

Jefferson Airplane

Fillmore Auditorium

San Francisco, CA

October 15, 1966

Late Show

<http://concerts.wolfgangsvault.com/dt/jefferson-airplane/51719-3230.html>

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San Francisco, CA
10/15/1966
Late Show
Tracks: 13
Total Time: 57:37

Signe Anderson - vocals
Marty Balin - vocals, percussion
Paul Kantner - vocals, guitar
Jorma Kaukonen - lead guitar
Jack Casady - bass
Spencer Dryden - drums

This particular run of six shows, occurring over three days in October 1966, featured Jefferson Airplane, Big Mama Thornton (a big influence on Janis Joplin, who was likely in attendance) and the most legendary original lineup of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. For scholars of Jefferson Airplane lore, this run has inspired endless discussion, as it encompasses the most critical transition in the group's history: the departure of original female vocalist Signe Anderson, and the emergence of Grace Slick as her replacement. The circumstances surrounding Anderson's final show and Grace Slick's debut has been the source of speculation for nearly four decades. With the emergence of underground radio in San Francisco, Bill Graham provided local underground radio stations with several sequences from his personal recordings of this run. These bits and pieces have circulated among collectors ever since. Between those (often mislabeled) fragmentary recordings and disagreements between first hand recollections in print (including those of bandmembers and group historians), it seemed possible that we might never know when exactly the Anderson/Slick transition occurred.

That was until now, as Bill Graham's nearly complete and accurately dated master reels of the Jefferson Airplane performances from this legendary run now reveal exactly when the transition occurred. The last four shows with Signe Anderson and the first two shows with Grace Slick are here in outstanding quality, complete with humorous introductions by Bill Graham (on 5 of them), Marty Balin's announcement about Anderson leaving the band, as well as her actual farewell to the audience. These six performances will be addressed individually in terms of setlists and relevant content, but the fact that this was a monumentally fascinating time to have heard Jefferson Airplane in concert is universally applicable. It's well known that the original first album lineup, which included Signe Anderson, had developed a highly innovative original sound that helped establish the group's reputation; and you'll find no better example of the original band in concert than the first four shows of this run - also the last four shows they ever did with Anderson. By the end of 1966, after performing together just a little over a year, it was becoming obvious that the group had taken their initial musical stage as far as it could go. They were beginning to head in a direction that would require them to leave their more traditionally structured sound

behind - and embrace experimentation in every sense of the word. Within days of this run, the band would begin recording much of their classic second album, Surrealistic Pillow. Soon after, they would experience international recognition - and eventually become musical icons of the 1960s. Indeed, these shows give one the opportunity to observe the original lineup at the peak of their live abilities - as well as Grace Slick's initial, tentative steps on her very first day as a member of Jefferson Airplane.

This fourth show of the run had to have been an extremely emotional experience for the band, as this was to be Signe Anderson's final show. Together just over a year, the band had developed into an incredibly captivating band by this time, in no small part due to the vocal blend of Anderson and Balin. Signe Anderson had been a strong visual presence as well, and many fans of the band considered her a critical element to the group's innovative sound.

Bill Graham's humorous introduction kicks off the set. He announces the band with "Candidates for the Sexual Freedom League, the Jefferson Airplane." The set begins without Marty and Signe, and the remaining members head straight into the stratosphere with a lengthy instrumental jam. It's a remarkably adventurous way to begin a show, and those fortunate to be in the Fillmore that night must have sensed that something special was going on. This jam features Kaukonen and Casady heading into deep space, with an intensity not unfamiliar to the psychedelic explorations they would begin furthering on "Spare Change" and later "Bear Melt." Familiar nuances of that later material are already beginning to surface here in more embryonic form.

Anderson and Balin then join the others onstage as they begin another early rendition of "3/5 of a Mile in 10 Seconds." The song, at this point, seemed to be getting better with each performance, and this version is the first to approach the intensity of the studio version they would soon record. Casady's bass playing is getting more ominous with each performance, and Kaukonen is beginning to add additional guitar elements that would raise this song to a level beyond anything laid down on the first album.

Three songs from those debut album sessions follow. "Tobacco Road" rises above the normal level, with extraordinarily intense vocals from all three singers. "Come Up The Years" follows, and it's another beautiful performance. Sadly, this would be the last time the band ever played this song. "Go To Her" is next and is relatively tame compared to the previous night's version. It's still propelled by Casady's bass playing, which is nothing short of extraordinary, but this version is a little more relaxed than usual. Balin and Anderson leave for the next number, as Kantner leads the band through a fascinating rendition of Donovan's "Fat Angel." At this early stage of development, Kantner is playing this song on acoustic guitar, giving it an even spacier sound than later versions. This instrumentation makes Kaukonen's electric guitar improvisations stand out even more and it's a truly mesmerizing performance.

Marty then returns to the stage (without Signe), and from the trancelike mood created by "Fat Angel," eases into the sparse laid back blues arrangement of "And I Like It." This remains sparse through the verses until they head into the instrumental section prior to the bridge, when it begins escalating in intensity. That intensity remains as Balin belts out the bridge and then concludes the final verse.

A reel change occurred after this song and when the recording resumes, they are reaching the end of a rip-roaring version of Otis Redding's "Midnight Hour" with Kaukonen blazing on guitar. Marty belts out the conclusion and most of the people attending must have thought it would be the end of their set.

However, the group remained onstage as Balin address the audience by saying he would like to make an announcement. He speaks slowly and thoughtfully about the band playing together in San Francisco for a little over a year. He says "It's been a year of real beauty and everybody in the group has had probably the best time of their life." He pauses briefly and continues with the announcement that Signe is leaving the group. He seems at a loss for words to thank Signe and invites her back to the stage to sing for the last time with the band.

Following a standing ovation for Signe, she takes the microphone and says "I want you all to wear smiles and daisies and box balloons. I love you all. Thank you and goodbye."

Several members of the audience shout for her to sing "Chauffer Blues." Within seconds, the group obliges and they perform a fantastic version of the song with Anderson fronting the band. They would sadly never perform this song again, but this is a tour-de-force performance that likely would not have been surpassed. After another round of applause, they group eases into "High Flying Bird," with Marty, Signe and Paul taking turns on the verses and breaking into their trademark harmonies on the choruses.

This ends the set and as the applause begins to die down, Bill Graham returns to the stage and says, "Just this once, we're gonna be utterly selfish and keep the Airplane out of it. One big whopper for Signe Anderson!" Following another round of applause, he continues with "It's more than likely that she'll never need it, but she's always got another home right here, as far as I'm concerned. Thank you."

Thus ended Signe Anderson's last performance with Jefferson Airplane. The band would return to play two more shows the following night with Grace Slick on board for the first time.

Naughty Dog

Jefferson Airplane Fillmore (Oct 15, 1966, late)

1. Jam
2. 3/5ths Of A Mile In 10 Seconds
3. Runnin' Round This World
4. Tobacco Road
5. Come Up The Years
6. Go To Her
7. Fat Angel
8. And I Like It
9. Midnight Hour
10. Goodbye to Signe 1
11. Chauffeur Blues
12. High Flying Bird
13. Goodbye to Signe 2

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