

The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Russian Hill Upholstery & Décor is still located in Nob Hill, not Russian Hill.

New and relatively new: Exotic Zone Gifts & More on California and Hyde. Tahona Mercado (tacos, quesadillas, craft spirits, wine, liquor, Mezcal tasting) at 1168 Leavenworth. Be Bright Artists Collective, a new hair salon/art gallery at 1045 Bush. More news about Bush Street: I wondered whatever happened to reWAXation, that hair removal place on Bush Street. It turns out they just moved across the street. "Come to Bush, leave without one" is their motto. No joke. They're at 1017 Bush.



Maybe some of you out there remember when the Herald was a bona fide newspaper, not this piddly little newsletter you're reading. And you may remember perennial SF Herald cover girl Terri Nunn, leader of the band Berlin, which has been around since Joe Biden was in his thirties. Well, Berlin is back in town (sort of). They'll be at a brand new concert hall, the Guild Theatre in Menlo Park, on February 19th. The Guild used to be a movie theater, but now those places are going the way of newspapers.



DAVID NOT LIVE

Fondly remembering the Thin White Duke



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David Bowie died six years ago this month. In the Spring 2016 issue of the Herald, some of us here wrote a few memories we had of him. Here are some of them. We'll have more next issue.

The first time I encountered David Bowie was in 1979, when I was about 14 years old. It was watching him on a TV commercial for his album, *Lodger*, which featured the video for his song "DJ", showing him smashing records and collapsing into some venetian blinds. I was repulsed.

Later that year he appeared on *Saturday Night Live* and performed some more of his artsy Berlin period shtick (Bowie did "Sprockets" on *SNL* ten years before Mike Meyers and his Dieter character did). I thought he was mentally ill. My friend Ken slowly got me into the Thin White Duke, as did this older guy down the block who wanted to be a rock star. By 1981 my record collection was no longer a Bowie virgin, and included *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* as well as its follow-up, *Aladdin Sane*. Bowie performing "New Wave" almost a decade before "New Wave" was invented.

Bowie's best-selling work, *Let's Dance*, was released in 1983, and its commercial sound, bland title and silly cover art turned off much of his fan base. Regardless, Bowie was more popular than ever, and apparently happier than he'd been in a long time. The songs off the album ("Let's Dance", "China Girl", "Modern Love", etc.) had a more positive vibe than the gloomy tunes of his past decade and a half in the limelight. My godmother took me to see Bowie at New York's Madison Square Garden on his *Serious Moonlight Tour* that year, and to this day, it's the best concert I've ever attended. It wasn't just music - it was a performance. And in many ways, I wish it ended there. Not him dying. I just wished that was it, in a way. The memories didn't get any better.

Sure, *Let's Dance* probably wasn't his best album. There was none of his trademark oddness about it. But after 15 years of being weird, what was wrong with an album of smart, uplifting pop tunes? David later dismissed *Let's Dance* and its two follow-up albums, *Tonight* and *Never Let Me Down*, as

his "Phil Collins years", and seems to have as much of a disdain for them as his original fan base has. The dark Bowie slowly crept back into these new, happier Bowie records ("Loving the Alien" on *Tonight* and "Time Will Crawl" on *Never Let Me Down*).

That old Bowie peculiar-vibe accelerated on his 1987 *The Glass Spider Tour*. I saw him at San Jose's Spartan Stadium for that. It was good, but I preferred the show I saw in New York four years earlier. Bowie had reached his 40th birthday, and to see him perform amidst sci-fi type stage props evoked memories of him a decade earlier, and to me it felt tired. It was like watching one of his less-talented imitators like Gary Numan or Steve Strange than David himself.

During *The Glass Spider Tour*, Bowie mentioned his favorite band were the Screaming Blue Messiahs, a band that was experimental, noisy, and... awful. In 1988 Bowie formed a band called Tin Machine, which was experimental, noisy, and... awful. Tin Machine had a short life, detested by critics and fans alike.

Bowie then went solo again, releasing a few more albums over the next three decades, with a more avant-garde sound - or so I've heard. They didn't sell very well, and they weren't played on the radio much, if at all. And I'm not complaining. I had no desire to listen to David Bowie anymore. Not that it's necessarily justified, it's just the way it is. Or was. So long, David.

Gene Mahoney

SF Herald Editor/Publisher/Delivery Boy

When I first found out about David Bowie's passing, I had just logged onto social media late on Sunday night and immediately saw someone's post about it in the newsfeed.

I remember just blankly staring at it in state of disbelief for a long time before my brain could register what I had just read. I found myself unable to speak and immobilized with a flood of grief so intense I couldn't even cry but tears ran down my face. I was in a state of shock, I felt sick on a deep physiological level. It felt strange I'd have such a visceral response upon hearing of a celebrity's death. My mind was fluctuating between a numbness of denial and sudden rushes of emotional devastation. I kept whispering to myself, "No, this can't be, no he can't be dead, not in my lifetime."

Bowie felt immortal and because he was being reborn over and over in a continual metamorphosis on the world stage, he was like phoenix always rising from the ashes. Surely he would never be gone forever, surely he had not left us, the man who consoled us with the lyrics: "Oh no love you're not alone, give me your hand, 'cause you're wonderful."

Growing up with all of Bowie's incarnations throughout my life, it felt as if he was a part of me, deeply resonating in my psyche since my formative years. To many of us, his music was the soundtrack to some of our greatest

life experiences. His lyrics were a passionate clarion call to celebrate and express openly our otherness, he inspired those of us who were different and alienated to embrace this proudly.

I immediately posted on social media how I was feeling and started to see an overwhelming outpour from friends online who felt the same, reminiscing his legacy together. For those of us who felt so alone being the outsider or ostracized for our uniqueness, suddenly the pain of his death brought us together, our memories uniting us on a universal level.

I never cared about celebrities or fame nor could understand why people idolized or deified them. I learned to separate the art from the artist. David Bowie was the exception; he was not just a performer but multifaceted characters in all consuming drama not unlike that of the Pierrot which inspired him. He was more than an iconic aesthetic, musician, actor, poet, philanthropist: he was transcendence itself, a living canvas of exploration, pulling us out of ourselves into magical realms and mysterious dimensions, feeding our senses with the arcane, the taboo, esotericism, the sublime. As teacher, prophet, alien preacher, he was a prolific catalyst of change in the 20th century, an exponent of total autonomy, the ascended master of Theosophy ushering in the new Aeon.

Bowie seemed like a mythological being that lived outside of space and time and an inner space alien, alchemy's androgyne, who taught us to see our world through new eyes. His music spoke on behalf of an identity, spirituality and sexuality that we denied and kept hidden behind societal mores and its oppressive inhibitions. He had such a profound impact upon society, as a liberator and cultural agitator, he changed the world forever.

The following week laid heavy on my mind and I felt this indescribable emptiness. Losing Bowie was as if a great light and brilliance had gone out of the world, one that we would never see again for another thousand years. As he traveled through these various epochs, we bore witness to his prophetic visions which illustrated our history. As a goth teen in the 1980s, when androgyny and gender bending was at its height among the mainstream after the cultural inception of the 70s glam rock movement that Bowie manifested with Ziggy Stardust, Bowie's albums *Station to Station* and the Berlin trilogy, mainly *Low* and *Heroes*, were the soundtrack to the emergence of the Symbolist inspired goth movement. *Low* was the defining album, along with Joy Division's *Unknown Pleasures*, in its aching, tormented, and haunting beauty. The Thin White Duke became a stylistic icon for the poetic, fatalistic romanticism that we lived in, full of existential nihilism, drug induced spiritual exploration and sexual experimentation that always verged on self destruction, suicide or overdose. We lived each day as if it was our last, many were using heroin heavily and so the song "Heroes" was a kind of anthem, that we could be each other's heroes but just for one day. Making sanguine promises late into

the night: "I, I will be king, you, you will be queen... we can be heroes, forever and ever." We lived in this fragile promise of forever lost in our youth.

Low was a musical liminal state between this otherness and the desperate longing of the outsider to find solace. The sampling of the song "A New Career in a New Town" from *Low* on the last song of *Black Star*, was as if to say he's ready to face his death and begin a new existence.

As I scoured through friends' Bowie revelations, some people began to tell heartfelt stories of knowing him on a personal level. The stories were fascinating, ranging from Shade Rupe's recollections of the black humor shared while working with David Bowie on the set of *Twin Peaks* to Steve Severin of Siouxsie and the Banshees reminiscing of opening for David Bowie in 1987 during the *Glass Spider Tour*, which inspired him to write his autobiography.

It was during this same tour my then boyfriend had invited me to meet David Bowie backstage, as his uncle had opened for him years earlier on the *Serious Moonlight Tour* and were friends. Imagine as a teenager, the impact an opportunity like this would have on you, it was surreal. A few years later in 1991, I was working at the Warfield for the Tin Machine shows and invited that same boyfriend to work alongside me. Strangely the audience was near empty and Bowie spent almost the entire show singing to us as we stood in the balcony. We planned to be married and it felt as though the theater venue had become a church that night, and we took our vows of matrimony as we sang his lyrics in unison.

Bowie's album *Black Star* was his swan song and a culmination of his esoteric studies, illuminating us with this knowledge he'd gained over decades. The last song on *Black Star* has the lyrics: "Seeing more and feeling less, Saying no but meaning yes, This is all I ever meant, That's the message that I sent, I can't give you everything."

The esoteric symbolism aside, to me, Bowie is telling us to live fearlessly and without inhibitions, to see everything with great awe and wonder without fear or judgement, to be open to experience the unknown and to never let your fears keep you from speaking your mind with full authenticity, so that you die with no regrets. And he can't tell us everything because we have to follow our own paths and hearts.

Zora Burden

Esteemed underground writer

When I was younger, early high school, I was lucky enough to be taken to various shows on Broadway and at Radio City Music Hall. When I first saw David Bowie perform on TV, I thought immediately of those earlier days when I had seen British performer Anthony Newley. Bowie's voice and the way he moved in performance in general was quite reminiscent of the great Newley in the shows

"Stop The World" and "Roar of the Greasepaint".

There he was, this young, thin version of Newley. You couldn't take your eyes off him. Mesmerizing. Over the years, Bowie, unlike Newley, was able to translate from one medium to another...from concert stage, to video, to live TV, and to film...Bowie was always a wonder. You had to just stop and watch him. It was years later that I read Bowie had been influenced, or at least was a big fan of Newley's.

In any event, when I was fortunate enough to see one of his new videos being showcased on MTV (we all waited with baited breath), I was never disappointed. In person it was even more obvious that he had this incredible prana aura that lured you in, this great skill that only the giants have. *The Serious Moonlight Tour* comes to mind. Bowie's magic filled Madison Square Garden. He took us in, portraying his many characters, but always gave us his all. For many years, we were more than happy to fall under his spell.

May you rest in peace, Mr. Bowie. Can't wait to see you one day again.

Patricia Kearney

(Gene Mahoney's Godmother)

John Lennon

By Ace Backwards

(Part Seven - The Conclusion)

To ward off all the evil spirits, John-and-Yoko became obsessed with the occult. "The Lennons saw magic as both an instrument of crisis management and the ideal weapon," said John Green, Yoko's full-time tarot-card reader. According to Green, who accompanied Yoko on the trip, Yoko traveled to South America to hook up with a famous Columbian witch named Lena. Yoko paid the witch \$60,000 to use her magic powers to protect Yoko from her many enemies, and to increase her wealth and power. Unfortunately, for the magic spells to work, the witch had to cut off the head of a white dove and have Yoko sign her name in the dove's blood. So how's *that* for an image to remember the great "peace guru" Yoko Ono by: slaughtering a white dove in the name of acquiring personal wealth and power.

In 1980 John Lennon embarked on a brief comeback, scoring the last hit song of his lifetime, "Starting Over." But he was wrong yet again. He wasn't *starting over*. He was *finishing*. So he got that one wrong, too. Just like he had gotten just about everything else wrong before that.

"If John had stayed in England this would not have happened," said George Harrison, commenting on Lennon's tragic murder. Shortly after that, a crazed English Beatles fan who thought George was a "witch" who

was controlling his mind, broke into George's English mansion with a butcher knife and stabbed him ten times. George probably would've died if his wife hadn't smashed a big lamp over the intruder's head. After that, George pretty much went back to being the Quiet One.

Take a Drink from Dr. Lennon's Special Cup

But there still remained that one last missing piece to the puzzle. What was WRONG with John Lennon?

What had caused the whole spectacular "success," and the equally spectacular fuck-up that was his life? The grand and cosmic melodrama that was the life of John Winston Ono Lennon. (5,493 John Lennon biographies to date: "Every ex-girlfriend, every chauffeur gets a book," he said, wryly.)

Maybe it was little Stu Sutcliffe that was the missing piece in the Lennon puzzle. That night in Hamburg, Germany in 1961 when Lennon went berserk after a weeklong binge of alcohol and amphetamines and kicked the living shit out of his little pal Stu, kicking him in the head repeatedly with his famous, pointy-toed cowboy boots (were they Beatle boots?). Leaving Stu lying there on the sidewalk in a bleeding, unconscious heap.

"John was taken over by one of this uncontrollable rages," wrote Pauline Sutcliffe, Stu's sister, repeating what Stu had told her shortly after the attack. "He kicked at Stu again and again and kicked him in the head. There was blood streaming down from Stuart's head when John finally came to his senses. John looked down at Stuart and fled, disgusted and terrified. Paul McCartney was with them when the fight began but could do nothing to stop the instant insane burst of violence. Paul helped Stuart, who was bleeding from face and ear, and took him to their room. I'm convinced that kick was what eventually led to Stuart's death. I know John always held himself responsible for Stuart dying. Yoko Ono told a friend, Marnie Hair, what I had said about his guilt at losing control with Stuart and punching and kicking him. John told Yoko that he was wearing his gold and silver cowboy boots with pointed toes."

Shortly after the attack, Stu Sutcliffe started suffering from terrible, violent headaches, and died of a brain hemorrhage at age 21. "A postmortem revealed Stuart had a dent in his skull, as though from a blow or kick," wrote Pauline Sutcliffe.

"The devastating news (of Stu's death) hit The Beatles like a bomb," wrote Geoffrey Giuliano, The Beatles biographer. "John Lennon burst into hysterical laughter, unable to stop."

Whether John Lennon actually killed Stuart Sutcliffe or not, Lennon himself felt he had killed him. Lennon felt personally responsible for Stu's death until his dying day. And was plagued with guilt all his life, confessing as much to several intimates including his guitarist Jesse Ed Davis.

Beatle fans, of course, were shocked and outraged to hear this blasphemy about Saint John Lennon. And Pauline Sutcliffe has subsequently toned down her original statements, probably in the face of all the pressure and heat from all the outraged little Beatlemaniacs.

By why the shock? Why the outrage, Beatle fans? Why the surprise? Considering John Lennon's lifelong, and well-documented, pattern of regularly going berserk in drunken, drugged-out rages and coming within inches of killing people? So *spare us* the shock and outrage, Beatle fans.

Lennon in his later years suffered from persistent nightmares, which he dutifully recorded in his journals. In one nightmare he's in a dark backyard, surrounded by headless bodies who are menacing him. Lennon is carrying their heads in his arms and looking for some place to hide the severed heads where nobody will find them.

He suffered from major guilt, that boy John. All his life. And it's what ruined the whole grand parade that his life could have been. Every step of the way. The guilt that plagued him was what drove him to his great success, and what destroyed him. It made John Lennon, the man who had everything, desperately want to be somebody else. Anybody else. If only he could trade in his mind for a new mind. Or as Lennon put it: "The only reason I'm a star is because of my repression. Nothing else would have driven me through all that if I was 'normal.'"

And there's one other factor to consider: John Lennon's motives in all of this. There's no question that John Lennon was a nasty piece of work. So one begins to question the Hero-With-Feet-of-Clay image. For it could well have been something much, much worse.

"I was the one that all the other kids' parents would say, 'Keep away from him,'" said Lennon, proudly. "Because they knew what I was. The parents instinctively recognized I was a trouble-maker, meaning, I did not conform and I would influence their children, which I did. I did my best to disrupt every friend's home. Partly out of envy that I didn't have this so-called home."

And you wonder if this family-wrecking side of John Lennon magically disappeared with the success of The Beatles. Or if in fact Lennon relished his role as '60 Youth Leader, as Psychedelic Pied Piper, driving as big of a wedge as he could into the fabled '60s Generation Gap. Which turned son against father, and daughter against mother.

And dig this. Along with "Tomorrow Never Knows," Lennon's paean to chemical mysticism, there was another drug song on *Revolver*. Another ode to chemically-altered consciousness. The song was called "Doctor Robert." And it's about a famous doctor in New York, much revered among the Andy Warhol set, who was famous for injecting his patients with a special vitamin-enriched cocktail that was laced with PURE methamphetamines. Speed, baby. His

patients left Doctor Robert's office feeling no pain. On top of the world. In the pink of good health and full of energy!

What a song it is, "Doctor Robert." The Beatles sing some of their sweetest harmonies on that song. "Well, well, well, you're fe-e-e-eeling fine . . ." they sing, like a barbershop quartette. Or perhaps like hearty Christmas carolers singing hymns of good cheer. Only The Beatles are singing about that warm and glorious feeling that comes from the rush of methamphetamines, when it's injected with a needle directly into your blood, and then pumped immediately to your heart, and then rushed immediately to your head-bone! Well, well, well . . . you're REALLY feeling fine now.

"Take a drink from Doctor Robert's special cup," sings John Lennon, oh so sweetly.

Lennon's pal Pete Shotton described how *thrilled* John Lennon was at slipping this drug reference, this methamphetamine reference, this little "joke," into one of his innocent li'l Beatle songs: "When John first played me the acetate of 'Dr. Robert,' he seemed beside himself with glee over the prospect of millions of record buyers innocently singing along," wrote Shotton.

Ahh, what a great gag for a natural born home-wrecker, huh?

Years later, I would meet homeless, 17-year-old runaway chicks, with their faces covered with sores and abscesses from slamming bad speed. Their little heads looked like lop-sided, deflated basketballs from the punctured sores and swollen abscesses. I didn't find this *nearly* as funny. But then, perhaps I lacked John Lennon's madcap sense of humor.

So there you have it. The great '60s Youth Leader, John Lennon. The Pied Piper of his generation. The great Dream-Weaver. The Walrus, himself. In one song, John Lennon is urging his listeners to take one drug, LSD, in order to alter their minds on the deepest level of their spiritual consciousness. And then, in the very next song, John Lennon is slipping a mickey into the drink.

But all you Beatle fans pipe down. John Lennon was one of the all-time greats. You think he's losing any sleep over what some bum on the street thinks of him? I'm just giving one side of Lennon. That doesn't negate all the other great things about him. I love just about every Lennon song ever recorded. John Lennon was one of the great artists of our time. Also, he was nuts. So I'm just trying to sort it out.

John Lennon.###

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♪ "LET'S DO
 THE
 LOCKDOWN
 AGAIN!" ♪

