalating popularity of “Do You Believe in Magic,” Koppelman named the band the Magicians.

Koppelman scheduled a 1:00pm meeting at the K-R offices for the following week: Longhair Productions and the band members would sign contracts with K-R for “An Invitation to Cry” and future recordings with Columbia. Wyld informed Koppelman of the hiring of Jacobs and Townley to complete the band. Koppelman asked Wyld to forward details on them and plan to record a B-side.

Wyld and Polhemus arranged to meet the band outside 1650 Broadway at 12:45pm. They would all go in together for the 1:00 meeting. Though Longhair Productions did not have contracts with any of the band members for production, management, or publishing, they planned to take legal steps to sign them immediately upon finalizing the recording contract with Koppelman-Rubin.

Wyld and Polhemus arrived early at 1650 Broadway for the meeting and at 12:45 they were still standing alone. Another five, ten, then fifteen minutes passed. It was now 1:00pm, and not a single band member showed up. They risked being late to the meeting and waited another five minutes. Nobody showed. They got in the elevator and looked at each other, and they knew their worst suspicion was about to come true: when they walked into the K-R offices, the four band members were already in the meeting. “We knew what was going on, but we had to keep our cool,” says Wyld. “Somehow keep a smile on our faces.”

Charlie Koppelman was direct: he praised Wyld and Polhemus for their production expertise, but he emphasized that it was Koppelman-Rubin who secured the contract with Columbia, and they were the businessmen, the executives with the connections, and they were making it their responsibility to ensure the band’s success—the same success they were making a reality for the Lovin’ Spoonful.

The band members had arrived at the meeting two hours earlier and had agreed to contracts with Koppelman-Rubin for recording, publishing, and management. But K-R did want Wyld and Polhemus to remain integral to the package and offered the following concessions: Longhair Productions would produce all future recordings of the band and receive 50% of the producer’s royalties; and Longhair would also receive one-third of the band’s management

commission in a new K-R company, Troika Management. Koppelman-Rubin, however, would receive 100% of all publishing under their Chardon Music.

Wyld and Polhemus agreed to the terms and left the meeting. The band remained to finish signing. “We were had, especially being cut out completely on the publishing,” says Wyld. “But the truth is, Koppelman-Rubin were an up-start powerhouse, and we weren’t there yet. There was no reason to blow the whole deal and walk away with nothing. But Artie and I looked at each other and all we could say was ‘never again.’” Wyld and Polhemus would keep searching for new bands, new sounds, new opportunities; and there was a band playing the Night Owl they were really excited about: the Bloos Magoos.

Chapter 3:

“Rain Don’t Fall on Me No More”

A B-side for “An Invitation to Cry” was needed immediately, but the newly formed group had never rehearsed or played together, nor had they discussed what songs could comprise their repertoire. Since Townley and Jacobs had folk and blues in common, Townley proposed they record “my main folk stage number at the time,” the Blind Willie Johnson gospel-blues recording, “The Rain Don’t Fall on Me,” recorded in 1929 on Columbia Records. Townley’s arrangement was inspired by folk artist Geoff Muldaur, who recorded the song on his 1964 solo debut album, *Sleepy Man Blues*. (Muldaur was a founding member of the Jim Kweskin Jug Band, and husband of the Jug Band’s vocalist, Maria Muldaur, who released the hit single “Midnight at the Oasis” in 1973.)

Wyld and Polhemus approved “Rain Don’t Fall on Me No More” as a B-side and their office became a rehearsal space for the song with Townley and Jacobs on guitars and Gordon hitting drum sticks on furniture. Bonner was present, but the song would only feature Townley’s lead vocal.

Two days after the rehearsal, the band stepped into Regent Sound Studios to record a master. It took just 10 minutes to set up the amps and mics. The first track Polhemus recorded was Townley playing his Gold Top

Les Paul in open G tuning with heavy-gauge strings, adding “a different syncopated roll for each bar from top to bottom, alternating the thumb or first finger on the strong beat,” says Townley. Track two featured Townley’s vocal, and the third track was Gordon’s drums *sotto voce* with high-hat and snare. The guitar and drums were then mixed down to a single track to leave two open tracks.

Bonner wanted more time to get the bass down, so the next track featured Jacobs on bass, “playing to his own muse,” says Townley, who added that Jacobs’ track was “a basic blues pattern. He went up high at one point in a more guitar-like flourish that left the bottom unsupported.”

The final fourth track recorded Jacobs’ harmonica. The entire 2:24 recording took less than 90 minutes. Polhemus mixed the tracks and within days the final master was in Koppelman-Rubin’s hands to give to Columbia. It was a recording that Alan Gordon later cited as “the best-produced Magicians song.”

The Columbia Records Photo Studio

Columbia Records’ president Goddard Lieberson believed in the importance of photographic documentation of the artists signed to the label. In addition to images for record albums and 45rpm picture sleeves, Lieberson wanted Columbia to capture the essence of the artists’ lifestyles in context with cultural history. His Columbia Records Photo Studio in the company’s building at 799 7th Avenue was staffed by photographers Henry Parker, Sandy Speiser, and Don Hunstein—the big three responsible for every 1960s album cover image in the Columbia catalog, along with enduring images of artists in the studio and out in the streets.

Koppelman-Rubin pushed Columbia for every benefit available to the label’s promising artists, and aligned the Columbia Records Photo Studio with the Magicians, resulting in five photo sessions with Parker, Speiser, and Hunstein for the duration of the band’s career.

Before the band could even begin rehearsing, their first photo session was scheduled for the end of September 1965 with Henry Parker. His assignment: capture a commercial image of the group for upcoming ads, publicity, and promo materials for “An Invitation to Cry.” Parker’s photographs previously appeared on Columbia LPs by Bobby Vinton, Charles Lloyd, Aretha Franklin, Robert Goulet, Percy Faith, Marty Robbins, Oscar Brown Jr, and Simon & Garfunkel’s debut from October 1964, *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*.

The session took place during the day on the roof and in the stairwell of Columbia’s offices at 799 7th Avenue. Townley wore a red windbreaker, scarf, and Jim McGuinn granny sunglasses; Gordon wore a tweed sport coat



and red velour turtleneck; Bonner was bundled in a burgundy suede coat; and Jacobs had on a short, tan suede coat (that he and Bonner swapped for some shots).

The shoot generated 144 images: two rolls of 35mm b&w film and two rolls of 35mm color transparencies—the only professional color images shot of the original band, and they offer breathtaking views on the New York skyline and the vacuous stairwell, the studio's echo chamber, where Parker took over 30 shots with a trippy fisheye lens.

The Magicians Build a Repertoire

The Magicians needed to build a repertoire—starting with folk, rock, and blues standards before attempting to write original material, which Alan Gordon was enthusiastic about pursuing. But Townley's critique of the Magicians' attempts to create a repertoire exposed the inherent weakness of a band created through audition and contract: "We were four soloists with individual identities and individual tastes in music. Any suggestion from one would get vetoed by another, and it only took one."

For the next week, the band rehearsed in the evenings in the piano room at Longhair's offices. Alan Gordon moved in his drum kit; Townley moved in his Fender Twin Reverb; Jacobs moved in a 1950s brown tweed Gibson (likely a Les Paul GA-40); and Bonner brought in his recently purchased Danelectro Longhorn Bass and Ampeg B-15 amp.

They warmed up with simple 1-4-5 blues progressions before breaking down "An Invitation to Cry," which Columbia projected to release as a single in November. Gordon took control and coached everyone on the different parts of the song. Townley could not relate to the lead guitar part and turned it over to Jacobs. They got it down to sound like the recording, but without the single's subtle organ track.

"Who Do You Love," the 1956 Bo Diddley recording, was gaining popularity in the Vil-

lage with several acts—particularly the Danny Kalb Quartet—and all four Magicians gave the song a thumbs up. Bonner could unleash a raw, aggressive vocal; Townley and Jacobs could create rhythmic cacophony with their guitars; and Gordon could turn loose with a drum solo that could extend the song to up to three times its original length. "Great filler for a 45-minute set," says Townley.

Another song making the rounds in the Village was Howlin' Wolf's 1960 recording, "Back Door Man," written by Willie Dixon. The song complemented "Who Do You Love"—with strong vocal potential for Bonner.

They looked at R&B possibilities and Jacobs proposed "You're So Fine," the 1959 hit by the Falcons, an easy chord progression that could be improved with an arpeggiated guitar part. They gave it a try, and it worked.

There was further agreement on a haunting #2 pop hit from 1963, "Sally Go Round the Roses," by the all-girl Bronx group the Jaynetts. By replacing the original's tinkering piano motif with guitar, the verse featured two opposing guitar riffs, enhancing the song's hypnotic drone and opening the door for extended, improvised Eastern raga solos.

They had five songs and they had to add at least five more to fill out a 45-minute set: Charlie Koppelman was about to get them booked at the Night Owl Cafe.

The Night Owl Cafe

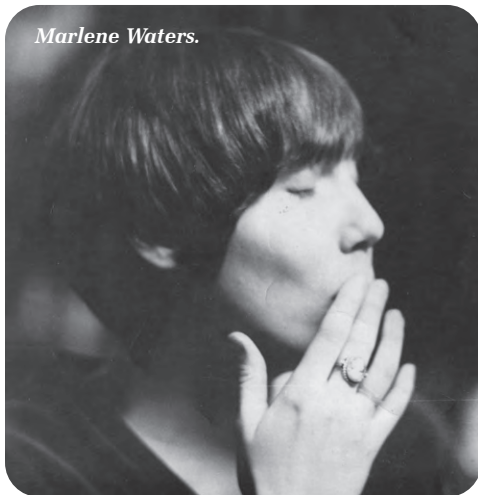
The Lovin' Spoonful, on the heels of the release of "Do You Believe in Magic," had not played the Night Owl since July, but Koppelman-Rubin arranged an unexpected booking on September 1 and 2 as a warm-up for their September 3 appearance at Murray the K's Labor Day Show at the Fox Theatre in Brooklyn. Marra was thrilled, and when Koppelman-Rubin called Marra to book the Magicians, there was no resistance, and not even a need for an audition. The group's first booking was in two weeks.

The Night Owl Cafe was one of the most popular clubs in Greenwich Village—the result of both its location at the entrance to MacDougal Street's commercial hub and the club's booking of breakout underground bands, promoted on its large canopy marquee. Located at 118 W 3rd Street, the Night Owl was housed on the ground floor of a five-story, 16-apartment tenement with Neo-Grec architecture and cast iron fire escapes dating to 1886. All accounts indicate the entire 118 W. 3rd building was owned by Marra's father, and in the 1950s, he operated a bar on the ground floor. In 1958, the bar was converted into a single commercial space with a wall of eight-foot glass panels and a glass entry door on the right offering full views of the interior. Marra took over the space when his father retired and created the Night Owl Cafe. Certificates of occupancy for a "restaurant, coffee shop, and cabaret" are dated July 15, 1960, and October 9, 1962, with accommodations for up to 74 people. Born in July 1934, Marra was a stocky Italian who stood just shy of six feet. He was known as much for his heart of gold as he was for his short-fused temper and caustic personality.

The building next door at 120 W 3rd was also a five-story tenement, but built in 1910 in the Queen Anne architectural style. The ground floor was converted into a commercial space in 1963 and featured pulp artist Chester Bloom's "Bloom Gallery and Portrait Studio"—his signage so prominent from the Night Owl's entrance it was almost intrinsic to the club's identity. Bloom was born in Canada in 1918 and moved into the building's apartment #7 right after serving in WWII.

In 1962, the Night Owl Cafe was a simple coffeehouse with solo folk acts and a reputation as a distributor of Keane lithographs—the popular "big eye" portraits created by Margaret Keane but credited to her husband, Walter. The evolution of the Night Owl as a music venue was solidified in 1964 with regular bookings of such burgeoning Village artists as Fred Neil, Vince Martin, Richie Havens, and Tim Hardin. The admission/cover charge was \$1. By 1965,

Marlene Waters.



Zal Yanovsky at the Night Owl with Jake's Fender Esquire.



Georgia Smith.

the club was predominantly electric.

All of the bookings at the Night Owl were the responsibility of Joe Marra. He had an excellent eye for talent and booked a lot of great bands, but he also made his share of mistakes. When the Lovin' Spoonful first played the Night Owl in February 1965, Joe Marra fired them. Steve Boone, in his book *Hotter Than a Match Head*, says that Marra told them, "you guys suck ... come back and see me when you figure out what the hell you're doing." He also auditioned Jimmy James (Hendrix), but turned him down, suggesting he take his noise to the Cafe Wha?

Marra's bookings featured three bands performing together for an entire week, with the rare booking of only two bands. The average pay in 1965 was \$10 per musician per night, escalating to \$15 in 1966. "With small apartments in the Village going for \$40 a month," says Night Owl employee Marlene Waters, "you could live pretty good on seventy dollars a week."

Marra promoted the club and its acts by displaying near life-size mounted posters of Night Owl bands in the front window. The Lovin' Spoonful, the Magicians, and the Blues Project were popular poster images in late '65, and Marra would juggle their position in the window to obscure visibility of the stage from the sidewalk. "If people wanted to see the show, Joe wanted them to pay the \$1 cover charge and come inside," says Waters.

Performance schedules and sets were based on the day of the week, the size of the crowd, and the popularity of the acts. Music would begin around 7:00pm and run until midnight. "Noise was a major problem with the apartments upstairs on the second floor," says Night Owl waitress Georgia Smith. "We were always getting complaints, especially if the music would run late."

Weeknights could have each band performing one set of 30 to 45 minutes, with 30-minute changeovers to the next act. Some nights called for two or more consecutive sets from each band before a changeover. With strong weekend crowds, all three acts would perform multiple full sets with Marra clearing the room and imposing a new \$1 cover charge for a new set.

To simplify setups and changeovers, bands would often leave amps, drums, even key-

boards on the Night Owl stage for the week, only taking home their instruments. There was also an etiquette to share amps and drum kits where possible, which not only simplified changeovers, but helped struggling musicians who didn't have a decent amp, or didn't even own an amp, which was common. It was also common for two guitarists to plug into a single amp (Jagged Edge guitarists Shelly Leder and Don Brown both plugged into Brown's Fender Super Reverb).

The staff at the Night Owl was consistent from '65 to '67 with the most prominent being Shelly Plimpton, a cute, innocent-looking, 18-year-old hostess whose long straight hair and smile graced the club six nights a week. In '67 she would be discovered at the Night Owl by James Rado and Gerry Ragni, two producers who were trying to cast "hippies" for a musical they wrote entitled *Hair*. They hired Plimpton for the lead role of Cissy, which opened on October 17, 1967, at Joseph Papp's Public Theater in the East Village before moving to Broadway in April of 1968. In 1970, Plimpton and actor Keith Carradine would father actress Martha Plimpton.

Marlene Waters started working for Joe Marra at the Night Owl in March of 1965 when she was only 16 years old. The slender, five-foot-ten-inch brunette with a trendy bowl haircut and blue-green eyes was doing every odd job Marra could throw at her. "It was Joe's way or the highway," says Waters, who made \$10 a night waitressing, making ice cream sodas, sweeping floors, assisting the hostess, and pulling letters for the canopy's marquee from alphabetical file folders. "The letters were all hand cut with scissors on index card stock," says Waters. Though Waters would date Garry Bonner and spend evenings at his mother's Riverdale apartment, she discovered her future husband when guitarist Jerry Yester played with the Modern Folk Quartet (MFQ) in late 1965.

Georgia Smith was a waitress at the Night Owl for four years from March of 1963 (when she turned 18) until early 1967. She lived on Staten Island and would take both the ferry and the subway to get to work. Marlene Waters recalls Smith as "a remarkable beauty ... the Brigitte Bardot of the Night Owl. She had

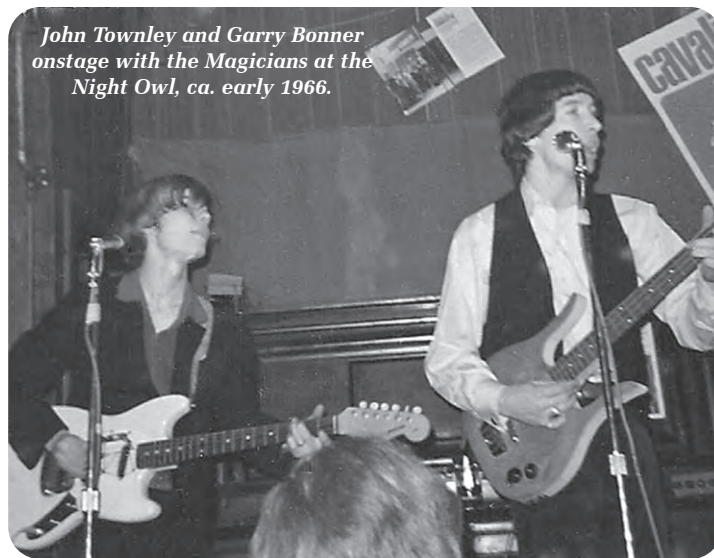
the blond hair, the pouty lips, and the sexy figure. And a great sense of humor." Smith speaks fondly of working for Joe Marra and remembers him mostly for his kindness and generosity: "He gave so many people work. He was quick to hire anyone who needed a job. And he fed so many people. He opened his kitchen to anyone who was hungry, especially the musicians. Joe would feed Richie Havens almost every night. Joe would also find people apartments and places to stay. He even found me my first apartment in the city on Charlton Street, just west of 6th Avenue."

When the Magicians took up residency at the Night Owl in late 1965, Smith began dating Jake Jacobs, and became his girlfriend—a relationship that would last into 1966 and even be showcased on WCBS-TV.

Other waitresses at the Night Owl from '65-'67 included Joanne Milazzo, Judy Chin, Carol Ardman, and Suzy O'Brian, whom Waters remembers as "petite, calm, and as beautiful as a Renaissance painting." She was married to Sean O'Brian, the manager of the Little Flowers—the Night Owl regulars whose harmonica player, Mark Gauche, would spend eight years with Georgia Smith and father their son in 1970.

As a performance space, the Night Owl was imperfect, if not crude: a railway car layout, the room was less than 20-feet wide and totaled 800 square feet with seating for 50-70 people. As you walked up to the glass door on the right side of the building, you were greeted by the doorman, a guy with missing teeth and dirty clothes known as "Jack the Rat" (real name Jack Camp). Bonner and Gordon would write a song about Camp entitled "Fancy Dancin' Man" that was recorded by Petula Clark.

Once inside, a counter (and Marra's "office") was on your immediate right, set back from the doorway where you were greeted by Marra and a hostess. Just past the counter was the open floor space occupied by a drum kit, followed by the stage (a mere six-inch riser) that extended no more than eight feet from the wall—enough to cram amps, three to five musicians, a Vox Continental or Farfisa Compact organ, and a rare drum kit if the act was small. The limited stage space was exacerbated by the placement of a virtually unused upright piano against the



John Townley and Garry Bonner onstage with the Magicians at the Night Owl, ca. early 1966.

wall. Along the wall just past the piano were the restrooms.

For seating, a long, narrow bench and counter—notoriously known as the “crotch watcher’s bench”—faced the stage, putting a customer’s line of vision straight at the musicians’ zippers. Another bench and counter lined the east wall opposite the stage, surrounded by small wood tables and chairs. Acoustics? The sound from every amp and the substandard in-house PA crashed into the facing wall—a distance of no more than 12 feet.

Like the majority of coffeehouses in the Village, the Night Owl Cafe did not serve liquor. Beverages included a variety of coffees and teas, soft drinks (Coke, root beer), milk, and egg creams. The Night Owl kitchen, located at the back of the room, was spacious with double sinks, a large grill, and a soda fountain station on one side. A door at the back of the kitchen led to the building’s small courtyard. The kitchen was the spotless domain of Pepe Lopez, a slim, flamboyant Cuban in his late 20s. Though Lopez was openly gay, he was also known to date women, including Georgia Smith’s girlfriend, Christine, a nurse who frequented the club. Lopez prepared close to ten sandwiches in the \$1 range: ham; salami; bacon, lettuce, and tomato; grilled cheese; tuna; and egg salad; and the Night Owl Burger—a popular perk with the musicians. There were nearly a dozen ice cream dishes, and baskets of potato chips and pretzels.

Joe Marra was open to permitting bands booked at the Night Owl to use the club during day hours to rehearse. Numerous bands took advantage of Marra’s policy, including the Magicians. The rehearsals even became a popular attraction for the club, attracting a strong daytime audience. They were so popular, in fact, that Marra began serving beverages and snacks during rehearsals and on occasion imposed a cover charge.

Night Owl rehearsals permitted the Magicians to tighten the band and expand their repertoire. They learned a few more songs quickly, mostly covers of R&B and Top 40 hits: Don Gardner & Dee Dee Ford 1962 R&B howler,

“I Need Your Loving”; the Stones’ “The Last Time”; the Miracles’ “That’s What Love is Made Of”; and even a Herman’s Hermits medley (“Mrs Brown, You’ve Got a Lovely Daughter,” “I’m Henry VIII, I Am,” “I’m into Something Good,” and “Can’t You Hear My Heart Beat”). Two David Blue songs that Townley and Jacobs both played with Blue were added to the mix: “About My Love” and “I’d Like to Know.”

But the inherent creative divisions within the band crippled their ability to add original material written by the Magicians. As Townley explains, “writing new songs took forever. Everybody had different ideas on what to write. I had strong ideas, which were left field to the others.” The same divisions applied to arrangements. “Song arranging was difficult,” says Townley. Despite the conflict, two originals by Jake Jacobs were approved for the band to learn: “Angel on the Corner” and “I’ll Tell the World (About You).”

The hiring of two lead guitarists created another conflict for the Magicians: who would play rhythm guitar? Neither Townley nor Jacobs wanted to play rhythm. “The customary separation of one guitarist as rhythm and the other as lead was already crumbling due to finger-style folk influences,” says Townley.

The Magicians often shared Night Owl rehearsal time with the Jagged Edge. Unlike most Night Owl bands who played original material, the Edge performed British Invasion hits and R&B songs by the Pretty Things (e.g. “Midnight to Six Man”), hand-picked by their manager, Mick Glasser, before the singles even reached the US market. Rehearsals resulted in frequent Baroque jams with John Townley and the Edge’s drummer. The two bands would share the bill through March of 1966, and often share amps and Garry Bonner’s Danelectro bass.

The Magicians’ name went on the Marquee at the end of September with the band performing modest 30-minute sets with up to a dozen songs, many still in rough form. Daytime rehearsals continued, and on October 2, 1965, they shared rehearsal time with the Danny Kalb Quartet with Kalb on lead guitar (“Danny

was a big influence on me,” says Jake Jacobs); Tommy Flanders on vocal (billing himself as Tom Jones); Steve Katz on rhythm guitar and harmonica; Andy Kulberg on bass and flute; and Roy Blumenfeld on drums. Five days later, on October 7, the Kalb Quartet premiered at the Night Owl, renamed the Blues Project, for a three-night stand. The opening act was the Magicians.

Other acts that Marra booked in the fall of 1965 to perform with the Magicians included the Bloos Magoos, the Strangers—a future product of Erik Jacobsen and Koppelman-Rubin featuring Peter Gallway (lead vocals, guitar), Eric Eisner (drums), Larry Hendel (bass), and Kenny Altman (lead guitar). “A Mary Wells sound with jazzy influences,” says Townley. Also frequenting the marquee were the Myddle Class (a regular attraction at Scott Muni’s Rolling Stone at 304 E 48th Street); the Gingermen; the Fugitives (featured on Columbia Records in 1965 and Mala/Kama Sutra in ’66); the Lost Sea Dreamers; the Little Flowers; the Raggamuffins, and the Rahgoos, a quartet headed by guitarist Peter Sando, who within a year would be signed to Koppelman-Rubin. “I was very impressed with the Magicians’ mix of folk and soul,” says Sando. “Garry’s vocals, the group’s harmony, Alan’s creative drumming, and Jake and John’s funky picking made for a unique stew of music that I had never heard before.”

Marra also frequently booked Tim Hardin, a Magicians favorite, but according to Georgia Smith, he was a frequent no-show. “Every time we booked Tim, we had Richie Havens on standby. He was Tim’s go-to replacement.”

In late 1965, the Modern Folk Quartet (MFQ) were on the Night Owl bill for a week with the Magicians and the Strangers. The band featured Jerry Yester, who would join the Lovin’ Spoonful in 1967 after Zal’s departure; Henry Diltz, who would become a preeminent rock music photographer; Chip Douglas, future bassist of the Turtles; Cyrus Faryar, future producer of the Firesign Theater; and Eddie Hoh, future drummer of *Super Session* with Mike Bloomfield, Al Kooper, and Stephen Stills. Yester recalls that during the engagement, drummer Hoh, known as “Fast Eddie from Chicago,” performed ten-

minute solos with DayGlo-painted drum sticks and black lights, walking around his kit and attacking it from every possible angle. "And then Alan Gordon decided he wanted to become part of Hoh's act," says Yester. "Alan would announce himself as 'Slow Ally from Brooklyn' and take over from Ho and run around the club waving his drum sticks, banging pictures on the wall, the cash register, the doors, and even the occasional customer."

The Magicians played the Night Owl the entire month of October, receiving enthusiastic response from customers and fellow musicians. In the Spoonful camp, Erik Jacobsen recently recalled, "I liked them." Even John Sebastian offered this recent comment: "Yeah, we loved the Magicians!"

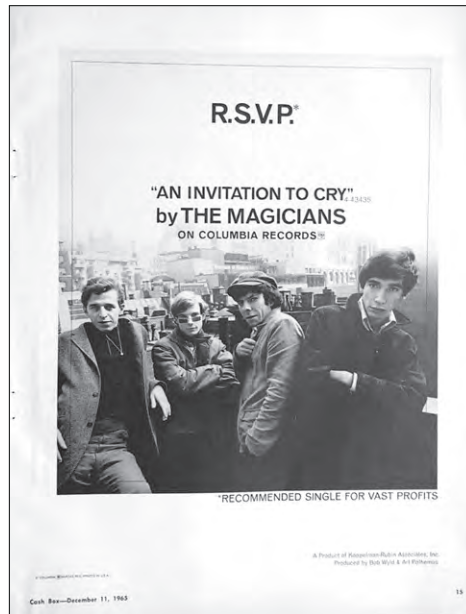
November 1, 1965: Columbia Releases "An Invitation to Cry"

During October, Columbia Records' sales, marketing, advertising, and public relations departments prepared campaigns for the November 1 release of the Magicians' 45rpm single, "An Invitation to Cry" b/w "Rain Don't Fall on Me No More," catalog number 4-43435.

A white label DJ promo version was issued with a two-sided black-and-white picture sleeve. The cover featured a Henry Parker rooftop photo shoot with the headline "Columbia Records Proudly Presents The Magicians / An Invitation to Cry b/w Rain Don't Fall on Me No More." On the back, white text on a black background with notes by Ray Fox stated:

The voices you are about to hear come to you from another world—a world of the imagination, where sounds have many colors and emotions rage in subtle undertones. The world of The Magicians—a mystical whirlpool where all human experience is hopelessly engulfed and entangled, and love and hate merely shades of each other. Prepare yourself for an INVITATION to—(pooffh!)

For major records labels, such as Columbia, records were delivered to the record distributors, radio stations, and trade publications on the first day of release, with at least a week re-



quired to reach retail outlets. Orders from juke box operators were dependent on the popularity of the artist. In the case of the Magicians, the jukeboxes would wait for airplay. Promotional campaigns were immediate and integrated between representatives of the labels, the artists, and the managers. And then everyone would wait, ears glued to the radio, tabulating how many times the record is played ... praying for heavy rotation. It could take thirty to sixty days to determine a record's fate.

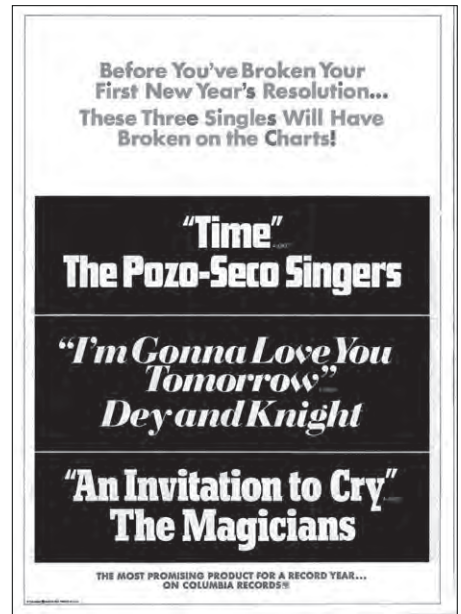
Koppelman and Rubin looked to "Do You Believe in Magic" as a guideline: upon release, the record took 16 days to enter *Billboard's* Hot 100 and nine weeks to make it into the Top 10. For "An Invitation to Cry," a realistic expectation was to break the Top 40 in December, and reach its highest position in late January.

The first full-page trade ad to promote the single was placed in *Cash Box* on December 11, featuring an alternate Henry Parker rooftop portrait of the band with the following caption: "R.S.V.P.*—Recommended Single For Vast Profits." Not a word about the band or their sound—the ad's aesthetic derived from a Columbia regime still in transition to rock and roll.

Given Columbia's timely publicity campaigns with the trades, reviews were swift, and they were noteworthy for their prominent representation of Koppelman-Rubin, consistent with their Spoonful campaigns. *Billboard* on November 27 cited the single on the "Spotlight Singles" page in the "Predicted to reach the Top 60 of the HOT 100 Chart" column:

"MAGICIANS—AN INVITATION TO CRY (We Three, BMI) Production team of Koppelman and Rubin strike again and come up with an exciting new quartet of folk-rock-blues betters with fast chart material. Good group sound. Slow rock dance beat in strong support. Flip: 'Rain Don't Fall on Me No More' (Chardon, BMI). Columbia 43435."

Record World, also on November 27, cited the single in their "Singles Reviews" page:



"AN INVITATION TO CRY (We Three, BMI) RAIN DON'T FALL ON ME NO MORE (Chardon, BMI) THE MAGICIANS—Columbia 443435. Magnetic beat should grab teens when they hear this funky one by new Koppelman-Rubin discoveries."

With most magazines requiring minimum 60- to 90-day leads for placement of publicity stories, the Magicians would wait until late January for print coverage, with both *16 Magazine* and *Hit Parader* lined up. Sales expectations were revised to bypass holiday competition and now focused on January for the single to chart. "Expectations were still high," says Wyld. "Everyone believed in the song, the band, and the importance of being on Columbia."

Charlie Koppelman had an idea how to get major coverage for the band and give their record the leverage it deserved: he would talk to the producers of the WCBS-TV series *Eye on New York*.

Chapter 4: FOUR TO GO

Eye on New York premiered in 1956 on CBS affiliate WCBS-TV, Channel 2 in New York City. It was described as "a searching weekly half-hour program encompassing phases of life in the city—a study of its people, their problems, their pleasures, politics, and philosophies... the magic of New York, the mecca of fascinating people, the city like no other city anywhere."

With Columbia Records joining the CBS Broadcasting Network at "Black Rock," Koppelman-Rubin had every CBS resource within arm's reach, and the *Eye on New York* concept was perfect for the Magicians. In eight years, the program had profiled numerous performers, artists, and musicians, but never a counterculture, post-British Invasion rock and roll band. It was not only original, but self-serving to the interests of the company's record division.

Charlie Koppelman pitched it, and a half-hour documentary on the Magicians was put on the fast track. Albert C Waller was assigned to produce and write the program. Waller wrote and produced two previous *Eye on New York* episodes: 1964's Emmy-nominated "In the American Grain," a profile of the life and work of poet William Carlos Williams with E.G. Marshall and Florence Williams; and 1965's "Shakespeare in the Park," an inside look at Joseph Papp's traveling Shakespeare festival.

Waller confirmed in a 1976 telephone conversation that Koppelman offered him the option of documenting the Magicians or the Lovin' Spoonful, but the offering of the Spoonful may not have been viable: *Kama Sutra* was about to release "You Didn't Have to Be So Nice," the follow-up to "Do You Believe in Magic," which was still high on the charts. During the month of November, the Spoonful had *Shindig* and *Hullabaloo* appearances and 16 cross-country dates with the Supremes, and they would close the month with a slot on the Big TNT Show in Hollywood. For the new year, Koppelman-Rubin had their sights on Spoonful appearances on every local and national music-variety TV program in the country. Steve Boone estimates that beginning in July 1965, the Spoonful were booked 275 days over the next 12 months. Could the band really commit to a full week of filming for a local New York City program? We don't know Koppelman's stratagem, but the offering of the Spoonful was alluring, if not manipulative. Waller's obvious choice was the Spoonful, but he admitted with a sigh, "I picked the Magicians."

Waller proposed developing seriocomic vignettes with a one-week shooting schedule throughout Manhattan in early January. During December, Waller's crew would make live recordings of the Magicians at the Night Owl with a Nagra recorder for use with silent footage. Since the Magicians' studio-quality recordings were limited to just "An Invitation to Cry" and "Rain Don't Fall on Me No More," the group's first recording session at Columbia Records was scheduled for December 10, with Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus producing.

Columbia Records Session #1: December 10, 1965

As December 10 approached, the Magicians maintained regular bookings at the Night Owl, refining material for the recording session while watching the charts for "An Invitation to Cry." The Magicians frequently shared the bill with the Bloos Magoos, the Bronx-based quintet that featured 16-year-old "Peppy" Theihelm on rhythm guitar. The DeWitt Clinton High School drop-out was an intense, instinctive rhythm guitarist, playing a 1964 Olympic White Fender Mustang. John Townley asked Peppy if he wanted to trade the Mustang for his '58 Gibson Les Paul. Peppy agreed, and Townley had a new guitar to bring to Columbia's Studio A.

Columbia Records opened their first recording studio in New York City in February 1939 at 799 7th Avenue at 52nd Street. The build-



The Magicians. Columbia Studio A, New York. December 10, 1965.
L to R: John Townley, Jake Jacobs, Gary Bonner, Alan Gordon. (Photo: Sandy Speiser)

ing featured four recording studios; editing and mastering facilities; engineering, research and development departments (where all equipment for projects was built and assembled); and eventually a photo studio. The studio would utilize all Columbia-built consoles, and with the advent of tape recording in the late '40s, they would use Ampex recorders: from mono to two-, three-, four-, and eight-track. In 1960, the two small recording studios on the seventh floor were combined into Studio A, a single 1,600-square-foot space with an extended 30-foot roof.

Unlike many recording studios that featured formal echo chambers in large open rooms or basements, Studio A was forced to use the building's seven-story stairwell as an echo chamber, and it created legendary sounds. Microphones were positioned at the top of the stairwell to record playbacks from loudspeakers placed one-half floor down, or as far down as the first floor.

Session highlights in Studio A in the 1960s included Barbra Streisand's debut album, recorded on three tracks with a 36-piece orchestra on January 23–25, 1963, and every Bob Dylan album recorded through 1966: *Bob Dylan* (1962); *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963); *The Times They Are a-Changin'* (1964); *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (1964); *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965); *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965); and portions of *Blonde on Blonde* (1966). Dylan's now historic June 15, 1965, recording of "Like a Rolling Stone" featured engineer Roy Halee, who became known as the master of Studio A and its stairwell echo.

Roy Halee was born on Long Island, New York, in 1934. He studied trumpet as a child and was inspired by his entire family: his mother, who played violin in Al Jolson's band; his father, the original singing voice of the cartoon character Mighty Mouse; and his sister, an opera singer. Halee began a career in televi-

sion in the 1950s working as a cameraman for CBS. He moved into sound as an audio engineer, also at CBS Television, working on many shows, including *The \$64,000 Question*. In the 1960s, he moved over to Columbia Records as a sound editor and then sound engineer, which resulted in his work with Dylan and Simon & Garfunkel. He would later work with the Lovin' Spoonful (recording "Summer in the City" in Columbia's Studio A in March 1966 with Erik Jacobsen producing for Koppelman-Rubin); the Dave Clark Five; the Yardbirds; the Byrds (*The Notorious Byrd Brothers* and *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*); Journey; and many others.

On December 10, 1965, Alan Gordon, Garry Bonner, Jake Jacobs, and John Townley entered Studio A for their first session with Columbia Records, dragging in all of their equipment from the Night Owl. They were greeted by Roy Halee and his engineering assistants. Charlie Koppelman and Don Rubin were present with their general manager (and potential in-house producer), Gary Klein, who was there to "learn the ropes so he was ready to step in," says Bob Wyld, who was present with Art Polhemus to produce the sides.

The entire session was captured on film by Columbia Photo Studio photographer Sandy Speiser, whose many Columbia album photos included Bob Dylan's *Another Side of Bob Dylan*. For the December 10 Magicians session, Speiser shot six rolls of b&w film—216 images. Every physical characteristic of the session was documented: Gary Bonner in a polka dot shirt with his Danelectro bass now adorned with Jake Jacobs' hand-painted flowers; Jake in a long-sleeved striped shirt, checkered vest, and omnipresent newsboy cap; John Townley in a corduroy shirt jac and long wool scarf; and Alan Gordon in dress slacks and a dress shirt over a black turtleneck. One roll of film focused on Bob Wyld, Art Polhemus, Charlie Koppelman, Don Rubin, and Roy Halee in the studio.



Columbia Studio A, New York. December 10, 1965. L to R: unknown tech, Roy Halee, Gary Klein (partial head), Charles Koppelman, unknown woman, Art Polhemus (seated), Don Rubin (smiling), Bob Wyld. (Photos: Sandy Speiser)



The control booth, with its signature windows, clock, and no smoking sign, bare striking resemblance to many photos from Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" session.

Two songs were scheduled for the session: David Blue's "I'd Like to Know," recommended by Jacobs. The Baroque-influenced arrangement featured double lead guitars—"with contrapuntal lines and fingerpicked arpeggios," says Townley—and an overdriven rhythm guitar that Townley found "very organic." The two-part harmony was enhanced with Halee's effective use of the stairwell echo.

The second song, "Angel on the Corner," was a Jake Jacobs original that received the approval of the entire band. The song combined jazz, R&B, and doo-wop harmony. Townley and Jacobs both played lead guitar with Townley taking the solo. Halee again made effective use of overdrive and echo.

The session was just over four hours, and Bob Wyld was not pleased: "Too few hours to make a good record. It was all too formal, too disciplined. No spontaneity. It was stuffy being there with Charlie and Don and Gary Klein, and those heavy stares from the tech support working with Roy Halee. It was very uptight. But we loved working with Roy Halee, and he did his best with us."

John Townley admits that Roy Halee was a great engineer and that his staff was experienced ("They could splice tape in mid-air"), but he was very critical of recording at Columbia, even though nobody else in the band complained. "They imposed severe restrictions and rules. Excessive commands. Unnecessary delays. We couldn't even pick up our own instruments," he says.

Wyld and Polhemus would work directly with Roy Halee to mix the tracks, with no interference from Koppelman, Rubin, or anybody else. "That part was great. It went beautifully," says Wyld.

They had two tracks. Would they be used in *Eye on New York* and released as a future single? Nobody knew. The decisions and the strategies were in the hands of Koppelman-Rubin and what they could push with Columbia. For the time being, the tracks went in the can, and "Angel on the Corner" would not see the light of day for another four months. "I'd Like to Know" would wait seven months.

Four to Go

Within a week of New Year's Eve festivities in Times Square, production of *Four to Go* commenced with a shooting schedule of approximately five days at 13 locations. Three locations would be filmed with synchronized sound and feature live performances. The production had five songs recorded live at the Night Owl which would be used for scenes featuring the band in various stages of lip-syncing.

The *Four to Go* production team included George Silano, Cinematographer (1930-); Albert C Waller, Producer/Writer (1932-); Robert Wiemer, Director of Operations (1938-2014); George Dessert, Executive Producer (1925-2012); Nick Masci, Editor (1931-2020); Richard V Foster, Production Supervisor; and Gerald Pruitt, Titles.

George Silano worked many productions with Albert Waller in the '60s, including several for *Eye on New York*. "Al called me for everything," says Silano, who confirmed that a typical *Eye on New York* production included a cameraman, soundman (whom Silano could not identify), director, and an assistant/script supervisor—usually a female, as was the case in *Four to Go*. Equipment included Silano's 16mm Arriflex, a Nagra sound recorder, reflectors, and light stands.

The shoot started on Friday, January 7 with mild temperatures in the upper 40s. The open-

ing scene was filmed on West End Avenue on the Upper West Side of Manhattan between 74th and 75th Street. In the spontaneous, unplanned scene (cited in the opening of the article), the band was filmed during a break in traffic, running down the middle of the street. A live Night Owl recording of "Who Do You Love" would be added to the forty-second scene.

Filming continued at the Phone Booth, a discotheque with go go dancers on 152 East 55th Street (between 3rd and Lexington Avenues), previously the Blue Angel where Wayne Storm and Bob Wyld performed. Just a month earlier, the Young Rascals ended an eight-week residency at the Phone Booth that launched their career.

The Phone Booth's stage was dressed with amps (the Fender Super Reverb most prominent) and Gordon's drum kit for the band to lip-sync a Night Owl recording of "You're So Fine." They used the same guitars as their December 10 recording session: Jacobs' Esquire, Townley's Mustang (but with the pickguard now removed), and Bonner's Danelectro bass. Various shots of the band and individual members were combined with cutaways to the go-go dancers (in sleeveless striped shirts and white miniskirts) and a small group of conservatively-dressed dancers in front of the stage.

When shooting resumed on Saturday, January 8, temperatures plummeted to 20 degrees in the middle of the day and down to 16 degrees by evening. Weather would remain in the low 20s through January 12 with only a short break on Monday the 10th when temperatures rose to 45 degrees for a few hours in the afternoon. "We started the shoot with light clothing to match the mild weather," says Townley, "and we had to wear the same clothes for continuity, even in the freezing weather. We suffered through those outdoor shoots."

The Phone Booth scene was intercut with shots of a subway train and Alan Gordon riding



alone in one of the cars. No music was added to the scene—just the clanking of the train’s wheels against the track. In a voice over, Gordon speaks of the inspiration he derives from the train’s noise and his belief that “money and music are the international language” and that money could bring him happiness.

The longest segment in *Four to Go* is a combined 10 minutes of Jake Jacobs, Garry Bonner, Georgia Smith, and Jeanette Jacobs (no relation) at Georgia Smith’s apartment at 30 Canal Street on Staten Island. When producer Al Waller asked Jacobs about the best social setting to film him and Bonner, Jacobs suggested his girlfriend Smith’s place—and Smith agreed. Her three-story building was originally a hotel for sailors with a large ballroom and retail stores on the ground floor. It was located across the street from the Staten Island Railway, and one block from the ship worker’s bar, the Green Lantern. Smith’s apartment was on the top floor facing south with a view of Coney Island’s Parachute Jump. She lived in the two-bedroom space for four years from 1963 to 1967 paying \$40 a month rent.

The Staten Island segment required a half day of shooting and opens with a shot of the two couples holding hands as they walk through an empty lot with an abandoned car: Jake Jacobs and Georgia Smith; Garry Bonner and 15-year-old Jeanette Jacobs, a striking, dark-haired singer who would form the all-girl baroque pop band the Cake later in 1966. The couples buy a bag of popcorn from a vending machine, toss kernels at each other, then walk to the industrial entrance of 30 Canal Street, with Jacobs and Bonner carrying full bags of groceries.

The scene inside the apartment was filmed with synchronized sound at a large round table in the kitchen with cigarettes, wine, and champagne—Smith on the left with cascading blonde hair, dark eyelashes, and flowing white blouse, and Jacobs and Bonner in the center. Though Jeanette Jacobs can only be seen on

the extreme right of the table in a few shots, “she was a visible and vocal presence all day during filming,” says Smith, “singing songs for the crew,” which included her self-proclaimed original composition, Lennon-McCartney’s “Michelle.” “The crew looked at her incredulously,” says Smith, “and told her, ‘you write more songs like that you’re going to end up in jail.’” The crew wanted a unique setup for the conversation between Jacobs and Bonner and they asked Smith to fill the background by lounging clothed in the kitchen bathtub with a glass of wine. “But I declined,” says Smith.

Jacobs and Bonner open the scene singing David Blue’s “So Easy She Goes By” with Jacobs on acoustic guitar. The scene then indulges Jacobs’ rant on various subjects: the lack of commercial appeal of the David Blue song; prejudice toward rock ‘n’ roll bands; being judged in public for having long hair; and their impression of Alan Gordon (“Al is straight,” says Bonner, to which Jacobs adds, “He’s from Brooklyn, he still lives in Brooklyn, and he lives with his mother in Brooklyn”). The scene ends with Bonner’s comment that he likes his hair long and he believes it becomes him.

Bonner was then filmed walking along the railroad tracks and climbing on rocks at the edge of the Hudson River in Riverdale where icy, slushy water rolled onto the shore. He speaks of being happy with his life at that moment and no longer afraid of the future.

Another 2:25 of Smith’s apartment footage was edited in with Jake Jacobs getting increasingly intense about being abused in public, his lack of acceptance, and what constitutes happiness in people’s lives. The scene closes with Bonner telling him he’s letting these people ruin his life, to which Jacobs agrees with a smile.

Jacobs was filmed at night walking along 42nd Street and Times Square. Close-ups of his face, smoking a cigarette, are intercut with the theater marquees advertising Roman Polanski’s *Repulsion*, Burt Lancaster in *The Hallelujah*

Trail, and *Darling* starring Julie Christie. Shots of a pawn shop window focus on a saxophone, assorted Japanese electric guitars, and Jacobs’ reactions. The master recording of “An Invitation to Cry” would be added to the footage, but less than half of the song was featured: the entire scene is just under one minute.

Another 40 seconds of footage of the apartment was inserted with Jacobs arguing that he wants to go to regular places and be accepted as a regular person, to which Bonner informs him, “but you’re not a regular person.” Additional footage of the Phone Booth performance of “You’re So Fine” ends with a close-up of John Townley and a wave of blonde hair in his right eye.

Townley, his wife Gilma, and 10-month-old daughter Deirdre were briefly shot in freezing-cold Tompkins Square Park on E 10th and Avenue A in the East Village, before moving into Townley’s nearby 1920 apartment at 256 E 10th Street between 1st Street and Avenue A. Townley rented the first floor and basement of the six-story, 36-unit building for \$300 a month. He covered the walls of the living room with horsehide fur, and had Steve Weber of the Holy Modal Rounders living in the basement.

Townley, Gilma, and Deirdre were filmed lounging on their bed as he fingerpicks an original composition “Redeemer” on his Guild F-40, harmonizing the vocal with Gilma, whose sunglasses conceal her eyes through the entire scene. He speaks of the restrictions of being married with a child at such a young age, though he appreciates the knowledge it has given him. Gilma gives her thoughts on mainstream acceptance of the folk music boom, and Townley expresses his feelings about money: “I have all the things that money *can’t* buy. I’d like some of the things money *can* buy.”

The closing 45 seconds of “You’re So Fine” at the Phone Booth are edited in, followed by the third and final synchronized sound scene: the band’s afternoon rehearsal at the Night Owl Cafe. For nearly three minutes, they run



through the instrumental chord sequence of a song in development. Jacobs stops the band twice to request a slower, more Samba drum beat from Gordon.

A live Night Owl recording of Jake Jacobs' original composition, "Frightful, Delightful Dolores," was used for a lip-synced performance filmed on a South Street Seaport dock where Fulton Street meets the East River near the Financial District. Jacobs sings lead—the only song in the Magicians' oeuvre (with the exception of "Rain Don't Fall on Me No More") that did not feature Garry Bonner on lead vocal. The scene is distinctive for its cutaways to flying seagulls, the skyline of Manhattan, and John Townley's shuffle in his \$75 McCreedy boots, his prized possession.

The next scene was filmed in Central Park and began with a strolling lip-synch of a live Night Owl recording of David Blue's ballad, "I'd Like to Know." The band then ascended to the deck of Belvedere Castle, the 1872 lookout tower built on top of the park's Vista Rock at 79th Street, where they finish the song. With the strong icy winds, the wind chill factor was below 10 degrees.

The final location in *Four to Go* is the lobby and mezzanine of the 59-floor Pan Am Building at 200 Park Avenue and 45th Street. Built in the International Style and opened in March of 1963, the building's lobby was distinctive for the 28' x 54' abstract mural, "Manhattan," created with 486 red, black, and white rectangular Formica tiles by German artist Josef Albers (1888-1976). The mural, which was commissioned by Bauhaus founder and the building's co-architect Walter Gropius, was the backdrop for much of the scene, filmed to hallucinatory effect by George Silano. With Gordon on his drum kit—positioned as an abstract set-piece on the mezzanine—Townley, Jacobs, and Bonner ride the escalator, parade down corridors, and violate a security desk's phone system while lip-syncing a live Night Owl recording of David Blue's "About My Love."

Four to Go ended with a repeat of the band running down West End Avenue, followed by credits over a repeat of the closing notes of "You're So Fine" at the Phone Booth. The final scene in the Pan Am building truly captures the high-energy fantasy of a new society dominated by rock and roll—but in the end, we are jolted back to reality with the cold, colorless cinderblocks of the *Eye on New York* logo, animated to come alive and remind us that men in gray flannel suits still prevail.

Columbia Recording Session #2: January 22, 1966

Koppelman-Rubin believed they had an A-side from the December 10 session: "Angel on the Corner," the Jake Jacobs doo-wop-inspired original. But they wanted a strong contrast for the B-side, and "I'd Like to Know," the David Blue composition also from December 10, did not rock hard enough.

The live recording of David Blue's "About My Love" from the Night Owl (and lip-synced in *Four to Go*) was the contender, and Wyld and Polhemus had ideas on how to embellish the arrangement. On January 22, 1966, the Magicians returned to Columbia's Studio A.

The "About My Love" studio recording started as a faithful adaptation of the live arrangement, but then deviated in ways that Townley believes did not serve the best interests of the

song. "The song really did depend on that guitar hook," says Townley, which he wrote and performed. But in the studio track, the hook became buried with the addition of harmonica and Jake's lead guitar. Townley refers to the recording as "an example of over-sweetening when you've got spare tracks to throw on. A common affliction."

The Magicians Meet the Press

Columbia Records' advertisements in early 1966 promoting the Magicians did not offer aesthetics or emphasis on the band. A January 1 *Billboard* ad featured a "Win a Color TV Set!" contest that listed 11 songs, including "An Invitation to Cry," with check boxes for readers to pick which songs they felt would enter the Hot 100 by February 5. Correct answers would receive a 23-inch Westinghouse color TV console.

THE MAGICIANS we came up with OUR OWN THING

The Magicians, latest of the rock-folk practitioners, John Townsley, Jake Jacobs, Garry Barten and Alan Gordon. The boys have been together for a little over four months and were taken out of various groups to form the Magicians. Recently, they were contracted by Columbia records. *(Continued on next page)*



The Magicians are currently waiting at The Night Owl in Greenwich Village, "Angel On the Corner" & "I'd Like to Know" are their latest records, and they starred in a CBS-TV documentary.



Hit Parade: April 1966.

A text-only January 15, 1966, *Billboard* ad featured the headline, "Before You've Broken Your First New Year's Resolution... These Three Singles Will Have Broken on the Charts!" The three singles listed (from top to bottom) were "Time"/The Pozo-Seco Singers; "I'm Gonna Love You Tomorrow"/Dey and Knight; and "An Invitation to Cry"/The Magicians. A small footer read, "The Most Promising Product For A Record Year... On Columbia Records."

The apparent first mainstream publicity coverage on the Magicians appeared with *16 Magazine's* March issue, on newsstands January 20 with a circulation of one million. The Magicians are one of six bands depicted in the full-page article "Groups! Groups! Groups!" that included the Rockin' Ramrods, Simon & Garfunkel, the Young Rascals, the Dillards, and the New Breed. The Magicians' photo, from the Henry Parker rooftop session, included the caption, "Destined for the top of the charts are the

Magicians, who are also on Columbia Records. Their first single is Invitation To Cry. Yes! We believe in magic."

The March issue of *Cavalier* (newsstand late January) featured a full-page color photo of the Night Owl canopy with the Magicians, the Bloos Magoos, and the Strangers on the marquee to accompany their article, "Hello Groupie." Joe Marra hung the two-page spread on the Night Owl wall behind the stage at a 45-degree angle and it is visible in many photos from the period.

The March 1966 *Hit Parader* (also on newsstands in late January) had a two-page spread on "The Village Club Scene—The Night Owl" with seven photos—the Spoonful, the Fugitives, the Strangers, Fred Neil, etc. "The Magicians are in a Rolling Stones bag" was the band's only reference. However, the April 1966 *Hit Parader* magazine (newsstands late February) printed a two-page spread entitled

"The Magicians – we came up with OUR OWN THING" with four Henry Parker rooftop photos and two live shots at the Night Owl.

Song Hits, a magazine devoted to song lyrics since 1937, featured a visually impressive two-page article, "The Spontaneous Magicians," in its July issue (distributed in late May) with a Henry Parker rooftop image and six photos from the December 10 Studio A recording session. The article opened with "recently they were the subject of a CBS TV special," but there is no mention of "An Invitation to Cry" or any new recording. Townley and Bonner are identified as John Townsley and Gary Barten.

On the trade publicity front, the *Cash Box* "Record Ramblings" page from February 19 offered late details on *Four to Go*: "WCBS-TV's *Eye On New York* will present a segment following the Magicians through their day to day activities." There were various other short notices in the trades, but the Magicians would have to wait for a second wave of advertising and publicity to coincide with the release of a new single.

February 13, 1966: The Premiere of *Four to Go*

Four to Go premiered on Sunday, February 13, 1966, at 6:30pm on WCBS-TV, channel 2 in New York City and its environs. In 1966, the radius of the WCBS-TV antenna was approximately 70 miles from the center of Manhattan. The signal could reach about five million households comprising an estimated 15 million people, with televisions in approximately 90%. It was estimated that TV viewership on weekends from 6pm to 7pm was 38% of households (1.9 million). *Eye on New York's* average 8.5 rating suggests a potential 160,000 households tuned into the *Four to Go* episode. (Though an inequitable comparison, 73 million people watched the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9, 1964.)

Four to Go was unprecedented—and its 26 minutes were celebrated by music enthusiasts, loyal viewers of *Eye on New York*, and the majority of residents and patrons of Greenwich Village. But there were no local or national reviews, and nobody outside the 70-mile radius of Manhattan saw the program—or would ever see it. There was a lot of local buzz in New York the week of February 13, mostly among musicians—"Hey, did you see the Magicians?"—but that faded within weeks.

Four to Go had no influence nationally, and it did nothing to increase awareness of the Magicians or the sales of "An Invitation to Cry." But the simple mention of a CBS show gave the band credibility, and Koppelman-Rubin made certain it was a consistent hook in Columbia Records' PR. The show would be repeated on Sunday, July 17, but to no avail.



John Townsley was a single act, singing country and blues and playing in the Village area for the past three years. Gary Barten hails from the Bronx, where he sang with different rock 'n' roll groups before joining with the Magicians. Jake Jacobs, for the past few months, did back-up work for various rock artists. Alan Gordon played drums for several rock 'n' roll groups before teaming up with John, Gary and Jake.

They have a foggy concept of their music. "Any song we did," says Jake, "Gary came out with a good sound. John played country and ragtime, Alan on drums, and I mostly rhythm and blues. Combined together we came up with our own thing."

Gary's influence came from Ben E. King and Chuck Jackson as well as others. John's

main help was the Rev. Gary Davis and the entire East Coast blues style, including Blind Blake and Blind Boy Fuller, which led into more modern people. Jake's influence comes from the Chicago form of blues, along with Big Joe Williams, B.B. King and Muddy Waters.

The group feels that they have a real spontaneous quality, "it's not planned out, but expressed very freely. It's tough when you get a bunch of guys together who are all so diversified and have their own ideas. But for some reason, we manage to combine our thoughts and meet together."

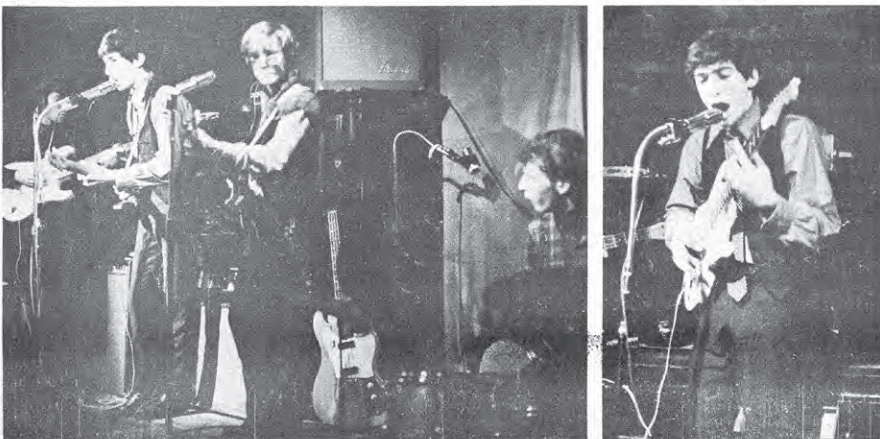
When asked what they would like to do in the future, these are some of the replies we got. John would like to do studio work, arranging and composing. In a short while, he'll be doing the sound-

track for an underground movie.

Gary's main ambition was to be a jazz singer and to have good vocal training, which he hopes to achieve. Jake would like to produce. He says "There's a lot of good talent around that needs help. I admire Phil Spector a lot and would like to achieve the fame and success he has by producing good music."

Alan Gordon writes most of the material for the group along with Jake. Besides continuing with writing, he would like to make a lot of money, be greedy and ruthless.

*Editor's note: An Underground movie is an art film made by amateurs.



Chapter 5: AND THE BEAT GOES ON

The Magicians, 1966.

(Photo: Sandy Speiser)

On February 19, 1966—six days after the broadcast of *Four to Go*—Koppelman-Rubin launched the third Lovin' Spoonful 45, "Daydream." It would reach #2 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. They followed "Daydream" with "Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind" on April 30 (recorded the previous September), scoring a consecutive #2 hit. With the Spoonful, Koppelman-Rubin had an undeniable winner, and "A Product of Koppelman-Rubin Associates" was an inseparable element of every Spoonful representation. The industry respected Koppelman-Rubin, and they were receptive to whatever K-R had to offer—including the Magicians. But did the Magicians have the combination of product and persona that propelled the Spoonful to success?

March 1966 marked four months since the release of "An Invitation to Cry" and the ambitious campaign to market and promote it. But "An Invitation to Cry" did not break *Billboard's* Hot 100. The prospects for "An Invitation to Cry" had come to an end.

The Night Owl remained home base, a residency that band members mixed with frequent visits to Googies and the Kettle of Fish for drinks. There were many memorable nights at the Night Owl. Alan Gordon recalled "Bob Dylan showing up with David Blue to see us perform 'I'd Like to Know,' one of David's songs we did. But they both left after that song!"

The Magicians had to increase their exposure and commercial appeal with more prestigious venues and concerts, like the Murray the K touring shows that helped break out the Spoonful. So Koppelman-Rubin signed the Magicians to the William Morris Agency. They were one of the most powerful booking agencies in the world, but they could not work magic with an act that did not have a reputation or a hit record.

William Morris went to work, and the Highway Inn dance club in Roosevelt, Long Island, became a weekly gig for the Magicians. The club regularly featured Mary Wells, Wilson Pickett, Gladys Knight, and the Young Rascals. One of Jake Jacobs' most memorable experiences was being booked with the Everly Brothers. "We were told that we were to share a dressing room with Don and Phil," says Jacobs. "Meeting Don and Phil was a dream come true. I loved their singing and their songs and thought they were the coolest looking guys in the world. I asked Don if I could try his guitar and he said yes. It was a Gibson J185, a little smaller than the J200. I couldn't believe I was sitting next to brother Don and playing his guitar."

The Magicians also made five trips to Cleveland, Ohio, to appear on *Upbeat*, one of the more popular *American Bandstand*-style television shows. *Upbeat* started in August 1964 as *Big 5* before its syndication in January 1966 with host Don Webster. With each *Upbeat* appearance, the Magicians would drive to nearby Akron to perform at small clubs. The band would also make short trips to Connecticut for promo appearances on local radio stations. But the band remained mostly landlocked at the



Night Owl, hoping for a change in their destiny.

Despite their agreement with Koppelman-Rubin for one-third of the management of the Magicians, Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus were not active with the band. Their only job was producing their records, which they did on December 10 and January 22, resulting in "Angel on the Corner," "About My Love," "I'd Like to Know," and a few demos. But there were no future recording dates, and the possibility of ever producing a full album of songs was remote.

Longhair Productions always had their eyes on Night Owl regulars the Bloos Magoos, and in the winter of 1966 they signed the band to a full-service contract with similar terms to the Koppelman-Rubin agreement with the Magicians. The Magoos had just recorded "So I'm Wrong and You Are Right" b/w "The People Had No Faces," two folk-rock songs written and produced by Rick Shorter, a client of Simon & Garfunkel manager Marvin Lagunoff. The record was a one-off, and after the single was released on Verve Folkways in February, Longhair locked the band up with Mercury Records, with Bob Wyld negotiating the recording of a complete album, even without a hit single.

Though the Magicians were perceived as a privileged Night Owl band in 1966 due to their Columbia and Koppelman-Rubin affiliations, the acts they shared the bill with were making their own inroads—recording and releasing music:

After their debut at the Night Owl, the Blues

Project added Al Kooper on keyboards and established a residency at the Cafe Au Go Go on Bleecker Street. They were booked for the club's "Blues Bag" on November 24-27, 1965, and their sets were recorded by Verve Folkways. In January, Verve released the single, "Back Door Man," followed by an album, *Live at the Cafe Au Go Go*, in March.

The Myddle Class released their first single, "Free as the Wind," a Gerry Goffin/Carole King original, produced by Goffin and King and released on their new Tomorrow label. They recorded Dylan's "Gates of Eden" for the flip side. A second Tomorrow single was recorded for release in June.

In February 1966, the Modern Folk Quartet recorded "Night Time Girl," written by Al Kooper, an early example of folk-rock with Eastern-influenced raga. Despite being a Dunhill release with Jack Nitzsche producing, the record only reached #122 in April.

On February 26, the Jagged Edge released their first single on the Twirl label (recorded at Dick Charles), "Midnight to Six," a cover of the Pretty Things original (written by singer Phil May and guitarist Dick Taylor) that was released by the Pretties in the UK on the Fontana label on December 15.

The Strangers remained active at the Night Owl, with plans to record their first single, "Land of Music," with Eric Jacobsen producing for Koppelman-Rubin's new KR label, distributed by Chess.

Despite the originality and popularity of the Greenwich Village music scene, its bands and recordings remained predominantly un-

derground. The success of New York bands in general was limited to the Lovin' Spoonful, Simon & Garfunkel, the Mamas & the Papas (who in early 1966 had smash hits with "California Dreamin'" and "Monday, Monday"), and the Young Rascals, whose Edwardian school-boy outfits created a striking visual presence. With Eddie Brigati on vocals and tambourine, Felix Cavaliere on Hammond organ, Gene Cornish on guitar, and Dino Danelli on drums, the Young Rascals released their first single, "I Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore," on November 22. Though it only reached #52 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, they followed it in March with a #1 hit, "Good Lovin'," and an album, *The Young Rascals*.

A band popular in New York but not descendent from the Village were the Vagrants, featuring Leslie West on guitar, Peter Sabatino on vocals, Larry West (Leslie's brother) on bass, Jerry Storch on organ, and Roger Mansour on drums. Their first single, "I Can't Make a Friend," was recorded in March and released on Vanguard Records in April. They would premiere the song on *Clay Cole's Diskotek* on New York's WPIX-TV (Channel 11) on Saturday, April 23 at 6:00pm. Taped at the WPIX studio at 220 E. 42nd Street, Leslie West admitted in 2003: "We had to pay Clay Cole to be on that show!" "I Can't Make a Friend" was co-written by Storch and Trade Martin, and produced by Martin, who at the time was also producing Eric Andersen, Leslie Gore, Ian & Sylvia, and Ricky Nelson. As a songwriter, Martin wrote "Take Me for a Little While," a hit for Evie Sands and Vanilla Fudge.

The First Anniversary of Koppelman-Rubin Associates, Inc.

As the Magicians waited for a second single to be released, Koppelman-Rubin Associates commemorated their first anniversary in business with feature articles in the major trade publications during March and April, including two separate articles in *Record World*.

In their first year, Koppelman-Rubin Associates were credited in the press with creating the new blueprint for a successful music firm in the mid '60s: combining music publishing, personal management, and independent production into a three-pronged drive. *Record World* called them "one of the most exciting sagas of the past year ... that seems destined to continue to gain momentum during the months and years to come."

In their first twelve months, the company's music publishing firm, Faithful Virtue Music, had three Top 10 hits: the Lovin' Spoonful's "Do You Believe in Magic," "You Didn't Have to Be So Nice," and "Daydream," while the Spoonful's LP track, "Good Time Music," became a hit for the Beau Brummels. Artists signed to Faithful Virtue included Tim Hardin, David Blue, and Scott McKenzie.

The company's Chardon Music publishing arm charted with "Pied Piper" by the Chargin' Times, while selections from both the Chardon and Faithful Virtue catalogs were recorded by Ian & Sylvia, the Turtles, Sarah Vaughan, Joan Baez, Bud Shank, Barry McGuire, Sonny &

Ugly Things



Cher, and Gary Lewis.

During their first year, Koppelman-Rubin Associates' production company signed major deals to develop new talent for Mercury, and to record established artists already on Mercury and Philips, Smash, Fontana, Blue Rock, Decca, MGM, and Columbia Records.

With their business blueprint, Koppelman-Rubin cut deals for product from outside producers, such as Eric Jacobsen, Bob Wyld, and Art Polhemus. But Koppelman-Rubin handled all production business and provided supervision and direction as warranted, attaching the credit, "A Product of Koppelman-Rubin Associates," to every recording.

April 18, 1966: Columbia Releases "Angel on the Corner"

If Columbia Records was to capitalize on almost six months of exposure the Magicians received from the promotion of "An Invitation to Cry," a new single had to be released. But neither the band members nor Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus had any input on song selection or strategy: Columbia took direction from Koppelman-Rubin, and on April 18, Columbia released the Magicians' "Angel on the Corner" from the December 10, 1965, session. The B-side was "About My Love" recorded January 22.

"Angel on the Corner" was a soft, easy ballad with subdued guitars and doo-wop background vocals. For Koppelman-Rubin, the song may have inspired comparisons to the Spoonful's "You Didn't Have to Be So Nice," but the trades were not impressed.

Billboard's "Spotlight Singles" page in the April 23, 1966, issue listed "Angel on the Corner" in its column, "Chart Spotlights—Expected to Reach the Hot 100 Chart." But it was listed at the bottom of the page in extremely small type with forty other songs, excluded from the "Top 20" or even the "Top 60" columns.

Columbia placed a full-page ad in the May

14 issues of *Billboard* and *Cash Box* with a striking Henry Parker rooftop photo against a black background and the bold headline, "Watch The Magicians work wonders with their new magical single!" Body copy included "Angel on the Corner" c/w "About My Love" 4-43608; A Koppelman-Rubin Production; and a new stock footer for Columbia, "Where the action is. On COLUMBIA RECORDS."

But the Magicians needed more than a few ads; they needed a campaign and the direct participation of Koppelman-Rubin.

George Papadapoulo & GSP Artist Management

Despite Koppelman-Rubin's commitment to the Magicians, their company was more committed to their expansion and new projects with the potential for success. The failure of "An Invitation to Cry" was a reality check, and Koppelman-Rubin could not justify being personally accountable to the Magicians or their producers. Consequently, they could never be reached by phone. "Very difficult to ever get them on the phone," says Bob Wyld. John Townley adds, "We used to have Alan make the calls, changing his voice and pretending to be someone else with urgent business to discuss. It would get Charlie on the phone every time, but it would piss him off and the call would go nowhere."

To resolve the problem, Charlie Koppelman assigned GSP Artist Management to take over the band's day-to-day management activities. GSP was a moniker for George Papadapoulo, a native of Greece who owned the Unicorn Coffee House, a folk music venue in his home base of Boston. To create a presence in New York, Papadapoulo shared office space with booking agent Leonard Rosenfeld at 152 E 52nd Street, even sharing Rosenfeld's phone number. He proved to be an asset and an active complement to the Magicians. "He stepped in to whip us in shape and accommodate us," says Townley. "And he did a good job."

George Papadapoulo immediately pushed



the William Morris Agency on the Magicians' bookings, but their first team effort proved to be the absolute worst booking in the band's career: a nondescript roadhouse bar/disco south of Erie, Pennsylvania—a grueling three-week engagement of seven sets a night—20 minutes on, 20 minutes off.

"From the stage, all you could see was a sea of smoke and drunken dancers everywhere. Not only on the dance floor, but up on stage and all around us," says Townley. To accommodate the dancers, they were forced to play Top 40, "The Last Time" by the Rolling Stones being a favorite.

And there were many strange customers: "A giant, bald-headed figure whose head rose above the smoky haze, like an alien from a low-budget science fiction movie," says Townley. "It turned out to be the tallest man in the world. There was also the girl from Venus. She would make out with you, but you could never go further because she wore a metal corset. The whole scene was very psychedelic, but in a very bad way."

The band quickly adopted a routine to maintain their sanity: "After the fourth set, we'd go outside and smoke a joint," says Townley. "After the sixth set, we'd have a Zombie at the bar." Days were spent getting stir crazy trapped in motel rooms adjacent to the bar. "We were literally driven there and dropped off. We didn't have wheels," says Townley.

They were ecstatic to return to New York, but for Townley it was "out of the frying pan into the fire." While he was away, his wife Gilma left him to be with a struggling musician named Bob Berkowitz, taking their daughter with her.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Papadapoulo thought the band would benefit by getting out of New York City—taking time for a retreat so they could work on new ideas and material. With his Boston connections, Papadapoulo rented a large, three-level, turn-of-the-century Victorian house just outside Cambridge where each member had their own room. The living room was huge and gave them ample space to rehearse.

Cambridge proved to be "a rolling sexual and pharmaceutical adventure," recalls Townley. Though the Magicians were not drug people, everybody smoked pot. During their days in Cambridge, a local chemist introduced them to DMT, a psychedelic white powder they sprinkled on their grass for an intense twenty-minute high. Jake would try mescaline, but only Townley took LSD, until Gordon eventually agreed to take a trip with him, and it was bad. "He thought he was going crazy," says Townley. "But after a whole bottle of Cointreau and my calming words, he was able to mellow out and get through it."

After a few weeks in Cambridge, Papadapoulo booked the Magicians for a 7-day engagement at his Unicorn Coffee House. Opened in Boston's Back Bay at 825 Boylston Street in 1961, the Unicorn was a small, dark club in an old commercial building, but it booked all the major acts of the '60s folk revival, includ-

The Magicians in Cambridge, Massachusetts, spring 1966.



ing Buffy Sainte-Marie, Jim Kweskin, Odetta, and such Village mainstays as David Blue, Tim Hardin, Dave Van Ronk, and Phil Ochs. Tom Rush would record his first live album there in 1962. By the mid-sixties, the club expanded to folk-rock and blues with such acts as the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGee, Mississippi John Hurt, and John Lee Hooker. The Magicians were well received, but the Unicorn felt like just an extension of their residency at the Night Owl, with Alan Gordon referring to it as "one of the endless dumb gigs we were playing."

Time spent in Cambridge proved productive. Alan Gordon and Jake Jacobs worked together on numerous songs. One in particular, "I'll Tell the World About You," was received with approval from the other members. They spent a lot of time rehearsing and adding to the song, particularly Townley's guitar. "I added an imitation Baroque double-lead guitar part that Jake and I shared," says Townley, who emphasized that his lead was totally DMT-inspired. Out of the entire Magicians catalog, "I'll Tell the World About You" is perhaps their most unique and distinctive work.

Gordon also worked alone on many compositions. One song he felt strongly about was a diversion from typical Magicians material. It would eventually be titled "Happy Together," but he was having trouble pulling it together. "I had nearly half a song already written, mostly lyric ideas," said Gordon, "but couldn't find the right melodic concept." It was a concept based on Jake Jacobs' unorthodox tuning using Major 7th chords. "Alan hummed a melody based on almost every single note I played in the tuning," says Jacobs. Gordon asked Jacobs to complete the song with him as co-writer. "But I refused," says Jacobs. "I felt it was too simple for me to be involved." For the time being, Gordon put the song aside.

Chapter 6: GOIN' WEST

Six weeks had passed since the April 18 release of "Angel on the Corner"—enough time for the record to crack the *Billboard* Hot 100 and get selected as a radio station pick, such as WMCA New York's "Sure Shot" or "Long Shot." But the single did not chart, and it did not receive any radio station picks.

Koppelman and Rubin—and Columbia Records—stepped back to consider the next move. It had been over nine months since the signing of the band to Columbia, and over four months since the band visited a recording studio. The indicators were not positive, but all the players knew that maybe one more shot at a hit single could deliver the promise they all felt with "An Invitation to Cry."

The Columbia Records national sales convention was scheduled for July 20-23 at the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas. Koppelman-Rubin had a plan: book the Magicians to perform at the convention and schedule a concurrent West Coast tour to promote the release of a new single.

Columbia Recording Session #3: June 3, 1966

The Magicians were given another shot in the studio, and it was scheduled for June 3, 1966. The band grabbed their guitars and made the four-hour, 210-mile drive from Cambridge. One master recording and three demos were recorded in Studio A with Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus producing and Roy Halee as engineer. Unlike their premiere session in Studio A on December 10, there was no interest from the Koppelman-Rubin camp to be present.

For Wyld and Polhemus, the session was but a momentary interlude in their busy schedule.

In the previous two months, they recorded ten songs with the Blues Magoos for Mercury Records on four-track at Regent Sound Studios. The band's new lineup featured Mike Esposito on lead guitar; Peppy Theilhelm on rhythm; Ralph Scala on keyboards; Ronnie Gilbert on bass; and Geoff Daking on drums. The first single from the session was about to be released: "Tobacco Road," a psychedelic cover of the Nashville Teens' August 1964 single. The song clocked in at an unorthodox 4:30—with 3:30 of that being breakthrough psychedelic solos and sound effects.

For the June 3 Magicians session, Wyld and Polhemus produced a master of "I'll Tell the World About You," the Jacobs-Gordon original written in Cambridge. The recording was quick, arranged almost exactly as rehearsed with the dominant Townley-Jacobs double leads.

A one-take demo was recorded of "That's What Love is Made Of," the Miracles R&B hit from September 1964 written by Smokey Robinson. The amps were clean and the guitar solos simple. "It's loose, the vocal harmonies are thin on the stop, but the groove is very strong," says Townley.

The session also afforded time for a one-track demo of an early songwriting effort of Garry Bonner and Jake Jacobs: "I Won't Be Here Tomorrow," featuring John Townley on lead guitar and Jake Jacobs on bass "playing minor third and seventh blues notes despite the song being in a major key," says Townley. Two hand claps are at work, attributed to Bonner and Bob Wyld. Townley believes the song had the potential to be great, but at this stage was still rough "with inconsistent harmonies in the verses."

Art Polhemus then announced, "Okay, we got room for one take. Let's make it. Play it the way you feel, one time." To which Alan Gordon responded with a giggle, "Back to the Unicorn!" And the band recorded Willie Dixon's "Back Door Man," the blues standard they introduced to their repertoire back in September 1965 during rehearsals in the offices of Longhair Productions. If it worked, the song could be considered as an album cut since it was already released as a single by the Blues Project.

After spending a few days in the city at their respective pads, the Magicians headed back to Cambridge.

Changes on the Way

On June 18, the Byrds passed through Boston to make a low-profile appearance at the annual Mayor's Charity Field Day on June 18 at Boston's War Memorial Auditorium, and David Crosby paid John Townley a visit in Cambridge. It was their first meeting since Townley roomed with him on the West Coast in the summer of 1964. "David arrived with a briefcase full of goodies to trade with us," says Townley.

After their meeting with Crosby, the Magicians officially left Cambridge for New York to prepare for the Columbia Records sales convention and their West Coast tour.

The trip west required reliable transportation, and between Koppelman-Rubin and George Papadapoulo, the Magicians were the proud owners of a new Ford Econoline six-door

van with enough room to transport the band and their equipment in comfort. Acquired by Papadapoulo in Boston, a PR stunt had the Magicians getting a car loan from a Boston bank by giving a live performance. The headline used in print read, "Columbia Records' The Magicians, recently pulled a unique new form of collateral for a bank loan out of their hats—TALENT!"

The Magicians needed a driver and roadie, and Papadapoulo hired Alan Gordon's friend, Ronnie Trachtenberg, a former professional wrestler who performed under the name the Alabama Plowboy. "But we called him Kong," says Townley. Jacobs adds that "whenever we'd stop at a diner passing through small towns, we'd all walk really close to Ronnie, practically hugging him, because with him we were safe from being harassed for having long hair. Nobody would screw with Ronnie."

Papadapoulo also imposed a Magicians image makeover that included new hair styles and wardrobe, taking the band to salons and boutiques throughout the city. The makeover included putting an end to Jake Jacobs' trademark newsboy cap, which was a traumatic adjustment for Jacobs "to the point of paranoia," says Townley. Matching corduroy Edwardian suits with leather trim were considered, but it was decided each member's style would be unique. They did go Edwardian, and mod, and Carnaby Street: bright colors, paisley, epaulettes, ruffles, scarfs, puffy shirts, and bell bottoms. With their new image in place, the band was given the PR benefit of quick visits to the offices of Columbia president Goddard Lieberson and vice president Clive Davis.

With CBS's purchase of Fender Musical Instruments in January of 1965, Fender was accessible to Columbia Records, and Papadapoulo worked with Koppelman-Rubin to include new instruments in the Magicians' makeover. "We got two Jaguars—which we hated—and two Dual Showman amps, which were great," says Townley. It was at the same time that Garry Bonner traded in his Danelectro for a new Guild Starfire bass.

Papadapoulo also arranged with CBS to get the band "two very cute assistants," says Townley, "who we all hit on."

The June/July 1966 Sandy Speiser & Don Hunstein Photo Sessions

At the end of June, Don Hunstein, the third of the big three Columbia Photo Studio photographers, was assigned to capture the new, improved image of the Magicians. Hunstein's album cover credits included Tony Bennett, Bob Dylan, Miles Davis, Aretha Franklin, Johnny Cash, Simon & Garfunkel, and eventually Janis Joplin.

The strategy was to deviate from Henry Parker's casual portraits on the roof and stairwell, and Sandy Speiser's candid shots of the Studio A recording session. The shots would be in the photo studio with a backdrop and choreographed poses.

Hunstein took 45 photos on medium-format 2-1/4 b&w film. Townley wore a bright Madras jacket over a shirt and ascot; Jacobs, sans newsboy cap, covered an eye-catching op-art shirt



*The Magicians, 1966.
(Photo: Sandy Speiser)*

with a western-fringed dress jacket; Bonner wore an Edwardian jacket over a buttoned-up dress shirt; and Gordon went conservative with a plaid sport coat and tie. Eight of the shots featured the band with their current instruments: Jacobs with his familiar Esquire; Bonner with his new 1966 Guild Starfire bass; and Townley with his CBS-gifted Fender Jaguar.

In the middle of July, Sandy Speiser did another photo studio session with the Magicians—just prior to their departure for Las Vegas. Identified as “informal individual and group portraits” on the Photo Services fact sheet dated July 26, Speiser shot 14 rolls of medium-format 2-1/4 b&w film—a total of 167 photos. With their hair trimmed and neatly combed—especially Townley’s—they all dressed more uniform and monotone, with a more formal, almost Edwardian, aesthetic compared to the previous Hunstein session. In two rolls of film, the entire band wore matching four-button Edwardian-style jackets with flap pockets and epaulets, but in different shades.

Many of Speiser’s compositions featured the band sitting and standing around a large prop box with tentative attempts at playfulness, such as arm and leg gestures. The band certainly showed a visual evolution from the Henry Parker’s rooftop photos from ten months ago. They were polished, almost respectable—scrubbed clean of the rough edges and mystery ... and perhaps the magic.

The 1966 Columbia Records Sales Convention

On July 16, Ronnie Trachtenberg, Alan Gordon, Garry Bonner, Jake Jacobs, and John Townley left New York in their new Ford van, loaded with their equipment, and drove 3,000 miles west to Las Vegas, hoping to realize their dreams at the other end of the country. All five took turns at the wheel with no recollection of ever stopping to spend a night in a motel.

On July 18, 1966, two days before the July 20-23 Columbia Records Sales Convention at the Dunes in Las Vegas, Columbia released the Magicians’ third single, “I’d Like to Know” b/w “And I’ll Tell the World (About You).” Both songs would be performed at the convention.

The Dunes, located at the southern end of the Las Vegas Strip, opened as a 200-room Arabian Nights-themed resort in 1955, and expanded to 450 rooms when a 24-story tower was added in 1961. The Magicians checked into their rooms to prepare for their performance.

Over 600 sales representatives and company principals attended, including CBS-Columbia group president, Goddard Lieberman, and CBS Record Division vice president and general manager Clive Davis. The highlight of the Convention would be a performance by Barbra Streisand, and a special appearance by Tony Bennett. Rock ‘n’ roll performers would include the Creatures, a recent Columbia sign-

ing from Ireland with two singles on Columbia: “Turn Out the Light” was released in March with a promo picture sleeve, but the single did not chart. A follow-up, “String Along,” was released in June and would be performed at the convention with its B-side, “The Night is Warm.”

The Magicians’ performance of their two songs in the showroom was short. “The band was tight with standout vocals from Bonner,” says Townley, but Jacobs disagrees: “We weren’t good that night.” Applause was respectful, and though there was no way to measure the impact of the convention, the band did receive notice of their appearance in the July 30 *Cash Box*: “Among the entertainers at the Columbia convention will be the Magicians, who will intro their debut outing ‘I’ll Tell the World About You’ and ‘I’d Like to Know.’ The August 6 issue of *Cash Box* added, “The Magicians, who were recently featured in a TV documentary are playing in and around New York. The talented foursome, who are a Columbia group are trying to break the playlists with their latest outing ‘And I’ll Tell The World (About You)’ and ‘I’d Like To Know.’”

The Sunset Strip

The Sunset Strip in the summer of 1966 was four winding roads of bright lights, convertible sports cars, and celebrations of

This is a Tri-ad
(for 3 rocking singles).

Webster's New Word
“I Don't Want to Be the One”
“Hard Loving Loser”

The James Boys
“Keep the Fire Burning”
“That Misty Look”

The Magicians
“I'd Like to Know”
“And I'll Tell the World (About You)”

Where the action is. On COLUMBIA RECORDS

Before you can say “Boo!”
THE CREATURES
have a hit!
“String Along”
(* 1 in Ireland)
“The Night Is Warm”

THE MAGICIANS
have a hit!
“I'd Like to Know”
“And I'll Tell the World (About You)”

Faster than the eye can follow,
THE MAGICIANS
have a hit!
“I'd Like to Know”
“And I'll Tell the World (About You)”

Where the action is. On COLUMBIA RECORDS

Cash Box—August 20, 1966



The 1966 Columbia Records Sales Convention. The Dunes, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Left: Flyer for the Ice House, August 1966.

rock and roll along the base of the Hollywood Hills. Driving west from Laurel Canyon, there was Pandora's Box and the Chateau Marmont, and further down on the right, Ciro's, the 1965 home of the Byrds. Passing La Cienega was the Sea Witch, Dino's Lodge, the Trip, Ben Frank's coffee shop, De Voss (the trendy Sunset Plaza boutique)—all leading to the infamous street scene "between Hilldale and Clark," a West Coast MacDougal with the Whisky A Go Go (home of the Doors, Love, and the Leaves that summer); Sneaky Pete's, the Galaxy, the London Fog, Cavalier, and the Hamburger Hamlet with its sidewalk-adjacent patio for watching freaks.

The Magicians spent days exploring the Sunset Strip and Hollywood, driving in their van with two Playboy Bunnies, listening to the Lovin' Spoonful's "Summer in the City." "We heard it every time we turned on the radio," says Townley. Released on July 4, it would hit #1 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 on August 13.

Days were spent hanging out with the McCoys and visiting with David Crosby in Laurel Canyon—John's first meeting with him since Cambridge. The band also made repeated visits to the communal basement residence of the Chambers Brothers. "John and I traded our Fender Jaguars to them, and he got an Airline in the deal," says Jacobs.

The Magicians' first booking was at Doug Weston's Troubadour, the city's folk haven since 1957, located one major block south of the Strip on Santa Monica Boulevard. "It had the feeling of the Village Gate," says Townley. The club's early '60s acts included Hoyt Acton, Carole King, the Byrds, the Buffalo Springfield

(who made their debut as a band that summer at the Troubadour), and Lenny Bruce, who was arrested there in 1962.

The Ice House

The Magicians major booking to tie-in with their record release and Columbia convention appearance was a two-week engagement at the Ice House, a coffeehouse located in a nine-story 1929 Art Deco Masonic Temple at 234 S Brand Boulevard in Glendale. It was a reputable, popular club that billed itself as "folk music in concert," but featured a strong folk-rock mix. The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band just ended a one-week engagement on July 3 with Captain Beefheart & His Magic Band. Hearts & Flowers, the Irish Rovers, Aerial Landscape, the Dillardards, the Association, Mason Williams, and a future Magician, Steve Gillette, were among the many acts who played the club.

The *Ice House Herald* was the club's letter-fold flyer they mailed to customers. "The Glendale's Sounds of August" flyer listed the Magicians (August 9-21) with a tight portrait from their Don Hunstein session and the copy, "The Magicians cast a big show-rock spell on the bewitched penthouse dwellers for two weeks starting August 9. The Columbia recording artists' big single, 'I'll Tell the World.' [*sic*] They have a show to go with their sound. They hail from New York and are on a national tour."

The flyer also depicts the Greenwood (August 2-7); the Unidentified Flying Objects (August 23-28); and "the big brassy sound of the hilarious and musically talented group" the

Versatiles (August 2-28), who would serve as the Magicians opening act.

The Magicians were an impressive addition to the Ice House roster, though they may have been too loud, too hard for the club's traditional customers. Staying at a nearby motel, presumably on Colorado Boulevard, the band found there was nothing to do in Glendale and getting to the Strip would take over 30 minutes. There were shops on Brand just north of Broadway, but Brand to the south was industrial—auto parts and appliances. So they hung out at the motel, and kept their eye on *Billboard*'s Hot 100: thirty days after release, "I'd Like to Know" did not chart.

On the evening of August 21, the Magicians loaded their equipment into the van and in the morning said goodbye to Los Angeles. With Trachtenberg at the wheel, they headed east for their 3,000-mile ride home to New York.

Chapter 7:

THE END OF THE MAGICIANS

September 1966. It was one year ago that Jake Jacobs and John Townley joined Alan Gordon and Garry Bonner to sign contracts with Charlie Koppelman and Don Rubin to form the Magicians and become part of the force of Columbia Records and the Columbia Broadcasting System. But three recording sessions and three single releases later, they were unable to crack *Billboard*'s Hot 100.

Upon returning to New York, there was no



talk about new record releases or future recording sessions ... or promotional campaigns ... or potential bookings outside of the Night Owl. Koppelman-Rubin had bigger fish to fry, and for the moment the Magicians went on the back burner. Since nobody in the band had opportunities that exceeded what the Magicians offered, they all decided to hang loose and wait to hear from Koppelman-Rubin. In the meantime, they could celebrate their first anniversary by returning to the Night Owl.

But could they? The new house band at the Night Owl headlining the entire month of September was Lothar & the Hand People, a Denver-based quintet with John Emelin (lead vocals and theremin), Kim King (guitar), Paul Conly (keyboards, synthesizer), Rusty Ford (bass), and Tom Flye (drums). They performed synthesized psychedelia with discordant sound effects that characterized the new sounds of the Village—sounds evolved beyond the ballads and doo-wop homages of the Magicians. Sharing the bill with Lothar for most of the month were Erik Jacobsen's San Francisco import Sopwith Camel, who were housed at the Hotel Albert while Jacobsen prepared to produce their first single, "Hello, Hello," and a full album for Kama Sutra.

The most dynamic evidence of the Village's evolution appeared at the Cafe Wha? with the artist Joe Marra refused to book: Jimmy James, a flamboyant 23-year-old black man with processed Dylanesque hair who wielded a Stratocaster behind his back and between his legs, and plucked guitar strings with his teeth. On September 23, he would board a plane to England with the Animals' Chas Chandler and began a new career using his birth name, Jimi Hendrix.

In October, there was further evidence of evolution when the Blues Magoos' released their first album, *Psychedelic Lollipop*, on Mercury Records—10 songs produced by Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus in the spring, including the single "(We Ain't Got) Nothin' Yet," which would become an international hit and reach #5 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. The B-side, "Gotta Get Away," was written by Alan Gordon with Ritchie Adams.

The changes in the Village were dramatic compared to one year ago, and they challenged the Magicians, and they forced the members to take a long, hard look at their relevance and the viability of their future: the Magicians' incredible journey that began a year ago was over.

Within a week of returning home to New York, John Townley inherited \$85,000 from the estate of his great Aunt Louise Dowden. Valued at \$775,000 in today's money, Townley could live for many years on the inheritance and even invest in his dream project: building a multi-track recording studio with a creative environment that superseded the conditions at Columbia's Studio A.

John Townley quit the Magicians and celebrated his new life by immediately buying a variety of instruments he only dreamed of owning a week before: a Gretsch White Falcon; a 1920s Paramount C Style five-string banjo; and a Gibson F-2 mandolin.

Jake Jacobs followed in John Townley's footsteps: he quit the Magicians and scouted the Village for a new gig. At the Players Theatre on MacDougal Street, upstairs from the Cafe Wha?, the Fugs had a standing engagement that would ultimately last for 700 performances. Fronted by Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg, the Fugs had a strong counterculture vibe that many viewed as revolutionary, even anarchistic. Unlike other bands playing the Village, the Fugs were not young: Sanders was 26 and Kupferberg was 42—their maturity and po-

etic sensibilities magnified the seriousness of their message, and their intimidation of the Village's teenage crowd. *The Fugs First Album* was released in the fall of 1966 on ESP-Disk, a 10-track, 27-minute reissue of the limited Folkways release from late 1965.

The musicians who comprised the Fugs constantly evolved. Steve Weber, who lived in John Townley's basement, was a member in 1965. When Jacobs saw their show at the Players Theatre, Sanders and Kupferberg were joined by Jon Kalb on lead guitar (Danny Kalb's younger brother); Lee Crabtree on keyboards; Vinny Leary on rhythm guitar; and John Anderson on bass. By the end of 1966, Jake Jacobs would replace Kalb on lead guitar.

Alan Gordon worked with Garry Bonner to finish writing "Happy Together." Charlie Koppelman and Don Rubin believed in great songs and the rewards of publishing, and they were high on "Happy Together" and planned to shop it to every act possible. By the end of the year, a deal was struck with the Turtles, and Koppelman-Rubin dictated exactly how it would be recorded. Joe Wissert, the Koppelman-Rubin producer who was present at the



The Magicians, 1966.
(Photo: Sandy Speiser)

meeting with Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus to listen to “An Invitation to Cry,” was installed to produce, and the session was moved away from the Turtles-preferred United Western Studios to Sunset Sound where Bruce Botnick would engineer on eight tracks.

“Happy Together” by the Turtles was released as a single on January 28, 1967. The Turtles showcased the song on numerous television variety shows, including *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*.

By the end of February, “Happy Together” reached the *Billboard* Top 20, and on March 24, it was number one in the country, and would remain number one for three weeks. The song spent a total of 15 weeks on *Billboard*’s Hot 100, and on May 4, it was certified Gold by the Recording Industry Association of America for selling one million copies.

Alan Gordon and Garry Bonner of the Magicians wrote one of the biggest hits of 1967, and they wrote a follow-up for the Turtles that Joe Wissert would produce for Koppelman-Rubin for an April release: “She’d Rather Be With Me.” It was an international hit, peaking at number three on the *Billboard* Hot 100, number two on the *Cash Box* Hot 100, and number one on *Record World*’s 100 Top Pops.

“We Were Never a Group” - John Townley

The Magicians represented the ultimate rock and roll fantasy in post-British Invasion America: a band playing Top 40 in a bar, joined by two coffeehouse guitarists working for tips. They are signed overnight to Columbia Records and an aggressive management company that will use every resource available to make their rock and roll dream come true.

“We were never a group,” says Townley. They were four disparate talents ultimately unable to complement each other and bond as a cohesive unit. Nobody wanted to accept their role as an element of a whole. Nobody wanted to compromise or concede. Everybody wanted to assert their personal ideas, priorities, even prejudices. Jacobs and Townley were soloists, stubbornly protective of their individual styles; Bonner was a lead singer, and the self-professed *only* singer; and Gordon was the songwriter and the composer—the qualified judge and source of material. They were on individual trajectories, and they could not find a common musical path.

From the very beginning, the Magicians were four musicians drawn together by audition and contract, plagued by the stigma of their unorthodox formation.

The “New” Magicians

Koppelman-Rubin believed in Bonner and Gordon’s songwriting and proposed to reform the Magicians and record Bonner and Gordon songs with the winning formula of “Happy Together.”

Folk guitarists Steve Gillette and Don Kerr were recruited to replace Jacobs and Townley. Gillette, also a songwriter, wrote “Darcy Far-



The ‘New’ Magicians, February 1967.
L to R: Alan Gordon, Garry Bonner,
Steve Gillette, Don Ker.

(Photo: Don Hunstein)

row,” which was first recorded by Ian & Sylvia in 1965 and would eventually be covered by over 300 artists. The new quartet were booked for several nights at the Night Owl to get tight as a band and work out new material. Though it was evident to the Night Owl crowd that the band was still the Magicians but with two new members, the Koppelman-Rubin strategy was to promote the Magicians commercially as a “brand new” band.

On January 24, 1966, four days before “Happy Together” was scheduled for release, the new Magicians recorded a Bonner-Gordon composition, “Lady Fingers.” Columbia’s Studio A, where the Magicians previously recorded, closed October 14, 1966, and the majority of Columbia’s rock and roll recordings moved to Studio B on the second floor of 49 East 52nd Street. It was the band’s fourth and final session with Columbia.

John Townley was hired to play on the session, using his Fender Mustang with a new fretless neck to add Beatlesque hook lines in the background. The song featured a bright, sunshine pop melody suggestive of “Happy Together,” replete with background harmony crescendo. The B-side was also recorded, the Bonner-Gordon original “Double Good Feeling,” an easy-going, good-time pop music standard.

To promote the new Magicians, Columbia Photo Studio sessions were scheduled with both Sandy Speiser and Dan Hunstein for the middle of February. A total of 45 images were shot on four rolls of medium-format 2-1/4 b&w film. For three rolls shot against both plain and pleated backdrops, Steve Gillette, Don Ker, and

Alan Gordon wore sport coats and flowered, patterned ties to contrast Bonner’s double-breasted jacket over a ribbed crewneck sweater. A fourth roll featured psychedelic, in-camera prism effects. Without Jacobs and Townley, the group looked foreign, intangible, with only remote resemblance to the former Magicians, despite Bonner and Gordon’s presence.

To capitalize on Bonner and Gordon’s songwriting credit on “Happy Together”—and the “new” group—the release of “Lady Fingers” was scheduled for March 14. A press release with the headline “Magicians Press First Single” appeared in the March 18 issue of *Cash Box*: “Garry Bonner and Alan Gordon, song writers under contract to Chardon Music, Koppelman-Rubin’s BMI affiliate, now comprise two members of a new group. Known as the Magicians, writers Bonner and Gordon have teamed up with members Steve and Don. Their new record, a Bonner-Gordon composition, is called ‘Lady Fingers,’ and will be released on Columbia March 14. Bonner and Gordon wrote ‘Happy Together’ for the Turtles, which is number 3 on this week’s *Cash Box* Hot 100. They also penned the new Gene Pitney record, ‘Animal Crackers,’ as well as the next release by the Righteous Brothers.”

The release of “Lady Fingers” was delayed until May 1, and the record would not break the *Billboard* Hot 100. The resurrection of the Magicians was short lived, but all four original members were “on their way,” and they would each ultimately find success in New York’s rock ‘n’ roll world.

EPILOGUE: AFTER THE MAGICIANS

In the spring of 1967, just six months after leaving the Magicians, **John Townley** combined his inheritance with insights on the New York recording industry and opened the revolutionary Apostolic Studios. Located at 53 E 10th Street in a six-story 1899 Neoclassical loft building, it was the first studio opened in the Village where musicians lived and worked—a departure from the midtown recording industry. Apostolic was the first 12-track recording studio in the country; the first studio designed with a stage-lighted, living room ambiance; and the first studio to give musicians the freedom to operate their own equipment. Frank Zappa & the Mothers of Invention, the Grateful Dead, the Critters, Spanky & Our Gang, the Serendipity Singers, the Fugs, Rhinoceros, Silver Apples, Kenny Rogers & the First Edition, Alan Ginsberg, and Townley's new 19-piece group, the Family of Apostolic, were just a few of the artists who recorded at the new studio.

Townley soon opened a second recording studio, Pacific High, in San Francisco, the first 16-track studio on the West Coast. But after Townley's concepts were duplicated by the Record Plant and Jimi Hendrix's Electric Ladyland, he closed his studios in the early 1970s. He became a contract songwriter for MCA, CBS, and Kama Rippa, then turned to astrology, writing four critically-acclaimed books that are still in print. Today, Townley is an authority on maritime music and has produced over a dozen albums in the genre. He continues to record and his music is released on Lollipoppe Shoppe Records of Berlin, Germany.

After a year with the Fugs, **Jake Jacobs** honed his act with Andrea "Bunky" Skinner and formed Bunky & Jake. Bob Wyld and Art Polhemus sold the duo to Mercury Records and recorded two albums: 1968's *Bunky and*



Jake and 1969's *L.A.M.F.*, which featured Felix Pappalardi on bass. Jacobs then formed Jake & the Family Jewels and recorded two albums for Polydor: *Jake and the Family Jewels* in 1970 and *The Big Moose Calls His Baby Sweet Lorraine* in 1972, which featured Garry Bonner on backing vocals, and Tom Flye, the former Lothar & the Hand People drummer, as engineer.

Andrea "Bunky" Skinner died on March 20, 2011, and Jacobs resumed his solo career, releasing *A Lick and a Promise* in 2012 as Jake & the Rest of the Jewels—a critical success with 15 songs composed by Jacobs. Today, Jacobs still lives in Greenwich Village with a rare courtyard where he feeds flocks of birds every morning. He still owns his original Fender Esquire and he is in the final stage of writing six songs for a new album. He spends most of his free time completing a mural that fills the entire wall of his kitchen. "I am grateful," says Jacobs. "I have a cat and my greatest pleasure in life is petting her."

Four months after the release of "Lady Fingers," **Garry Bonner** launched a solo career



that resulted in nine singles between 1967 and 1976, including October 1967's "The Heart Of Juliet Jones" b/w "Me About You"—both written by Bonner with Alan Gordon—and July 1972's "Mother's Waiting" (produced by Gary Klein and John Townley) b/w "It's So Easy" (written and produced by Bonner and Gordon).

The songwriting team of Garry Bonner and Alan Gordon produced numerous hits, including "Happy Together," named one of the Top 50 songs of the 20th century by BMI with over five million performances on American radio by 1999. Bonner and Gordon would write four more songs for the Turtles, including two Top 15 Hits, "You Know What I Mean" (#12, *Billboard* Hot 100) and "She's My Girl" (#14, *Billboard* Hot 100).

Bonner and Gordon compositions were recorded by numerous other artists, including Three Dog Night ("Celebrate," #15 on the *Billboard* Hot 100), Bobby Darin, the Righteous Brothers, Petula Clark, Gary Lewis & the Playboys, and the E-Types, to name a few.

Following the end of the Bonner-Gordon partnership in the early 1970s, Bonner spent the '90s and 2000s as a vocalist with Kenny Vance and the Planotones, performing '50s and '60s rock and roll. **Alan Gordon** pursued a 30-year solo career writing songs, plays, and short stories. The four songs he wrote for Barbra Streisand included her July 1977 hit, "My Heart Belongs to Me" (#4, *Billboard* Hot 100). Though he left us in 2008 at the age of 64, Gordon's unbridled joy, love, and kindness continue to be remembered through his songs, which have been performed over 18 Million times on radio and television and in movies and commercials. As Gordon so beautifully said prior to his passing, "As long as there's an April, a girl and a boy, there will always be music and I'll be around."

Without **Bob Wyld** and **Art Polhemus**, the Magicians would have never existed. They built the band from the ground up with just a drummer, and recorded the one song that aroused the convictions of so many who believed the band could be a hit: "An Invitation to Cry." After the Magicians, Wyld and Polhemus recorded three albums with the Blues Magoos: *Psychedelic Lollipop*, *Electric Comic Book*, and *Basic Blues Magoos*. After producing LPs for Bunky & Jake, Kangaroo (MGM 1968),

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| Recording | | | |
|---|-------------------|------------------|--|
| | (9 am — midnight) | (after midnight) | |
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| 4 track | \$60.00 | \$80.00 | |
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| Tape (2400 ft.) | Disks | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | (10" - 45 rpm) | (10" - 33 rpm) | (12" - 33 rpm) |
| 1/4" | \$10.00 | | | |
| 1/2" | \$20.00 | single face \$5.00 | \$7.50 | \$10.00 |
| 1" | \$40.00 | double face \$7.50 | \$15.00 | \$20.00 |

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Bob Wyld, 1966. (Photo: Sandy Speiser)

and Koala (Capitol 1968), the pair ended their partnership.

Wyld reformed the Blues Magoos with Peppy Castro and recorded two albums: 1969's *Never Goin' Back to Georgia* and 1970's *Gulf Coast Bound*. In 1974, Wyld relocated to Los Angeles and joined Seals & Crofts' publishing company, Dawnbreaker Music, and dominated the charts with "Summer Breeze," "Diamond Girl," "We May Never Pass This Way Again," and England Dan & John Ford Coley's "I'd Really Love to See You Tonight." Wyld later represented Otis Blackwell's music catalog and continues to produce records for his American Classic Talent label. He lives outside Los Angeles on the Tracy Ranch with his wife Cyndi and is an actor in Westerns, most recently in HBO's *Deadwood* and Michael Feifer's *Shooting Star*.

Art Polhemus continued working as a producer and engineer into the 2000s, and is recognized for his work with Angelo Badalamenti on the *Twin Peaks* TV series and feature film, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*.

In 1968, Koppelman-Rubin Associates was purchased by Commonwealth United and **Charles Koppelman** moved to CBS Records as Vice President/General Manager of worldwide publishing. In 1986, Koppelman formed SBK Entertainment World, Inc., the largest independent music publisher in the world, which sold to EMI Music in 1989 for \$300 million. Koppelman was subsequently appointed Chairman and CEO of the consolidated EMI Records Group North America. From 2000 to 2004, Koppelman was Chairman of Steve Madden, Ltd., and in 2005, he became Chairman of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. Today, he serves as Chairman and CEO of CAK Entertainment, a brand development and advisory firm. **Don Rubin** remained in production and founded Don Rubin Productions & RadaDara Music, BMI. He achieved early success with Charlie Daniels before serving as senior vice president of A&R for SBK Records, and executive producer at Capitol

Records, where his credits included Frank Sinatra's final 1993 LP, *Duets*.

After serving in the marines, **Mike Appel** returned to music and formed the Balloon Farm in 1967, co-writing the band's "A Question of Temperature," which was released in October 1967 and broke Billboard's Top 40 in February of 1968. In 1972, Appel signed Bruce Springsteen to a production contract, and was responsible for Springsteen's audition with Columbia Records' John Hammond, and subsequent signing to the label by Clive Davis. Appel produced Springsteen's first two albums from 1973: *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* and *The Wild, the Innocent & the E Street Shuffle*. Appel co-produced Springsteen's third album, the breakthrough *Born to Run*, but by 1976, the relationship ended in a lengthy legal battle that was settled out of court.

After his short tenure as manager of the Magicians, **George Papadapoulo** expanded on his success with the Unicorn Coffee House and opened Boston's Psychedelic Supermarket at 590 Commonwealth Avenue on September 8, 1967, with Cream performing eight consecutive nights. Located in a converted parking garage, the industrial club had no windows and initially no seating, but it did not deter the bookings of the Grateful Dead, Moby Grape, Country Joe & the Fish, and many other top bands. In 1969, Papadapoulo moved the Unicorn into the garage, but both clubs soon closed and the building was demolished. Papadapoulo died in 1992.

At 92 years old, **George Silano** is the oldest living principal of the *Four to Go* production team. He is credited as cinematographer and director of numerous films, television shows, and documentaries in the '60s and '70s, including many episodes of *NYPD* (1967), Alan Funt's *What Do You Say to a Naked Lady* (1970), and *The Last American Hero* with Jeff Bridges (1973). In 1965, he directed and filmed the landmark documentary/interview, *Rev. Martin Luther King: A Personal Portrait*, which received special screenings in 2021 with the participation of Silano for live commentary.

In 1976, a mere 10 years after *Four to Go* was broadcast on WCBS-TV, the original 16mm film was declared unavailable. In the 1990s, one poor-quality print—obviously a multi-generation copy of a kinescope—was offered for sale by several dealers on VHS, and can today be viewed on YouTube in three parts.

Following the release of *Gandalf* on Capitol Records in 1969, **Peter Sando** embarked on a solo career and released his first CD, *Creatures of Habit*, in 1999 on High Point Records, followed by the solo albums *Afraid of the Dark*, *Let There Be Love*, and 2020's *Reason to Live*. In 2021, Sando released *Tears of Ages* by Gandalf, a tribute to Village songwriters of the '60s with six new Sando compositions. Sando continues to write and perform his songs throughout the East Coast folk circuit.



Jerry Yester joined the Lovin' Spoonful in 1967 until the band broke up a year later. He rejoined the MFQ in 1988 for tours of Japan and recorded seven MFQ albums for Japanese labels. In 1991, he reformed the Lovin' Spoonful with Joe Butler and Steve Boone for reunion tours that lasted over 25 years. His most recent solo album is 2017's *Pass Your Light Around* and he is currently recording new material from his home in Arkansas. Yester was married to Judy Henske from 1963 to 1971 and has been married to **Marlene Waters** (now Yester) since 1975.

Shelly Leder (now Stewart) believes he is the only living member of the **Jagged Edge**, though the band's manager, Mick (now Mik) Glasser, is alive and well ... and on Facebook. In the spring of 1966, Leder played bass on Donovan's *Season of the Witch*, and backed Donovan with the Jagged Edge at the Hollywood Bowl. Through the '70s and '80s, Stewart went through numerous musical incarnations—glam, punk, New Wave, and industrial, and his bands included Fahrenheit 451, Orange Midnight, and Poptronix.

Joe Marra remained a legend in Greenwich Village his entire life, holding court in his later years at the Caffe Reggio, just around the corner from the Night Owl. There was a celebration of his 85th birthday at the Bitter End on July 18, 2018, with performances by many of the Night Owl's alumni, including John Townley, Jake Jacobs, John Sebastian, Steve Boone, and Peter Sando. Marra died on January 30, 2021, at the age of 87.

In 1972, "An Invitation to Cry" was included in Elektra Records' **Nuggets: Original Artyfacts from the First Psychedelic Era**, the seminal two LP compilation of garage, pop and psychedelic classics from 1965-1968. Compiled and annotated by New York guitarist Lenny Kaye (Patti Smith Group), *Nuggets* proved to be the vehicle that generated a new awareness of the Magicians and their premiere single.

In 1999, Sundazed Music released *An Invitation to Cry: The Best of the Magicians*. The CD compiles thirteen of the Magicians' recordings, including the eight sides of their four



single releases and five demos and live recordings—all detailed in the article with updated recording and release dates.

At the **Night Owl Cafe**, 1967 entertainment highlights included Tim Buckley, the International Submarine Band (with Gram Parsons), the Novae Police, and the Flying Machine with James Taylor. All accounts indicate Marra's father sold 118 W 3rd in spring 1967. "Joe's father definitely sold the building and it upset Joe," says Marlene Yester. "This is from the horse's mouth." The damage to Marra's hearing from the loud music was also well known, and it may have contributed to the club's demise.

The Morning and the Night People were the Night Owl's final acts, and their letters remained on the abandoned marquee for over a month until they fell to the ground one by one. Marra opened the space in the summer of 1967 as a poster/head shop with "Night Owl" in large yellow letters across the canopy's former marquee. Posters of musicians, celebrities, concerts, and art filled the front windows, with buttons, beads, DayGlo paints, and more for sale inside. Jack Camp (Jack the Rat) continued working with Marra, along with John Barrett and Sue Verdi (real name Lora Rose) until the shop's closure in the mid '70s.

From 1981 to 2013, the space was occupied by Bob Plotnik's Bleecker Bob's record shop. Today, 118 W 3rd belongs to Miyabi, an Asian cuisine restaurant. The legendary canopy is long gone, but the glass windows and the glass entry door remain, and they can bring the Night Owl to life with the blink of an eye.

Along the rest of 3rd Street, there is no longer a Zig Zag Cafe; the Heat Wave is now the Blue Note Jazz Club; Ed Simon's Four Winds is a Japanese noodle house; and a 7-11 takes the place of the Village Purple Onion. Moving east, Club Cinderella is today the Zinc Bar, a jazz club that retains much of its historic character, including the restored etched glass behind the bar.

On Bleecker, the Cafe Au Go Go was demolished in the '70s, while the Bitter End remains legendary after more than 60 years. On MacDougal, the Gaslight Cafe closed in 1971, Izzy Young's Folklore Center closed in 1973; the Kettle of Fish closed in 1987, and the Cafe Fi-

garo closed in 2008. But you can stand on the corner of 3rd and look south on MacDougal and see the Caffe Reggio, the Cafe Wha?, and the Minetta Tavern—they all endure, and continue to fill the present with the past.

Though so much of 1960s New York City has been replaced, the majority of Greenwich Village remains the same, and almost everything that existed prior to 1969 exists today—because in 1969 over 2,200 buildings and 100 blocks in Greenwich Village were declared part of a historic district.

And in the footsteps of *Four to Go*, you can still visit the Pan Am Building, but it was sold to Metropolitan Life in 1981 and renamed MetLife, and in 2000 the Josef Albers mural was removed with the explanation, "It just doesn't work for us anymore." But in 2005, Tishman Speyer and the Irvine Company acquired the building from MetLife, and in 2019, an exact reproduction of the mural was returned to its original place in the lobby—returning 1961 to the present ... a present where the South Street Seaport still meets the East River at Fulton Street ... and Belvedere Castle still towers over Central Park ... and ice still pounds the shore of the Hudson in winter ... and the chains on subway cars still rattle ... and abandoned cars still occupy Staten Island's empty lots ... all places where the spirit of the Magicians' quest to make it in New York's rock 'n' roll world can still be found. •



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Left: *The Magicians*, September 1965.
(Photo: Henry Parker)

Top left: *The Night Owl* as a poster shop ca. 1969, and (right) in the '80s when the space was taken over by Bleecker Bob's record shop.