

intoxication and ecstasy, was known for its orgiastic rites. There is dancing, flirting, drinking and feasting to the music of flutes and the rhythms of tambourines, and what today is known as “free love” was widely practiced between genders. As the son of Zeus and Demeter, goddess of fertility, Dionysus, in his aspect as Iacchus, also took part in the Eleusinian Mysteries at Eleusis: “The central idea of the elite was to drink wisely and suitably during the symposium. ‘Suitably’ meant to become drunk. Once achieved, one was held to be aristocratic, reputable, and an accessible human being by one’s peers. Poets of antiquity spoke of this often.”¹⁰²

Martin Luther (1483–1546), the Reformation theologian and reformer, saw no reason not to praise zest for life along with the fear of God: “Whoever loves not wine, women, and song remains a fool his whole life long.” And: “Young people should not be sad rather cheerful and happy. A cheerful nature befits youth.” The Middle High German word *Minne* means “love.” The Minnesingers, also known during the twelfth century as troubadours, lived during a time of societal and cultural transformation and, like hippies hundreds of years later, sang praises to love. A comparison of musical styles shows that: “Like Rock, Minnesang was made up of familiar subgenres such as those about love unfulfilled (elevated

songs) and those about love consummated (dawn songs),” with the Minnesinger serving as singer/songwriter and the minstrels as the singers’ back up bands.¹⁰³

The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time.

Jack Kerouac

Sounds of the Sixties

Dynamically evolving during the 1960s, rock music reflected the attitudes of the younger generation and the viewpoints of the counterculture better than did any other art form. Within a very few years, it fanned out in a myriad of different stylistic directions strongly influenced by drugs, especially LSD. The earliest use of the term “psychedelic” in music was a version of “Hesitation Blues” by The Holy Modal Rounders, a folk duo familiar only to connoisseurs, on their debut album in 1964.¹⁰⁴

In the mid-sixties, the genre later known as “psychedelic rock” or “acid rock” appeared in California. Its development was closely associated with hippie culture and was affected by the electrification of the folk scene. Pioneers of the genre were the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, the Electric Prunes, the Doors, and the Byrds. The word “psychedelic” first appeared in two album titles in 1966: *The Psychedelic Sounds of the 13th Floor Elevators* (by the 13th Floor Elevators, of course) and *Psychedelic Moods* by The Deep.

Singer-poet Jim Morrison and keyboardist Ray Manzarek founded The Doors in 1965. Morrison suggested the Los Angeles group’s name after using mescaline, reflecting a link to psychedelics. He was inspired by lines from the poet William Blake: “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.”¹⁰⁵ With their debut album, they were among the first rock groups to break the usual convention of limiting songs to three-minutes with “The End.”

That same year, the Jefferson Airplane from San Francisco played their first shows;

they are considered to be one of the most important representatives of psychedelic rock. Their first album *Jefferson Airplane Takes Off* appeared in 1966. Shortly thereafter, singer Grace Slick joined the band. Their second album *Surrealistic Pillow* followed in 1967 and contains her two best known songs which she wrote while with her previous band, The Great Society. They are "Somebody to Love" and especially "White Rabbit," which referred to the fictional world of Lewis Carroll's children's novel *Alice in Wonderland*, giving it a psychedelic slant but encoded to avoid censure and allowing it to be played on the radio.

Jimi Hendrix, genius of the guitar, also drew much of his musical inspiration from LSD trips—he named his band the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Their debut album in 1967 carried the title *Are You Experienced*, in keeping with Kesey's question "Can You Pass the Acid Test?"

The undisputed pioneers of psychedelic music in Europe included the Beatles and Pink Floyd who are considered to embody a prototypical psychedelic rock sound. The dividing line between psychedelic rock and other genres is fluid. Some music experts and historians include bands like Yes, King Crimson, Soft Machine, East of Eden, Hawkwind, Emerson Lake and Palmer in this genre. Music is by far the art form most frequently characterized by the word "psychedelic." However, the designation "psychedelic music" is vague and sometimes misleading because it was applied to completely different pieces and bands from folk to jazz. The



Album Cover for "Seven Up,"
by Walter Wegmüller

Grateful Dead, as the psychedelic band par excellence, in contrast to their extravagant concert appearances, sound like a normal country rock band on many studio recordings while the early works of Frank Zappa which contain many psychedelic sound elements are not included in this category due to his unequivocal rejection of drugs. In the mid-1960s, many jazz musicians like John Coltrane and Miles Davis were inspired by LSD, yet did not label their compositions and work as psychedelic. In Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* these influences can be clearly heard. The gifted saxophonist confirmed: "I perceived the interrelationship of all life forms." It's a matter of record that Charles Mingus,

Rahsaan Roland Kirk, and Dizzy Gillespie turned on with LSD given to them by Timothy Leary and Allen Ginsberg.¹⁰⁶

Typical attributes considered to be psychedelic in music were the application of feedback, wah-wah and echo e music using the sitar, and electronic instruments. The Mellotron or synthesizer, invented during this time, made novel "spacey" music possible with atmospheric floating sound carpets. Whether with the help of psychoactive substances or innovative recording techniques, the musicians' urge to experiment was unbounded. Elements of classical music also found their way into popular pieces, such as the trumpets and cellos on the Beatles' album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, or Procol Harum's "A Whiter Shade of Pale," influenced by Johann Sebastian Bach and considered by some to be psychedelic.

Lyrics of the period were influenced by Eastern religions or showed touches of surreal or esoteric color. Further influences flowed in from the writings of beatniks, science fiction and fantasy literature.

Hermann Hesse's legendary novel *Steppenwolf*, which appeared in 1927, is better known than the rock band of the same name which achieved great popularity on the West Coast in the late 1960s. Their hit, "Born to be Wild", quickly brought them worldwide acclaim as the title song to the cult film *Easy Rider*. In "The Pusher" they indicted profit-oriented traders of hard drugs; in "Don't Step on the Grass, Sam" they objected to Uncle Sam and authorities getting involved with regulating marijuana.

Their "Magic Carpet Ride" takes listeners on a psychedelic trip with a "flying carpet."

The trend towards multimedia presentation, to a kind of psychedelic synthesis of the arts, had already begun with surreal band names such as Vanilla Fudge, Iron Butterfly or Quicksilver Messenger Service and could be seen in the graphically extravagant, brightly colored concert posters, fantastic record jacket designs, playful texts, and light shows which imitated the colorful intoxication of an LSD trip. Acoustic impres-

sions of a trip were rendered in a piece by Pink Floyd, "Interstellar Overdrive" and in the album *Cottonwoodhill* by the group Brainticket, formed around the Belgian multi-instrumentalist Joël Vandroogenbroeck. Iron Butterfly induced a trip-like trance with their song "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida."

Some bands were dubbed "psychedelic" because their members spoke euphorically about their drug experiences, others because their music lent itself so well to listening during a trip, even if the musicians had never taken LSD. The fact that most rock musicians of the time were inspired by Albert Hofmann's discovery and references to psychedelic experience were pervasive makes it difficult to differentiate styles. The media and censors seized upon the subject of intoxication among musicians and accused many groups of glorifying drugs, sometimes erroneously. That is how the single by The Byrds, "Eight Miles High," ended up on the banned playlist in the U.S. and was boycotted by radio stations, although its lyrics were merely describing guitarist Gene Clark's first plane trip to London.

In Germany, a new musical scene emerged in the late 1960s called "Krautrock" that freed itself from the American and English models. It was characterized by a unique mix of haunting, ethereal sounds from electronic instruments and elements of music of contemporary composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen and experimental psychedelic rock. The greatest psychedelic influence came from bands like Amon Düül II, Can, Guru Guru and Tangerine Dream. The Berlin Krautrocker Ash Ra Tempel met Timothy Leary in 1972 in Bern and used the occasion to hold a jam session. It led to the release

In the beginning we were creating our music, ourselves, every night... starting with a few outlines, maybe a few words for a song. Sometimes we worked out in Venice looking at the surf. We were together a lot and it was good times for all of us. Acid, sun, friends, the ocean, and poetry and music.

Jim Morrison

We must always remember to thank the CIA and the Army for LSD ... Everything is the opposite of what it is, isn't it? They invented LSD to control people and what they did was give us freedom.

John Lennon

the following year of the legendary album *7-Up* with a cover illustration by Swiss painter Walter Wegmüller. During the recording session a bottle of 7-Up dosed with LSD circulated and gave the album its name. "The guy at the mixer console inserted clever noise intermezzi at regular intervals; Leary himself played the rock star, moaning and howling with a throaty voice while accompanied by a ten-man Big Band pounding out earthy rock that gradually sounded ever more psychedelic. After a while, the music left behind any connection to the earth's gravitational field and drifted weightlessly in space, passing strange planet-feedback melodies as it searched for the center of the universe."¹⁰⁷

Acid House, Psytrance, Goa Trance

Several different psychedelic music styles developed in the late 1980s between Europe and Goa in India, the ultimate destination of many sixties-era hippie trails, where DJs played their music at beach parties. Young people, paying homage to the life style and drug use of the Flower Power era, joined them. LSD consumption had faded in the 1970s, but was revived during the rave and techno parties of the 1990s, along with the use of magic mushrooms and MDMA. "The psychedelic revolution never ended. It only needed to travel halfway around the world to a solitary beach at the end of a dusty road where it could freely change and develop into a new paradigm without pressure from the state or media: Goa consciousness," according to Goa Gil, a representative of this music and life style. (Rom, Querner 2012)



Burning Man, 2006

The Desert Lives

With the words "Eros, fire, and acid," a participant in a blog got to the heart of the Burning Man Festival of 2009 held in Nevada's Black Rock Desert. Held annually since 1986, Burning Man has gradually developed into the wildest gathering of the American art and psychedelic scene, attracting visitors from around the world. Attendance has grown from the initial twenty "Burners" to the over fifty thousand in 2010 who enjoyed a week of eccentric and radical self-expression, constructed bold and crazy sculptures, consumed impressive quantities of hallucinogens, and swore to be entirely responsible for themselves. Experts such as Ann and Alexander "Sasha" Shulgin and relevant organizations like MAPS and Erowid were available on-site for psychedelic counseling. This unique anarchic, hedonistic spectacle ends with the ritual burning of the gigantic wooden Burning Man statue. It is a matter of honor that all participants help clean up afterwards and leave no trace upon the festival grounds.