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Expecting to Fly

The businessmen crowded around
They came to hear the golden sound
—Neil Young

Impossible Dreamers

For decades Los Angeles was synonymous with Hollywood—the silver screen and its attendant deities. L.A. meant palm trees and the Pacific Ocean, despotic directors and casting couches, a factory of illusion. L.A. was "the coast," cut off by hundreds of miles of desert and mountain ranges. In those years Los Angeles wasn't acknowledged as a music town, despite producing some of the best jazz and rhythm and blues of the '40s and '50s. In 1960 the music business was still centered in New York, whose denizens regarded L.A. as kooky and provincial at best.

Between the years 1960 and 1965 a remarkable shift occurred. The sound and image of Southern California began to take over, replacing Manhattan as the hub of American pop music. Producer Phil Spector took the hit-factory ethos of New York's Brill Building

songwriting stable to L.A. and blew up the teen-pop sound to epic proportions. Entranced by Spector, local suburban misfit Brian Wilson wrote honeyed hymns to beach and car culture that reinvented the Golden State as a teenage paradise. Other L.A. producers followed suit. In 1965, singles recorded in Los Angeles occupied the No. 1 spot for an impressive twenty weeks, compared to just one for New York.

On and around Sunset, west of old Hollywood before one reached the manicured pomp of Beverly Hills, clubs and coffeehouses began to proliferate. Although L.A. had always been geared to the automobile, the Strip now became a living neighborhood—and a mecca for dissident youth. Epicenter for L.A.'s dawning folk scene was Doug Weston's Troubadour club, south of the Strip at 9081 Santa Monica Boulevard. Weston had opened his original Troubadour on nearby La Cienega Boulevard, but had jumped across to Santa Monica east of Doheny Drive in 1961. The more commercial-minded members of the folkie crowd went with him. Typical of the tribe was a cocky kid from Santa Barbara called David Crosby. A lecherous teddy bear with a playful brain, David warbled plangent protest songs in emulation of Woody Guthrie.

For all the lip service it paid to folk protest, the Troubadour always had one beady eye on success. The clubhouse for the more commercial folk music epitomized by the Kingston Trio, it rapidly became a hootenanny (small gathering of folk singers) hotbed of vaunting ambition. Pointedly different was Ed Pearl's club, the Ash Grove, which had opened at 8162 Melrose Avenue in July 1958. L.A.'s self-appointed bastion of tradition, the Ash Grove held fast to notions of not selling out. It was where you went to hear Doc Watson and Sleepy John Estes—blues and bluegrass veterans rescued from oblivion by earnest revivalists. "The Ash Grove was where you heard the roots, traditional stuff," says Jackson Browne, then an Orange County teenager. "Lots of people went to both clubs, but you didn't stand much of a chance of getting hired at the Ash Grove."

Another Ash Grove regular was Linda Ronstadt, who had deep, soulful eyes and a big, gutsy voice. She'd grown up in Arizona dreaming of freewheelin' Bob Dylan. During the Easter break of

1964 Linda followed Tucson beatnik Bob Kimmel out to the coast, moving into a small Victorian house on the beach at Santa Monica. "The whole scene was still very sweet and innocent," Ronstadt recalls. "It was all about sitting around in little embroidered dresses and listening to Elizabethan folk ballads, and that's how I thought it was always going to be." Among Ronstadt's contemporaries were obsessive young folk-blues apprentices: kids such as Ryland Cooder, John Fahey, Al Wilson. Some of them got so good that they were even allowed to *play* at the club. Cooder, sixteen years old in 1963, backed folk-pop singers Pamela Polland and Jackie DeShannon. The nascent Canned Heat—a blues band formed by Wilson after Fahey had introduced him to man-mountain singer Bob Hite—played at the club.

"The scene was just tiny," Ry Cooder reflects. "It was by and for people who were players, not for the general public. Ed Pearl was some sort of socialist, whereas Doug Weston was just an opportunist clubowner. We'd go down in the evening, mostly on the weekends. At that point Ed must have had a supply line, because he had Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and he had Lightnin' Hopkins and Mississippi John Hurt and then Skip James. Sleepy John Estes was the one I was waiting to see. He seemed the most remote and peculiar—and I'd assumed dead."

It was no coincidence, perhaps, that record companies in New York were waking up to what snobs called the "Left Coast." Paul Rothchild, a hip Artists and Repertoire (A&R) man with Jac Holzman's classy and eclectic Elektra label, flew out to L.A. to scout the 1964 Folk Festival at UCLA. Smitten with what he found, Rothchild began to commute regularly between the East and West coasts. "L.A. was less the promised land than the untilled field," says Holzman, himself entranced by Southern California. "We'd picked over the East Coast pretty well."

Columbia Records, a far bigger entity than Elektra, was also casting a wider net from its Manhattan headquarters. If its meat-and-potatoes income came from such pop and middle-of-the-road (MOR) acts as Patti Page and Andy Williams, the label also was home to Bob Dylan and Miles Davis. On New Year's Day 1964, Columbia

publicist Billy James flew to Los Angeles to begin work as the company's Manager of Information Services on the West Coast. Already in his late twenties, Billy was pure beat generation, his sensibility shaped by Kerouac and Ginsberg. Thrilled at the way pop music was becoming a vibrant force in American culture, he plunged into the scene at the Troubadour and the Ash Grove. "Billy was a wonderful guy," says record producer Barry Friedman. "He was a charming, well-read, interesting fellow. In some ways I think he played the corporate game very well."

James also felt the seismic impact of the Beatles' first visit to America. The Liverpool group had done something no Americans were able to do: legitimize pop stardom for hipsters who despised idols such as Fabian and Frankie Avalon. All of a sudden young folkies such as David Crosby saw that you could write your own songs, draw on rock and roll, rhythm and blues, and country music and *still* be stampeded by girls. "The Beatles validated rock and roll," says Lou Adler, then an L.A. producer and label owner. "People could listen to them knowing that these guys were really writing their songs."

"What started happening was that these young, talented kids would band together," says Henry (Tad) Diltz of the Modern Folk Quartet (MFQ). "It was like double or triple the excitement." At the Troubadour and the Unicorn coffeehouse, opened by local promoter Herb Cohen in 1957 on Sunset Boulevard, David Crosby hung around the MFQ, envious of their ganglike camaraderie. Soon he was fraternizing with other folkies who'd gravitated to California in search of something they couldn't find elsewhere. Jim McGuinn, a slim and cerebral graduate of Chad Mitchell's Trio—and of a stint in the employ of Bobby Darin—was slipping Beatles songs into his hoot sets at the Troubadour. Gene Clark, a handsome, haunted-looking balladeer from Missouri, finished up his apprenticeship in the L.A.-based New Christy Minstrels. Shy and slightly bewildered, Clark approached McGuinn after one of his Beatle-friendly sets and told him he dug what he was trying to do. "You wanna start a duo?" Clark asked.

McGuinn had crossed David Crosby's path before and was wary of him. Clark, however, figured Crosby's velvety tenor was just the

additional harmonic element they needed. One night at the Troubadour, Crosby took Tad Diltz over to meet McGuinn and Clark. With a smug grin Crosby announced they were going to form a group. "Crosby and McGuinn and Clark were in the lobby of the Troub every night in 1964," says folk singer Jerry Yester. "They'd sit there with a twelve-string guitar, just writing songs." Taken up by manager Jim Dickson, a worldly and well-connected veteran of the folk and jazz scene in Hollywood, Crosby, Clark, and McGuinn rounded out the lineup with drummer Michael Clarke and bluegrass-bred bassist Chris Hillman. From the outset the band was conceived as an electric rock and roll group. "At some point the groups started plugging in their instruments," says Henry Diltz. "Doug Weston saw the MFQ rehearsing at the Troub with amps and was horrified."

"It was kinda like a tadpole growing legs," says Jerry Yester, briefly a member of the Lovin' Spoonful. "We just got closer and closer to being a rock band. Everybody else was doing the same thing—raiding the pawnshops for electric guitars. Inside of a year, the whole face of West L.A. changed." Secretly, Chris Hillman was horrified by the electrification of folk. "Chris told me he'd joined this rock and roll band," says bassist David Jackson. "He said it with this real sheepish look on his face, like he was betraying the cause."

After one single on Elektra as the Beefeaters, the group became the Byrds, complete with quaint Olde English spelling. Signed to Columbia, the band cut Bob Dylan's druggy "Mr. Tambourine Man" with producer Terry Melcher and a bunch of sessionmen. Released in April 1965, after the group had established themselves at gone-to-seed Sunset Strip club Ciro's, the single went to No. 1 in June and instantly enshrined the new electric folk sound. "You mainly just went to parties and to hear people play," says Jackson Browne. "But then the Byrds happened, and you heard them on the radio and they had a *huge* pop hit."

"We all came over and went, 'Ahhh! They got record contracts!'" said Linda Ronstadt. "I mean, as far as we were concerned they had made it, just because they had a record contract. David Crosby had a new suede jacket; that was affluence beyond description."

Pop life in L.A. would never be the same again.

Claims to Fame

Paying close attention to the Byrds' ascent were local industry figures, many of them caught off-guard. Lou Adler, the canny and highly focused L.A. entrepreneur who'd turned nightclub guitarist Johnny Rivers into a million-selling star, watched as "folk-rock" caught fire in California.

"The influx of the Greenwich Village folkies in 1964 and 1965 was very important," Adler reflects. "Music changed drastically. When Dylan plugged in his guitar he took a lot of people from the folk field to the rock and roll field. Folk-rock swept out the teen idols, and it gave pop a hip political edge." With his new Dunhill label, Adler homed in on folk-rock. Former surf-pop tunesmith P. F. Sloan was given a hat, a pair of Chelsea boots, and a copy of *Bringing It All Back Home* and instructed to write some protest songs. He returned a few days later with "Eve of Destruction," duly recorded by ex–New Christy Minstrel Barry McGuire. "Folk + Rock + Protest = Dollars," noted *Billboard* after the song topped the charts.

One afternoon, Barry McGuire brought a new folk group along to an Adler recording session at Hollywood's Western Recorders studio. John Phillips, their leader, had tried his luck in L.A. some years before, but his timing hadn't been right. He'd even married Michelle Gilliam, a beautiful California blonde who sang with him alongside Denny Doherty and Cass Elliott, former members of Greenwich Village group the Mugwumps. Now here they were in L.A., chancing everything on a move to the new promised land. The Mamas and the Papas' moment eventually came. Breaking into the pealing harmonies of Phillips's "Monday, Monday," they followed up with "I've Got a Feeling," "Once Was a Time," and "Go Where You Wanna Go." Shrewdly, they left the best for last: the soaring anthem "California Dreamin'." Adler was duly blown away. Released late in 1965, "Dreamin'" summed up what the rest of the nation was already feeling about the Golden State, except that this time it wasn't the clichéd California of surfing and blondes and hot rods that was being hymned—it was the blossoming hippie milieu of the Sunset Strip and its bucolic annex Laurel Canyon.

After "California Dreamin'," John and Michelle Phillips did what

all self-respecting musicians were doing in Los Angeles: they moved from a decaying dump in the West Hollywood flatlands to a funky pad on Lookout Mountain Avenue, up in the canyon, high above it all. Cass Elliott, born Naomi Cohen in Baltimore, followed in their wake. A rotund earth mama, she began to hold court in the canyon in what was a kind of folk-pop salon. Among her close friends was David Crosby, with whom she'd bonded on a folk tour two years before.

Observing the success of both the Byrds and the Mamas and the Papas were the savvy executives at Warner-Reprise Records in Burbank, north of Hollywood. It was a testament to their acumen that the conjoined labels were still in business at all. Warner Brothers Records, launched merely because the rancorous Jack Warner thought his movie studio should have a music division, had nearly gone under just three years earlier. Nor had Reprise, bought from Frank Sinatra in a deal that was laughably generous to the singer, launched promisingly. But Morris "Mo" Ostin, who'd come into the Warner fold as Sinatra's accountant, turned out to have instincts and ears. "The company had learned some good lessons coming out of the Dean Martin era," says Stan Cornyn, who became head of creative services at the company. Warner-Reprise had missed the Byrds and the Mamas and the Papas but was swift to sign the Kinks and Petula Clark to North America. "We got on the London express, because we weren't getting fed artists here," says Joe Smith, who joined Warner in 1961. "We had to go dig out our own and sign them for North America."

Mo and Joe were determined not to let the next Byrds pass them by. Helping them was a young A&R man named Lenny Waronker. "It's amazing how little I paid attention to the Byrds," Lenny says today. "I'm embarrassed to even talk about it, but we were so focused in our own world." Waronker was the son of Si Waronker, founder of L.A. label Liberty Records. He'd got his grounding at Metric Music, Liberty's publishing arm, overseeing a stable of songwriting talent that was the closest California came to New York's Brill Building. Among Metric's writers—Jackie DeShannon, David Gates, P. J. Proby, Glen Campbell—was Lenny's boyhood friend Randy, nephew of movie composers Alfred and Lionel Newman. "We were a kind of poor man's Carole King and Barry Mann and Neil Sedaka,"

Newman recalls of his Metric days. "I was trying to do the same things as Carole and I knew I wasn't doing them as well."

"We used to crank out songs for singers like Dean Martin," says David Gates, who packed his wife and kids into a battered Cadillac in 1962 and drove from Oklahoma to California. "Seeing some nice songs go down the drain, you started to think, maybe I ought to do them myself."

"Dylan exploded the universe of folk songwriting," says Jackson Browne. "Suddenly there was a whole wealth of ideas out there, and you could discuss *anything* in a song. You also had Jackie DeShannon on pop TV shows talking about songs she'd written herself. Normally you wouldn't even wonder where the songs had come from, so it was really something to learn that Jackie had written them."

When an opening at Warner Brothers came in April 1966, Waronker jumped on it, exploiting the fact that Joe Smith had done business with his father. Ostin and Smith became a formidable duo: Mo the reclusive mastermind, Joe the more gregarious public face of the company. Lenny, shy like Mo, fitted in perfectly behind the scenes.

There were others, too. Ostin's greatest gift was delegating taste, cultivating an inner circle of trusted talent-spotters. More often than not these men were mavericks. Bernard Alfred "Jack" Nitzsche, who'd come from Michigan on a bus in 1955 and had arranged the early '60s hits of Phil Spector, was a difficult and belligerent man but a typical Ostin confidant. He had given Reprise one of its earliest hits, the 1963 instrumental "The Lonely Surfer."

Another man who had Mo's ear was Derek Taylor, a suave Liverpudlian who'd moved to L.A. after working as the Beatles' press officer back home in England. Dapper and witty, Taylor was a conduit to British talent, but he also was doing press for the Byrds and the Beach Boys. "I had 2½ percent of the Byrds and no fee," Taylor remembered. "That became quite a lot of money. I didn't really have to do a lot for them except express what I wanted to. Billy James had really done all the work, but he was such a generous soul he just said, 'Over to you.'"

By the spring of 1966, Warner-Reprise was poised to strike—to become a true power on the West Coast. "New York itself was going

through enormous financial problems and became very hostile to the music business," says Joe Smith, who'd moved to L.A. in 1960 to work for a local record distributor. "So a lot of it shifted out here. California was now regarded by people as the place to go."

Among the freewheeling folkies who pitched up in Los Angeles in the late summer of 1965 was Stephen Stills. A tenacious Texan with thinning blond hair, Stills had spent time in a military academy and brought the discipline of the place to bear on his musical career. He quickly found the Troubadour more receptive to his talent than Greenwich Village. Hooking up with folk scenester Dickie Davis, he began networking, befriending several key people. Among them was Van Dyke Parks, a diminutive genius who looked like a child and spoke in a camp Mississippi drawl.

Parks and Stills knocked about together, sharing a love of Latin and Caribbean music. Parks was fascinated by calypso; Stills had spent part of his adolescence in Costa Rica. But it was Barry Friedman, former carny and fire-eater, who started making waves for Stephen. A native Angeleno, Friedman had done publicity for the Troubadour. When the Beatles played the Hollywood Bowl in August 1964, he was the publicist for the show. "Stephen ended up at my place," Friedman says. "I guess the floor was softer or something. He was pretty focused. He said he wanted to put a band together, and I thought that would be fun to do. So we just started finding people and phoning around."

Van Dyke Parks himself passed on the opportunity, as did a young Warren Zevon, then eking out a living as one half of folk duo lyme & cybelle. Stills's abrasive personality may have had something to do with their reluctance. "Stephen was definitely talented," says Nurit Wilde, a photographer and Sunset Strip scenester of the time, "but he was not a nice guy then and he continued being a jerk as long as I knew him." Drawing blanks in L.A., Stills summoned Richie Furay from New York, lying to him that he had a recording deal in place. Furay, a friendlier soul who conformed closer to the archetype of the optimistic folk singer, arrived in California in late 1965.

Parks remained pals with Stills but made his basic living from sessions and arrangements. His work with Brian Wilson on the Beach Boys' *Dumb Angel/Smile*—the unfinished psychedelic masterpiece

that could have been America's *Sgt. Pepper*—had everybody in L.A. talking. Elbowed out of the Beach Boys picture in April 1967 by the play-it-safe Mike Love, Parks was devastated. Then a call from Lenny Waronker got his attention. Parks knew Lenny was a rich kid like Terry Melcher, son of actress Doris Day, but it was obvious he was as determined as Mo Ostin and Joe Smith to make Warner-Reprise a home of credible and innovative artists.

Not long after Waronker joined the company, Joe Smith took him up to San Francisco to evaluate the catalog of Autumn Records, a label Warner was proposing to buy. Cofounded by larger-than-life deejay Tom Donahue, Autumn had a roster of promising pop groups that Smith fancied: the Beau Brummels, the Tikis, the Mojo Men, and more. For Waronker this was an instant opportunity to experiment with ready-made pop groups. Along with Parks he brought in Randy Newman and Leon Russell, an Oklahoma writer and arranger who'd worked on hits by Gary Lewis & the Playboys. The records they wrote and produced at Warner—particularly those by the newly created Harper's Bizarre—were interesting and significant. They pointed backward to the Brill Building and early Beach Boys pop era, but were also in synch with the complex orchestral psychedelia of the Beach Boys' lost *Smile*. "We wanted hits," Waronker told writer Gene Sculatti, "but we wanted them on our own terms."

Hit versions of Stills's "Sit Down, I Think I Love You" (by the Mojo Men) and Paul Simon's "59th Street Bridge Song" (by Harper's Bizarre) helped build a creative nucleus around Waronker. Following Mo Ostin's lead in making A&R the primary focus at Warner, Lenny gradually introduced—and blended together—the company's backroom talent: Newman, Parks, Russell, Templeman, Ron Elliott, and guitarists Ry Cooder and Russ Titelman. "We never made profit the thrust," says Joe Smith. "It sounds very self-serving, but that was the reputation we wanted. Van Dyke we were in awe of. This little drug-ridden crazy kid from the South was so talented."

Yet Waronker also could sense that the days of pop groups such as Harper's Bizarre, in their matching suits and ties, were all but done. The new template for bands was the Rolling Stones, who looked and sounded more threatening than the Beatles ever did. Here was the ultimate gang of rebels, openly flaunting their sexuality and drug use.

Meanwhile, Mo Ostin, who'd already signed the Kinks for North America, was checking out another U.K. export, a flamboyant guitarist born and bred in the United States. Jimi Hendrix wasn't Waronker's personal style, but he rightly identified him as the avatar of a new sensibility in pop—or rock, as it was increasingly being called.

A native Angeleno, Waronker was himself more intrigued by a new strain in the L.A. sound: a countryish, back-to-the-roots feel heard in songs by the Byrds and other groups. "My goal was very simple," he says. "It was to find a rock band that sounded like the Everly Brothers."

So You Want to Be a Rock and Roll Star

"I'm sitting in Barney's Beanery," says Denny Doherty of the Mamas and the Papas, "and in walks Stephen Stills. He looks kinda down, so I ask him what he's doing. He says, 'Fuck all, man, I ain't doin' nothin'.' Two or three weeks later I walk into the Whisky and *Bam!*—there he is onstage with a band. I said to him, 'What the fuck? Did you add water and get an instant band?'"

Early in April 1966, Stills and Richie Furay were stuck in a Sunset Strip traffic jam in Barry Friedman's Bentley. As they sat in the car, Stephen spotted a 1953 Pontiac hearse with Ontario plates on the other side of the street. "I'll be damned if that ain't Neil Young," Stills said. Friedman executed an illegal U-turn and pulled up behind the hearse. One of rock's great serendipities had just occurred.

Young, a lanky Canadian, had just driven all the way from Detroit in the company of bassist Bruce Palmer. They'd caught the bug that was drawing hundreds of other pop wannabes to the West Coast. "I didn't know what . . . I was doing," Young said. "We were just going like lemmings." A week later Stills had the band he'd fantasized about for months. With drummer Dewey Martin recruited from bluegrass group the Dillards, the lineup was complete: three singer-guitarists (Stills, Furay, Young) and a better rhythm section than the Byrds. Van Dyke Parks spotted a steamroller with the name "Buffalo Springfield," and everyone loved it. It was perfect, conjuring a sense of American history and landscape that interested all of them—Neil Young in particular.

Young was skinny and quiet and more than a little freaked out by the bright automotive sprawl of Los Angeles. His intense dark eyes in a face framed by long sideburns mesmerized women. "Neil was a very sweet fellow," says Nurit Wilde, who'd known him in Toronto. "He was sick and he was vulnerable. Women wanted to feed him and take care of him." At least Young and Palmer didn't have to sleep in the hearse anymore. When Stephen and Richie took them over to Barry Friedman's house on Fountain Avenue, a floor and mattresses were proffered. "The whole thing was . . . a tremendous relief," Young told his father, Scott. "Barry gave us a dollar a day each for food. All we had to do was keep practicing."

"People thought Neil was moody, but he didn't seem moody to *me*," says Friedman. "He seemed like just another guy with good songs, though he did have a funny voice." To Young, the affable Richie Furay was "the easiest to like" of the Springfield members, though he told *World Countdown News* that Richie's "hair should be longer." Furay had a small room in a Laurel Canyon pad belonging to Mark Volman of successful L.A. pop group the Turtles. "Our living room was the frequent meeting place for Stephen, Neil, and Richie," Volman recalls. "Dickie Davis was always coming by. With the Springfield, a lot of it was created around the energy of Dickie."

Between Davis and Friedman, the Springfield's career took off with a flying start. Their first performance was at the Troubadour on April 11, barely a week after their formation. Little more than a public rehearsal, the set was the prelude to a minitour in support of the Byrds, whose Chris Hillman was an early and ardent champion. To the other Byrds, the Springfield came as a galvanizing shock. Within weeks the group had developed a fearsome live sound that was rooted in the twin-engine guitar blitz of Stills and Young. "The Springfield live was very obviously a guitar duel," says Henry Diltz, who took the group's first publicity shots on Venice Beach. "They'd talk back and forth to each other with their guitars and it would escalate from there."

Friedman wanted to sign the Springfield to Elektra, but Jac Holzman wasn't the only record executive interested in the band. Nor was Friedman the only person keen to manage them. When the Springfield returned from their tour, Dickie Davis introduced them to a

pair of Hollywood hustlers named Charlie Greene and Brian Stone. The duo had hit town five years before, ambitious publicists who set up a phony office on a studio lot. With Greene as the front-man schmoozer, Stone hovered in the background and controlled the cash flow. Inspired by flamboyant svengalis such as Phil Spector, Charlie and Brian rode around in limos and played pop tycoons.

For Van Dyke Parks, schemers such as Greene and Stone changed L.A.'s innocent folk-rock vibe. "There was a severe competitive atmosphere in this scene," Parks recalled. "The Beatles had exploded and the youth market had defined itself." Greene and Stone set about wowing the Springfield, fueling Stephen Stills's fantasies of stardom. And they were ruthless in cutting Barry Friedman out of the picture. Taking him for a limo ride, the duo sat Friedman between them. Minutes into the journey, Greene quietly placed a pistol on Friedman's thigh. By the end of the trip Barry had signed over his rights to Buffalo Springfield on a hot dog napkin. "People like that do what they do," Friedman says. "I don't, though I'm still waiting for a check. I read in Neil's book that he owes me money, but he must have lost my address."

When Lenny Waronker saw the Springfield live they were wearing cowboy hats, with Neil Young positioned to one side in a fringed Comanche shirt. He went berserk: "I thought, 'Oh, my God, this is *it*!'" Waronker got Jack Nitzsche interested early on: "I needed weight behind me, and Jack had that weight. I talked to him about coproducing the group." Nitzsche instantly bonded with Neil Young, intuitively recognizing a fellow square peg in L.A.'s round hole. "Jack really loved Neil," says Judy Henske. "He told me Neil was the greatest artist that had ever been in Hollywood." Young, aware of Jack's pedigree, reciprocated. Nitzsche's approval wasn't enough, however, to land the Buffalo Springfield in Burbank. Greene and Stone turned to Atlantic's Ahmet Ertegun in New York. Upping Warners' offer of $10,000 to $22,000, Ertegun was only too delighted to whisk the group from under Mo Ostin's nose, assigning them to Atlantic's affiliated Atco label.

By the time Greene and Stone were in the studio with the Springfield, having imposed themselves as producers of the band's Atlantic debut, it was too late. The group's career was obviously in the hands

of charlatans. For the naive Neil Young especially, the sense of scales falling from the eyes was almost too much to take. "There were a lot of problems with the Springfield," he later said. "Groupies, drugs, shit. I'd never seen people like that before. I remember being haunted suddenly by this whole obsession with 'How do I fit in here? Do I like this?'" Compounding Neil's unease was the growing competitiveness between him and Stills—the band wasn't big enough for both of them. Neil acknowledged and respected Stephen's drive and versatility, but the guy's ego—the presumption that Buffalo Springfield was *his* group—began to grate. Although Buffalo Springfield's first Atco single was Young's fey and slightly pretentious "Nowadays Clancy Can't Even Sing," Stills was soon coming down hard on Young's material. To the consternation of the hippie women who nursed Neil's emotional wounds, Stephen undermined Neil at every turn.

Robin Lane, briefly Neil's girlfriend, recalled Stills storming into the small apartment his bandmate had rented. Irate because Neil had missed a rehearsal, Stephen picked up Lane's guitar and only just restrained himself from smashing it over Neil's head. "You're ruining my career!" Stills screamed at the cowering Canadian. Dickie Davis thought it no coincidence that Young had the first of several epileptic fits just a month after the Springfield formed. During the band's residency at the Whisky in the groovy summer of 1966, the sight of Young thrashing around onstage in a seizure was not uncommon. The real truth was that Stills and Young were both driven and egomaniacal—Stills's pigheadedness was merely more overt. Neil, a classic passive aggressive, stifled his resentments and licked his wounds in private. "We know each other," Stills would later say of his relationship with Young. "There was always a kind of alienation to the people around us. They are old things that no amount of analyzing and psychotherapy and all of that stuff can wash away."

For all the conflicts, Buffalo Springfield represented a new chapter in the unfolding narrative of L.A. pop. They were hip and genre-splicing, angry young men with talent and attitude. Last of the folk-pop groups, they also were one of the new electric rock bands. Now they even had a hit record. After Stills watched the LAPD break up a demonstration march on the Sunset Strip

on November 12, 1966, he wrote "For What It's Worth (Stop, Hey What's That Sound)." With its lines about paranoia striking deep and "the man" taking you away, it was as cheesy as Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction." But unlike Neil's singles, it cracked the Top 10.

Like the Springfield, the Byrds were riven by internal feuds and resentments. The enmity between David Crosby and Jim (now Roger) McGuinn was plain to see. McGuinn, lean and aloof, was the antithesis of the chubby, hedonistic Crosby in his hat and cape. McGuinn's cerebral voice and glinting guitar runs had defined the Byrds' sound, but Crosby was determined to insert his more rambling and flowery ballads into the mix. "David was a bit of a brat," says Billy James. "There was this contentiousness about him. His hackles got up very quickly." The Byrds' best writer, meanwhile, was sandwiched between Crosby and McGuinn. The group's tambourine-rustling front man, Gene Clark was paradoxically its most introspective member. He had supplied the B side of "Mr. Tambourine Man" and written the most songs on the first album. As a result—to the envious indignation of his bandmates—publishing royalty checks were pouring into his mailbox. Soon he was running around town in a maroon Ferrari.

Alcoholic from an early age, Clark was a troubled soul. In contrast to McGuinn's and Crosby's songs, his folk-throwback ballads sounded grave and timeless, closer to the soulful grandeur of a Roy Orbison than to the amphetamine poetics of a Bob Dylan. The bittersweet "Set You Free This Time," a failed single from *Turn! Turn! Turn!*, was the template for several folk-country masterpieces Clark would record. Crosby recognized that Gene was "an emotional projector on a huge and powerful level," but it didn't stop him and McGuinn from preying on his insecurities. "In the beginning, David was very musically intimidated, so he tried to intimidate others," said Jim Dickson. "He shook [Gene's] sense of time by telling him he was off." Early in 1966, Clark decided he'd had enough—enough of the sudden fame, enough of the tensions.

"After 'Eight Miles High' I felt we had a direction to go in that might have been absolutely incredible," Clark said in 1977. "We could have taken it from there, but I felt because of the confusion

and egos—the young, successful egos—we were headed in a direction that wouldn't have that importance or impact." One afternoon in March 1966, Barry Friedman and drummer friend Denny Bruce went to score some pot from a friend named Jeannie "Butchie" Cho. Sitting in her Laurel Canyon living room was none other than Clark. He had black bags under his eyes and looked ravaged.

Clark was in crisis, pouring out his heart to Butchie, saying he was due to go on tour with the Byrds the next day. "I can't do it," he kept repeating. "I can't see myself on that airplane tomorrow." Butchie said that nobody left a successful group. "I don't give a shit," Gene insisted. "I don't like what it's doing to my head." Clark did make it to LAX but started screaming as the plane taxied to the runway. The Byrds flew to New York as a quartet. The official announcement of Clark's exit came in July.

The departure only increased the tension between McGuinn and Crosby, even as the Byrds propelled folk-rock into a new psychedelic realm with *Fifth Dimension*. By the summer of 1967, relations between the two were severely strained. McGuinn approached the Byrds' music with what Derek Taylor described as "a fussy schoolmarm attitude." Crosby, enamored of the wild new scene up in San Francisco, felt the Byrds had become square. He wanted to be in a dynamic band like the Buffalo Springfield or the Jefferson Airplane. He was seeing an increasing amount of Stephen Stills, whose sheer appetite for playing and jamming thrilled him. "I remember hearing all these horror stories about what an arrogant asshole David was," said Stills, often accused of the same trait. "But when I met him I found he was basically just as shy as I was and making up for it with a lot of aggressive behavior."

Crosby had interests besides music. One was hanging out with scenesters such as Cass Elliott. The other, despite the shame he felt about his roly-poly physique, was sleeping with any woman who offered herself to him. "David was charming around chicks," says Nurit Wilde, who lived around the corner from Crosby in Laurel Canyon. "But there was a revolving door with him—one girl in, one girl out. And if a girl got pregnant, he was mean to her and dumped her." By the summer of 1967 Crosby had become so obnoxious that McGuinn and Hillman could take no more of him. After he used the

Byrds' appearance at the Monterey Pop Festival to launch into a tirade about the Warren Report on the Kennedy assassination—and then compounded that by appearing onstage with the Buffalo Springfield—the decision was made to ax him.

In October, McGuinn and Hillman drove in their Porsches to Crosby's new place on Lisbon Lane in Beverly Glen. "They drove up," Crosby said in a 1971 radio interview, "and said that I was terrible and crazy and unsociable and a bad writer and a terrible singer and I made horrible records and that they would do much better without me." Shaken as he was, the firing came as a relief. Accepting a $10,000 payoff from the Byrds, he was ready to cut loose and take time out. An obsession with sailing got him thinking about boats. He hung with Mama Cass, now holding court in a funky new abode on Summit Ridge off Mulholland Drive. A bold, narcotic adventuress, Cass was even dabbling in heroin and pharmaceutical opiates—a major no-no in the LSD and marijuana community of that time. "[Smack] was always the bad drug," Crosby would write. "It got a little more open around the time that Cass and I were doing it, but it wasn't something you told people."

Crosby was the nexus of a nascent scene, the supercool spider at the center of a web of new relationships. "He was the main cultural luminary to me," says Jackson Browne, then struggling on the scene. "He had this legendary VW bus with a Porsche engine in it, and that summed him up—*a hippie with power!*" For Bronx-born Ron Stone, owner of a hippie boutique on Santa Monica Boulevard that Crosby regularly frequented, the ex-Byrd *was* the scene. "The Byrds were *the* California band of the time," he says, "and there he was, the rebel within that group, tossed out on his ass. There was no question that it all spun around him and Cass."

If Crosby used the Monterey Pop festival to sabotage his position in the Byrds, he was nonetheless a key presence on that seminal weekend in June 1967. Bridging a sometimes insurmountable gulf between the Los Angeles faction behind the event and the Haight-Ashbury bands that dominated it, David hobnobbed with everyone from an edgy Paul Kantner to a diaphanous Brian Jones. Of all the L.A. stars he was the one who'd responded the quickest to what was happening in the Bay Area.

The brainchild of Lou Adler and John Phillips—whose Mamas and the Papas hits had made both men rich—Monterey Pop was effectively a rock and roll trade show masquerading as a love-in. Wresting control of the festival away from L.A.-based paper fortune heir Alan Pariser, Adler and Phillips transformed it into a seismic event starring as many of their superstar friends and contacts as they could cram into one long weekend. Also present at the event were the key rock executives of the day: Clive Davis of Columbia, Ahmet Ertegun of Atlantic, Mo Ostin and Joe Smith of Warner-Reprise. Following Mo's acquisition of Jimi Hendrix, Joe had signed the Grateful Dead, the quintessential Haight-Ashbury band. Clive Davis now picked up Big Brother & the Holding Company, featuring Janis Joplin.

Country Joe McDonald described Monterey as "a total ethical sellout of everything that we'd dreamed of." Perhaps it was. But it was also the inevitable, unavoidable moment when the underground went mainstream. "The San Francisco groups had a very bad taste in their mouths about L.A. commercialism," Adler admitted decades later. "And it's true that we were a business-minded industry. It wasn't a hobby."

It was the very tension between L.A. and S.F. that made Monterey so fascinating. "I saw everything change there," Judy James, wife of Billy James, says. "It was as if everyone went, 'Wow! We're no longer preaching to the converted.' They walked into this candy store of drugs and sex and saw that people would buy the music as the sound track to that."

"The industry totally changed after Monterey," says Tom Wilkes, who designed the famous poster for the festival. "The festival was basically a peaceful protest against the Vietnam war, against racism and all those things that were going on. Afterward, everything opened up."