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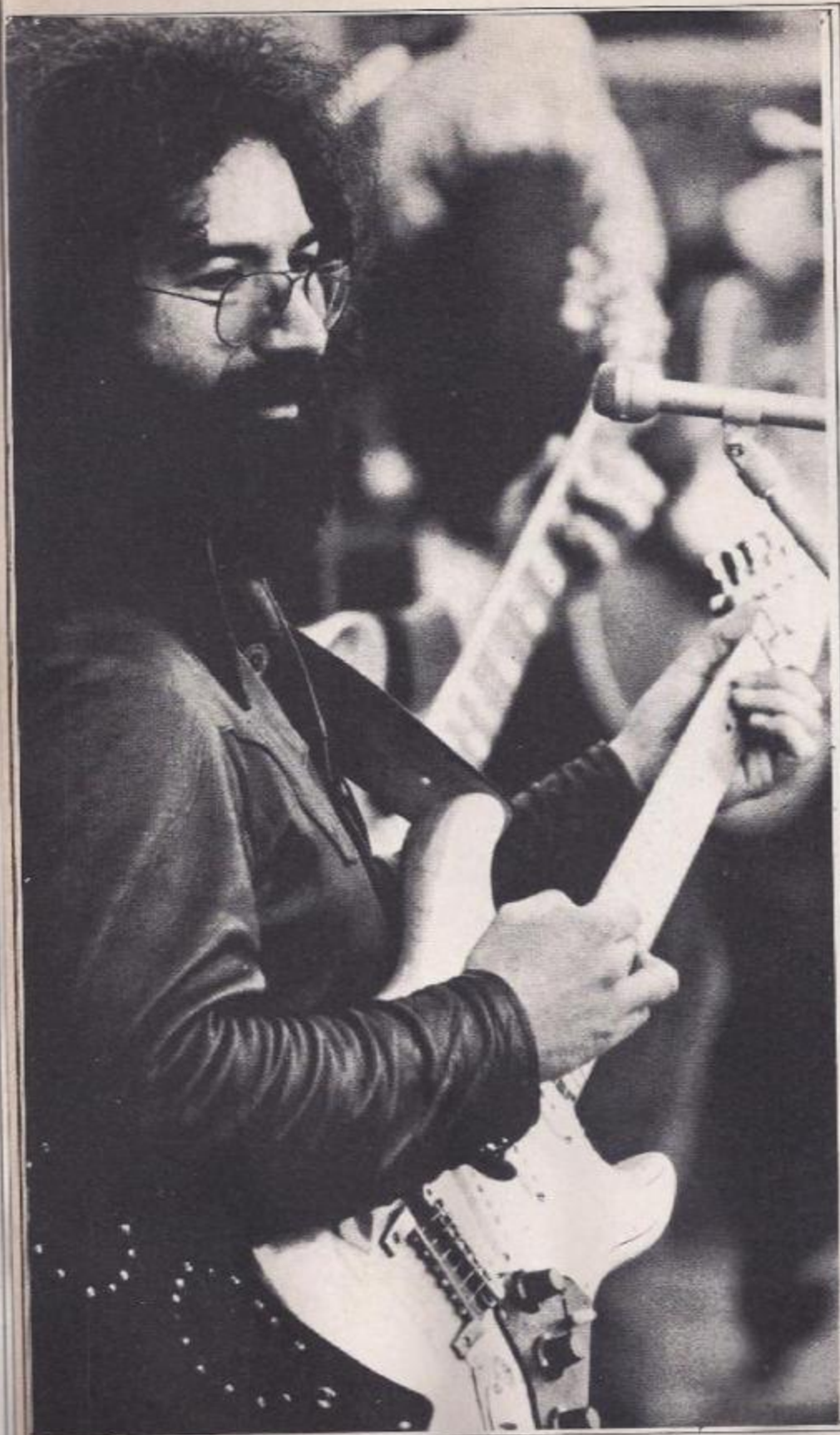
# Pearl

DRUMS

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## GARCIA

How does it feel to be touring with the Dead again — keeping in mind your new band?

The Grateful Dead for me is a special situation in that it doesn't particularly reflect my attitudes musically at this point. It's an experiment and it's challenging because everyone has a different idea about what is good. But it's flexible enough so that none of us is committed full time — possibly something chemically or magically will happen to excite us. My band, on the other hand is in accord musically; everyone has the same approach, ideas and feelings about music and performance. It's much easier, and more fun.

Then why continue with the Dead at all?

Well, we do share a common ground and I'm sure we'll continue to play together, but only for periods of time which are practical and realistic. Basically, we all share a mutual respect for the people who like the Grateful Dead and like the things we've been trying to do over the years, and that's partially why.

How do you feel this tour has progressed?

Good on some points, bad on others. You see, ideally the Grateful Dead should be a public service — something which is available to everyone at minimal cost — but the places we have as options to play in are either small auditoriums or huge coliseums with nothing in between.

What do you see as the ideal "in-between," the old Fillmore layout?

Not really. A place which would be comparable in size to a theatre, but one which would not have any seating. Theatres with seats require a little too much behaviour. I would like the audience to feel more free than that but there are no such places around. On the other hand, I don't like coliseums so it's very frustrating.

No alternatives, not even the old dance halls?

There are only a handful of them around and they're small at that. To offset the problem, the Dead may end up playing at a permanent place out in California, designing a building for ourselves and playing there as a fixture. That would give us all the advantages we would want to have.

The Dead are reputed to have one of the most massive equipment rigs...

Yeah, probably the best unit in the world.

What sort of equipment are you using now?

We're using a more conventional set up right now. Two P.A. systems, one essentially for voices and one for instruments. One reason for all that equipment was because we were playing the Coliseums, huge 15,000 to 20,000 seaters. In order to sound good in there it required a lot of equipment just to create a wave front of sound which would reach the back of the place.

What kind of guitar do you use on stage these days?

I'm using a Travis Bean Guitar right now.



**How do you find the aluminium neck's sliding ability when you sweat?**

I don't sweat.

**What do you like about the Travis Bean?**  
I'm really into them now, but when I first saw them I didn't know what to make of it — very strange you know — I picked one up, played it for about twenty minutes, put it back on the rack. The next day I started thinking about it, there was something exceptionally far out about the way it responded. I went back and bought one the next day and I've played it ever since. As far as I'm concerned, it's the first real quantum change in guitar technology. In terms of my own direction as a guitar player, it's been a process of developing greater control over touch, greater control over the tone of the instrument as a function of touch. It's, like, developmentally provided for me the next level I can advance to.

**Do you mean developmentally in terms of technique?**

I wouldn't describe it that way. It has more to do with physics, feeling. There are little refinements on the instrument which I never would have thought of myself, but just turned out to be really appropriate for my direction.

**What direction would that be?**

My approach has always been that everything is more or less equal. There is nothing tricky at all about my guitar set-up—it's very straight, all the strings are the same height, none sticking up, no modifications. As a guitar player I'm into precision and the Travis Bean is a real precision guitar. I also like the physical set up, the way it is one continuous piece of metal that both ends of the strings are attached to — no dampening properties, no acoustical feedback properties so you get maximum sustain from the strings. It is the first guitar which approaches a real electric guitar technology — forgetting about wood and its acoustical properties.

**What were you playing before?**

A guitar made by an excellent California guitar maker named Doug Irwin. It was kind of an expanded version of a Stratocaster.

**What sort of amplification are you using now?**

A Mesa Boogie Amp as a preamp and a MacIntosh 350 as a power amp, and I drive four JBLs on stage — a real straight-forward set-up.

**Do you use any other guitars?**

I have two really nice acoustic guitars, a 1942 Herringbone D-28 (Martin) which I really love and a 1939 Gibson L-5 F-Hole — first year they made them with the cut-aways. They have a lot of personality and I use them both for recording. I have a couple of classic Strats, '56 and '57, in mint condition. And I have a couple of extensively altered guitars, a couple of custom built guitars and two guitars by Doug Irwin — the Strat and an expanded version of a Les Paul, and I have three Travis Beans.

**Three Travis Beans?**

Yeah, well, the great thing about them is that in terms of playing action, you have three similar guitars but each completely different in electronic set-ups. You can maintain the same touch sensitivity to the instrument but go into a totally different space electronics-wise. Needing a back-up guitar and having one virtually identical to the one I play is a real boon. No wood guitar has that kind of uniformity.

**Isn't it possible that by striving for uniformity, you sacrifice quality?**

That can be true, but this is one time where I think that mass production is a good idea. With acoustic instruments, it's different because you need to use wood, but electronic instruments really need to be brought into a higher level of technology. All this experimentation with

**audiences tend to react with more restraint?**

No, basically it's a Dead audience. We've had some great concerts in Europe. We had been warned by everyone 'Oh, the English audience, very reserved' but we played Wembley two nights and we had an incredible time; the audience was amazing, they totally got off on it. We had a more intense experience when we played the Lyceum Theatre in London for four nights. It was great, as crazy as anything we've ever played in the United States.

The only place I noticed any marked change in the audience was in the Scandinavian countries. And even then, the difference was characterised by that thing where they all clap in time, like



new materials, I think these are materials of the future. I'm not into using trees for instruments if it's not necessary.

**What kind of strings do you use?**

Right now I'm using Vinci strings and I'll probably use them for the rest of my life. The neat thing about them is that they don't contain any nickel in the compound—just steel and iron, which is great for magnetic efficiency. Mr. Vinci is the guy who built the string winding machines for all the other string manufacturers, so it's kind of like going right to the source. These things, the guitars and strings, are things I've only recently gotten turned on to.

**I know that Dead audiences in the States can be pretty loose; are Dead audiences elsewhere the same or do European**

when the film projector stops in the middle of a film at the cinema and the audience gets angry; the first reaction is that they're going to tear the place apart, like they've really pissed off. But it's only a more orderly way of clapping.

**Aside from the playing, have you been involved in any sidetrips lately, producing, writing?**

I'm involved in a movie. It's been one of my things, film. I think I'll probably go on in it, maybe as a director or something. I'm not particularly ambitious but it's a whole new level of knowledge I've gained in the last year and a half. The movie is a Grateful Dead movie, about the Grateful Dead. Other than that, I haven't been doing much of anything outside of the music.