

## Visions of the Dead

scene: an ocean. Bubbles appear. As they pop, out of each comes a character or situation from the history of America. Constitution. Elections. Civil War. Depression. World War II, etc. "What was it for?" sighs the wind. Overview of America from sea to shining sea . . . forests, mountains and cities constructed of question marks . . . . . a Kennedy half dollar (improbably dated 1962) is flipped in the air & someone plugs it . . . it spins and falls on the pavement pouring blood\* . . . composed of exclamation points . . . the Haight in frenzied collage, longhairs paddling smiling canoes and swan shaped vessels down an avenue of honey . . . police drum band marching down sidewalk beating rhythm with nightsticks . . . ominous black panthers crouching on corners of buildings . . .

*\*(while the coin is spinning cut significant assassination footage in at the rate of one entirely different image per frame for however many it takes to fill a space of 5 seconds . . . this will make the Manchurian Candidate brainwashing footage look like slow motion)*

**Truckin'** continues as:

Rotating Scene shot from a carousel: Garcia painting a border of frogs around the edges of the Cistine Chapel, Phil dozes in a hammock slung in the tympanic membrane of an immense ear from Heironymous Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights. Pigpen, canoeing on a river of piano keys which runs through the room, opens a bottle of Thunderbird out of which flies a huge dark winged bird which blots out the screen -- in the center appears a pinpoint of light which turns into a bouncing ball accompanying the words "What a long strange trip it's been." The ball explodes, obliterating the screen, which then melts to reveal a face-on marching battalion of Mona Lisas with pushbrooms sweeping musical notes from the pavement into the laps of the audience, under an R. Crumb sun shining from a smiling sky. A banner reads: We hold these truths to be self-evident! We move over to Golden Gate park where the Grateful Dead conclude **Truckin'** to an audience of freeform dancers (enhanced actual footage, augmented with a light rain of hearts, clubs, spades & diamonds).

Dissolve to Bill Graham, standing on a very pedestrian modern day Haight Street, 1993, dressed in a flowing robe with a large ancient leatherbound book under his arm.

Bill: Here's what it looks like today. If you haven't been here in awhile, it might surprise you. But it *shouldn't* surprise you. This is pretty much the way things are everywhere today. Why should it be any different in the Haight?

*pan around the area – depressing, huh? – while we hear voices answer Bill from different parts of the audience, courtesy of surround sound:*

Voices:

Because we had faith in you!  
You had everything going for you back then.  
We envy your chance . . . there's no chance for us!  
It's a desert out here!  
Why did you let us down?  
Why did you drop the ball?  
Yeah, yeah, why?

Bill: This ball?

*He holds a tiny globe of the world. Move in on it as it becomes the actual Earth. Move through the stratosphere and clouds back down to Haight Street to re-establish the tiny globe in Bill's hand.*

Bill: Honestly Bozo, if you did drop it, where would it fall?

Weir: (walks by) I'll take that!

*He snatches the ball and rolls it down the street . . . in the wake of its roll the street becomes the old Haight, colors brighten, the 60's kids walk the street in ecstatic dress, Oracles & Rolling Stone being sold on the street, posters in shop windows, the whole shebang in its most positive aspect. We hear Janis singing **Piece of my Heart** from one window, **Somebody to Love** plays from another, **Like a Rolling Stone** from another. Dolly into a window where Hunter & Garcia are writing a song:*

Hunter: How about "Come drive Uncle John's Truck?"

Garcia: That's not quite it. It's a little too . . . um, secular-

Hunter: Ok, ok, how about . . . (pregnant pause) "Come hear Uncle John's jazz records?"

Garcia: That's getting closer, but it's still not a big enough image for what I want this song to say . . .

Hunter: Let's see: how about "Come hear Uncle John's Band?"

Garcia: No, that's going in the wrong direction . . . maybe a little too . . . how would you say . . . *Bravissimo*.

Hunter: Probably. So you want something non-secular and big, but not too big, and you want it to rhyme with *what*?

Garcia: Cumquat.

Hunter: Any particular reason?

Garcia: It came to me in a dream.

Hunter: I won't argue with that, but look, if you'll spot me Uncle John's Band, I'll add Buck Dancer's choice & raise you a crow.

Garcia: I'll see that and raise you a silver mine. Spot me a violin and we can lose the cumquat.

Hunter: But what about your dream?

Garcia: A dream is just a place to stand while you're trying to find your feet.

Hunter: Mind if I use that?

Garcia: No, it might give people the wrong impression.

Hunter: Yeah, dammit, you're right.

Garcia: Never dick with the dream.

Hunter: You said a mouthful!

*draw back out of the window & return to the street while Uncle John's Band plays. (work this out in detail) Photo & video montage of early '60s footage (go ape) against a black background which, when finished, proves to be a page of a photo album which closes at the end of the song-collage, proving to be the book Bill carried under his arm.*

BG: So what does it all mean?

Mr. Natural (walks by, remarks:) Don't mean shee-it man!  
(exits)

Voice from audience: Tell us how it all began, Bill!

BG: It didn't begin anywhere in particular. One day it was just here all at once . . . but if you mean the Dead, in particular, well I guess a band really begins when you select a name for it. These guys used a dictionary.

*Dissove to: Band sitting around while JG opens the Oxford Dictionary.*

JG: . . .hmm Grapefruit, graph-paper --that might be nice, Grappling iron . . that's got a certain ring -- grasshopper, naw, there's enough bands named after insects already, Grateful Dead -- now that would be weird . . . Graverobber . . . yeah, how about the Graverobbers!

Band members: That's it! Yeah! Graverobbers! Too much!

*cut to: Managers Danny & Rock, plus JG, Pigpen, Billy K & Phil gathered at Fillmore with BG.*

BG: You guys got to be kidding. I ain't gonna put Graverobbers on my marquee!

Danny & Rock: Aw Bill, don't be such an asshole.

BG: You want these boys of yours to work, find a nice name for the band.

Pig: How about *Ice Cream Prophylactic*?

BG: Graverobbers I like suddenly.

BK: What was that other weird name in the dictionary?

JG: Grappling Iron?

Phil: That sounds good and hairy. I'd go for that.

BK: No, that other one . . .

Pig: Grateful Dead.

BG: Now that's what I mean by a nice name. A nice, cheerful, upbeat image.

JG: I still think Graverobbers . . .

BG: Fuck you asshole. You're the Grateful Dead. Now shut up and go practice.

*The Wind Cries Mary concludes on a radio. Sue Swanson, listens, smoking a joint and ironing her hair. Part way through, she changes stations and hears last verses of Golden Road .*

Announcer: (Tom Donahue Voice). . .and there you have it, the first spin of the first single from San Francisco's own Grateful Dead: "the Golden Road to Unlimited Devotion" right here on KMPX FM where the sky meets the sea and all things bright and beautiful rise like mist to float into your ear. And now Scoop Nisker with Planet News.

(Research & run a short typical bit of Scoop to use as a thematic passage to whatever comes next)

OTHER SCENES (Not necessarily in order yet)

Lead in to Acid Test Scene

*Bill Graham stands outside the Straight Theatre, as it was in '67.*

BG: Acid was legal in those days. It's not legal now. But legality isn't the point. It took an A bomb to end World War Two and who can say with certainty it didn't take another kind of bomb to end the War in Viet Nam?

*Flower children and drug casualties walk by during this scene. One dude approaches Bill:*

Dude: Spare change?

BG: Get the fuck out of the world asshole!

Dude: Hey, *peace* brother!

BG: Peace. Piece of your fuckin' ass!

Dude: Hey, fuck you Graham! Why don't you give some of the bread you rake in back to the people?

People gather & join the exchange. Establish and develop this for about a minute, covering Bill's economic frankness over and against the hippie ethic (Digger ethic vs. Graham for another segment) During the discussion, dissolve the scene, going back in time, to the **Acid Test**.

### Neal Cassady (some typical dialogue)

Cassady: So there we were at the border sweatin' it when the sweetest pinpoint tornado lifted the duffle right out of the arms of the customs inspector, damned if it didn't, & set it down in El Paso square in the bed of a pickup truck lined up to cross into Juarez & . . .

A square mind in a square head. It was mammoth, I mean, sat on his shoulders like a diesel on a duck egg but as I said to Jack you got to catch yourself thinking before you can think about catching yourself. Lamantia thinks automatic writing is the most clear and conscious way to proceed, and of course Kerouac never looks back except, heh heh, when he does, then he gets so pissed off with himself he goes out and gets drunk, the problem with that being when the liver gives out so does the writing, but that's another story.

the fertility of ancestor worship as opposed to the sterility of monotheism, or like Lewie Welch said the conception of one God made modern government possible . . .

If I am a style what I am could be spoken by anyone.

But allow, heh heh, just naturally, find my personal prejudice to lie just somewhat southwest of that particular portal.

There's no free ride in the sensorium. You look as long as you can then beat it the hell out of there. If the sensorium is too strong or goes on for too long, the witness is swallowed up and the circus is left to play for itself, nobody feeds the lions and the whole thing runs out of control.

*The following bits actual Neal Cassady dialogue are extracted from Kerouac's Visions of Cody. An android mimicking Cassady's body language, keyed on some of Kesey's home movie footage, would be Apocalyptic if the technology could convince. If so, Cassady could appear in his film in several places. If not, we could just pin a picture of his face to a cardboard box and run tape dialogue.*

. . . it was about a hundred yards away, fifty yards, seventy, about fifty yards, yeah, seventy, sixty yards and, ah, it was (VC p122)

Phew! Naw, but man, what I'd tell you is, I didn't know that I'd appreciate remembering these things more, so therefore when I was there I didn't pay much attention to any of this, I was hung up on something else, you know, so I can't remember, say, for example, I can remember NOW for example, but now that I CAN remember it doesn't do any good, because . . . man. . . I can't get it down. You know . . . I just remember it, I remember it well, what happened 'cause I'M not doing nothin, see? (VC 123)

But I don't know if that's the case but it seem to me, it doesn't seem like it's usually been now as I remember because I wasn't thinking about those things, I certainly wasn't hungup on that, but it seemed to me (126)

Oh, I don't know what I was doing, I can't remember man, it's a terrible feeling not being able to remember what *I* was doing (*laughing*). . . Jesus was I there, I don't remember where I am but I think I was there, shit one time or another, damn that, Oh Christ, mmm . . . That's an interesting question, what WAS I doing? (*laugh*) What I was doing I think -- the reason I don't remember too well -- (127)

## Woodstock

Include GD Woodstock footage but gradually dub in hallucinations of fields of different kinds of flowers for the audience and create changing weather conditions during the tune chosen, drown the band out with thunder, move

the stage to the moon, change night to bright daylight with daisies raining out of the sky resolving to PigPen & Janis doing **Lovelight** in the center of a mandala with Altamont, Manson, Patty Hearst--SLA, George Jackson, Angela Davis, Hayakawa at SF State, at the edges of a slowly rotating mandala collage resolving into Jimi at Woodstock playing **Star spangled Banner** waist deep in an ocean made of an American Flag, foaming with surf. Let the roar of the flag ocean grow until the music is drowned out and dub in Dylan singing "I heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world" resolving to "one way or another this darkness got to give" as the scene begins to darken and dwindle. Voice over of Ginsberg (reading first verse of howl): *I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness/ Starving, hysterical, naked / Angel headed hipsters prowling negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix . . .*"his voice fades to give way to Diane DiPrima repeating (from Rant): *The only war that matters is the war against the imagination -- The only war that matters is the war against the imagination -- The only war that matters is the war against the imagination . . .* while all pieces of the visual presentation shrink & dwindle into a tiny whirling mass which settles on a paper plate -- it's sunrise at Woodstock -- Wavy Gravy holds this plate high and announces: *Breakfast in bed for four hundred thousand!*

## **POLITICAL RAP**

Scene: We see the band & crew watching TV in the dark. We see only the back of the TV & their faces.

TV: This footage just in from the Mekong Delta were American Troops are engaged in skirmishes with the Viet Cong . . . etc. etc. (*get some actual tv dialogue of the time.*) *We see flames shooting out of the TV into the room, though we never see what's on. Sickened look on some faces, fascination on others. After a burst of machine gun fire & explosions that rock the room, the television explodes and burns to rubble. Lights switch on. The viewers faces are blackened, as though they, too, have just experienced the taste of war action. Dissolve to:*

*JG, Phil, Weir, Mickey are conversing with a black revolutionary man and a female anti-war activist in the front room of 710 Ashbury.*

JG: I'm not putting down what you're doing, but why should we lay aside what we're doing to follow your program?

Brother X: All energies must be directed to the cause of the people! You're wasting time with this hippie dippy shit, and time is the one thing we don't have time to waste! We got a war to fight and the time to fight is now!

Sister Child: Now wait a minute, my man! We're fighting to *stop* a war and you're talking about starting a civil war at the same time!

BX: Viet Nam will take care of itself, soon's they realize they got to get those troops back here to fight the war on the home front.

Pigpen: Seems to me the problem is everybody fighting!

Weir: You say you're fighting to be free -- we're just trying to practice freedom the best we know how. We're not soldiers, we're musicians.

Brother X: We're not saying you should stop making music, we're just saying it's important for *all* energies to be directed in service of the revolution. Look at what you're saying for God's sake: "*Good morning little schoolgirl -- can I come home with you!*"

Pigpen: Wit'choo!

BX: Where you get off singing black songs in the first place . . .

Pigpen: Same place you get off talking English. . . what goes around comes around, brother.

BX: Don't give me that brother shit, white boy.

Pigpen: Don't give me that white boy shit, cousin!

BX: Don't fuck with my head, man. This may be the one chance you get to square your shit away & get right with the movement.

Sister Child: I'm with him that far. One way or another, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem

JG: We *are* part of the solution, just not your particular solution.

BX: Don't forget freedom comes from the barrel of a gun!



JG: Assuming the fighting ever does end, and you don't just turn to fighting among yourselves like any other armed revolution, what'll be left when the smoke clears?

Phil: That's what concerns us. Is there gonna be any of this famous peace and freedom or just a lot of broken windows on Telegraph Avenue?

Mickey: Seems to me you're running some old program from the turn of the century that looked good on paper but ended up being run by the same bunch of bullshit bureaucrats wherever they tried to put it into action.

Sister Child: Right on! We need our own revolution, not some pre-packaged Marxist bullshit. That wasn't Dr. King's dream!

BX: Yes it was!

Sister Child: No it wasn't!

BX: Martin and Malcolm, George Jackson, Stokely and Mao . . . baby, it's all the same dream! And it's yours if you want it!

Weir: If your dream's expansive enough to put Martin & Mao on the same mountain, I guess there's room for ours too.

BX: Negative! Them cats were not sittin on no mountain top high on LSD singing Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band & meditating on their dicks!

Bill Kreutzman (entering room): Somebody say party time?!

Phil: (dour) Yeah, it's party time all right.

BX: (preparing to split) One hundred and sixty-six percent pre-digested white bread stick your pointy little head up your ass and fight for air party time. See you after the revolution!

BK: Right on, brother! Comin' to the show tonight?

BX: Yeah -- could you put me on the guest list?

BK: Sure, no problem. What's up guys?

JG: (to Ramrod who's just entered) Hey Ramrod, you seen Hunter anywhere?

Ramrod: Down on Haight Street shaking down tourists for spare change.

JG: I think I'll join him -- it's time we wrote a protest song. And I could use some spare change for guitar strings anyway.

Weir: I just changed my strings -- you can have my old ones -- they only got three gigs on 'em.

JG: Naw -- you got some kinda weird PH in your fingers turns strings green when anybody else touches 'em.

Weir: Suit yourself.

Ramrod: I don't think you're gonna get any protest out of Hunter today. He had that wall to wall smile and was hovering six inches above the pavement.

JG: (leaving) I'll bring him down!

Ramrod: Hey, me and Rex are gonna drive over and raid the Jefferson Airplane's dumpster soon as they get on stage tonight. Anybody wanta come?

JG: (off-camera) Not if they're still on that vegetarian kick.

Cut to Mickey walking upstairs to his room.

## **Mickey teaches The Eleven**

Scene: Mickey Hart is beating on a drumpad. ( Closeups on Mickey's hands. Multi-tone light from a stained glass window onto the hands and pad.

Hart:

Papa Mama Papa Mama

flim flam paradiddle

ratamacue rat-ratamacue

dou-ble paradiddle

dou-ble paradiddle

Mama Papa Mama Papa (shot rises to his face)

Rhythm is everything.

Rhythm is all.

Rhythm is God,

bow down to rhythm

Rhythm is powerful

Rhythm conquers all

1-2-3-4-5-6 / 1-2-3-4-5-6 (counts a few bars of 6 then permutates to 9; counts a few bars of 9 aloud then adds a

two stroke flam to bring the count to 11. Sparks fly off the drumstick heads and an archery-type target face appears on the drumpad, oscillating centrifugally like looney tunes)

*Phil walks by Mickey's open door and peeks in as Mickey counts*

Hart: Hey Phil, follow this . . .

*Phil plucks a bass out of the air*

Phil: What's the count man?

Hart: Eleven!

Phil: Far out

Hart: onetwothree / fourfivesix/ sev'neightnine/ tenlev'n  
onetwothree / fourfivesix/ sev'neightnine/ tenlev'n

Phil: (follows suit on bass) Kinda got to cram those  
last two beats in there don't you?)

Hart: Do it till it feels natural.

Phil: How long do you figure that takes?

Hart: Twice as many times as you can stand to play it --  
teach it to your nerves -- play it till it gets in your  
sleep & you wake up counting it.

(They groove and the tune The Eleven develops out of it --  
the duet continues a bit then Garcia's descending solo comes  
in and lap dissolve to:

**Jerry goes walking in the Haight.** (This scene still to be developed) Watches tour buses from Mars, Venus & other dimensions, a steady stream of them, move through the Haight. Each has a tourist guide driver explaining fine points of Hippie culture. He eventually finds Hunter who is, indeed, floating above the pavement.

JG: Hey Hunter how's it going?

Hunter: You're not going to believe this man!

JG: I'll believe it.

Hunter: My body's here right now, but my mind's in 1994  
and I'm writing a movie about all the shit that's going down  
right now!

JG: Oh Yeah? How does it all turn out?

Hunter: Not allowed to tell, I don't think.

JG: I wouldn't want to know anyway. . . except for one thing.

Hunter: What's that?

JG: Who's gonna direct it?

Hunter: You are!

JG: Far out. When can I see the script?

Hunter: In about thirty years.

**Concluding Sequences Music: Attics of My Life**

Voice over:

What became of the girl  
in the tattered shawl,  
the many bodies, all  
beautiful, she wore  
walking arm in arm  
with the boy in the  
stovepipe hat grinning  
like a broad blue sun  
in checkerboard skies?

I see my brothers  
& fairy tale sisters  
by light no snap of  
a shutter can capture,  
no interview after  
the fact reclaim --

only conjuration  
performed in  
twilight mist  
upon scaffolding  
of moonbeam  
can reconstruct  
the architecture  
of a dream.

Though my foot is lost,  
I will walk. My tongue  
being tied, yet will I talk  
as a breeze speaks to  
the heat of day in the  
voice of common need.

I have sung  
strange songs  
beneath strange skies  
in a tongue no voice  
can hope to master  
but I have never  
sung to strangers.

## CONCLUSION

Using a live performance of **Days Between** as a matrix, lap dissolve or morph from one configuration of the Grateful Dead to the next, concluding with current configuration. Archive film & video clips may be slowed to master rhythm, or run at speed -- lip & instrument synch would be fine once in awhile but are not essential -- it need not seem that earlier versions of the Dead are performing this song so much as existing within its context.

### DAYS BETWEEN

(Begin with short establishing shot of GD 1994 playing tune on stage)

There were days  
and there were days  
and there were days between  
Summer flies and August dies  
the world grows dark and mean  
Comes the shimmer of the moon  
(LD (Lap dissolve) & shimmer to '65 configuration)  
on black infested trees  
the singing man is at his song  
the holy on their knees  
the reckless are out wrecking  
the timid plead their pleas  
No one knows much more of this  
than anyone can see anyone can see  
(LD to configuration plus TC)

There were days  
and there were days  
and there were days besides  
when phantom ships with phantom sails  
set to sea on phantom tides  
Comes the lightning of the sun  
on bright unfocused eyes  
(LD to configuration minus Pigpen)  
the blue of yet another day  
a springtime wet with sighs  
a hopeful candle lingers  
in the land of lullabies  
where headless horsemen vanish  
with wild and lonely cries lonely cries  
(LD to configuration plus Keith & Donna)

There were days  
and there were days  
and there were days I know  
when all we ever wanted  
was to learn and love and grow  
Once we grew into our shoes  
we told them where to go  
walked halfway around the world  
on promise of the glow  
**(LD to configuration with Brent)**  
stood upon a mountain top  
walked barefoot in the snow  
gave the best we had to give  
how much we'll never know we'll never know

There were days  
and there were days  
and there were days between  
polished like a golden bowl  
the finest ever seen  
**(LD return to present configuration)**  
Hearts of Summer held in trust  
still tender, young and green  
left on shelves collecting dust  
not knowing what they mean  
valentines of flesh and blood  
as soft as velveteen  
hoping love would not forsake  
the days that lie between lie between

We pull away from stage -- rise up, out into the night sky, ascend at ever increasing speed, star rush of time travel at interstellar velocity -- the establishing bars of **Playing in the Band** can be detected through the roar of hyperspace drive, but grows in volume as the speed of light is approached -- at 186,000 mps the roar suddenly vanishes leaving the music at volume -- curvature is seen around the edges of a screen filled with inky black swarming with motion -- a crack of light appears across the horizontal -- opens like an opaque visor to reveal a pre-dawnlit mountainscape containing two monolithic skeletons, masculine and feminine, lightly attired & decked in roses. One holds a crystal ball -- a shake causes snow to swirl inside it. She tosses it lovingly in the air where it floats off into the sky. They watch as it disappears. We follow the globe as the snow settles to reveal a golden boat with long sweeping oars. Tighten till we see only the boat heading into the rising sun.

Continue to follow its dwindle as credits roll. After major credits, credits for every enterprise or person ever connected with the scene continues, to the music of Dark Star. All names occur in alphabetically ordered sections so

that anyone who is old enough and waits long enough might conceivably find his or her name.

Other items to be covered include: the Diggers, the Be-In, Rex, Bear, Levitating the Pentagon --- this is a growing list. I want to stick to the 66, 67, 68 era & the song choice reflects this, though, in fact, most of the pertinent GD material post dates this time period. The treatment should resolve the anachronism.

Songs included in this scripting:

Grateful Dead:

Uncle John's Band  
Truckin'  
Space Music  
Playing in the Band  
Attics of My Life  
Box of Rain -- Phil Segment  
Sugar Magnolia -- Weir Segment  
New Speedway Boogie  
Golden Road  
The Eleven  
China Cat Sunflower  
Saint Stephen  
Dark Star  
Days Between

Others: (mostly fragments & choruses)

Lovelight  
Song w/o Words -- C.J. & the Fish  
Get Together - Youngbloods (a Dino Valenti song)  
Hard Rain -- Dylan  
Like a Rolling Stone -- Dylan  
You been on my mind -- Dylan, Joan Baez version  
Sunshine Superman -- Donovan  
For What it's Worth -- Buffalo Springfield  
Star Spangled Banner -- Hendrix  
Wind Cries Mary -- Hendrix  
Somebody to Love -- Airplane  
Piece of My Heart -- Janis  
Who Do You Love -- Quicksilver  
White Bird -- Beautiful Day  
We Love You -- Beatles & Stones

©1994 Robert Hunter  
all rights reserved