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## 20 Years After the Hippie Invasion of San Francisco

# Summer of Love Infiltrated the Modern World

By MARK A. STEIN, *Times Staff Writer*

SAN FRANCISCO—Forget the sun. Forget the North Pole. For one brief summer back in 1967, the world revolved around the intersection of Haight and Ashbury streets in San Francisco, the Hollywood and Vine of Hippiedom.

It was the Summer of Love, a time when youth flowed to San Francisco hoping to remake the world with flowers, innocence and LSD.

Much has changed since the "turn on, tune in and drop out"

counterculture burst into the public consciousness 20 summers ago. The Vietnam War has ended, the basic nature of affluence in the affluent society has changed, and hippies have become a comfortable, almost quaint, anachronism.

But the flash of history represented by the Summer of Love has had lasting effects on both the nation and this city, in ways ranging from a broadly based environmentalist movement and a general distrust of authority to new atti-

tudes toward sex and a chronic problem with illegal drugs.

"The whole legacy of that cultural revolution in the mid-'60s is extremely important," said historian Kevin Starr, media fellow at the Hoover Institute. "Attitudes toward social relationships . . . that were considered eccentric 20 years ago are mainstream America now."

"San Francisco was a wellspring, the headquarters in some sense," recalls Todd Gitlin, an author, essayist and associate professor of sociology at UC Berkeley. "People, at least in the Midwest, weren't looking to New York for cultural cues. They looked to San Francisco."

San Francisco "popularized an attitude," said feminist journalist Deirdre English, who as a teenager made a pilgrimage from Chicago that summer. "The attitude was one of seizing life, feeling free, feeling that if we do not like

something we can change it, feeling there was this critical mass of people who wanted to reject inherited, authoritarian, conformist ideas and make the world our own."

San Francisco, which served as ground-zero for this cultural explosion, has shared its fallout. Haight-Ashbury has changed—more expensive types of trendy shops now line Haight Street and the once-neglected Victorian

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homes adopted by hippie communes are now among the most coveted housing in town. But the old working-class neighborhood still hosts the avant garde as well as the old guard.

The city itself also continues to reflect the new life styles ushered in by the counterculture. It has the highest percentages of single-person and single-parent households of any city in the nation. It also is the unofficial capital of the human-potential movement, with its self-help and self-actualization gurus.

San Francisco also remains an individualist's Kanadu, where the hippie cry, "Do your own thing!" served to incubate a new cornucopia of causes—women's liberation, gay rights, senior citizen power, emancipation of mental patients and accommodation of "mobility-impaired persons," as well as efforts to save the whales, protect the forests and politically empower every racial, ethnic and sexual constituency with a typewriter and a photocopier.

## 'Alternative Capital'

"It has made San Francisco the alternative political capital of America," said Starr, with some disdain. "It took San Francisco out of the mainstream of American cities and made it an eccentric alternative capital."

Despite its effect on the city, or maybe because of it, the Summer of Love will pass almost unnoticed by the San Francisco Establishment; spokesmen for Mayor Dianne Feinstein and the city Convention and Visitors Bureau said they have no plans for any celebration. Indeed, city officials were reluctant even to discuss the anniversary.

Even unofficial events are few. An art-house theater in the area produced a multi-media show earlier this year, and UC Berkeley sponsored a seminar on the '60s experience last March. The final event happens this morning, when a local producer will host an "All Beings Parade" down Haight Street, a "community celebration" in Golden Gate Park and a combination concert and poetry reading in a Haight Street nightclub.

## 'A Perfected Boston'

Local newspapers, magazines and television stations have offered nostalgic recaps of the summer, but San Francisco itself seems too busy with the future to spend much time romanticizing this sliver of its past. Hippies, after all, were just another chapter in the city's richly bohemian history.

San Francisco has long represented a frontier, in several senses. Born as a boom town in the Gold Rush, its very foundation was laid by social castoffs and dreamy schemers of every conviction. The wide-open West has always represented freedom and possibility in the American psyche, so San Francisco—at the edge of the continent—was the furthest extension of those ideals.

Examiner columnist Rob Morse recently mused that the city was "a perfected Boston . . . a place where the values of Thoreau and the transcendentalists have roosted, without the sexual Puritanism and no-neck racism of the town of bean and cod."

Indeed, a native son of Massachusetts, Jack Kerouac, took the 1950s "Beat Generation" on the



Janis Joplin played the Monterey Pop Festival in June, 1967.

road—and to San Francisco. The Beats flourished in North Beach, eventually overflowing into the low-rent Haight-Ashbury district.

That was the start of bohemianism in the Haight, which soon started to draw white, middle-class youngsters—dismissed by the Beats as "hippies" because of their pseudo-hip attitude.

Hippies flourished in the early '60s for several reasons, sociologists say, including a new youth-oriented culture, an unprecedented number of teen-agers, a period of unparalleled affluence and the popular sense of American destiny and power. At the same time, these truths were tainted by wrenching social events, such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, a brutal reaction to the civil rights movement, the deepening Vietnam War and a lingering anxiety over nuclear weapons.

"Those were the issues that cut through the b.s., that cut through the traditional value system," concluded cultural historian Peter Carroll, author of a number of books and essays on both the '60s and the effect they had on the '70s. "My sense of it is the political issues were the ones that really broke the back of the culture, and then allowed [the counterculture] to surface."

## The Birth of LSD

Also important were, of all things, two pharmaceuticals. One was the birth control pill. The other was LSD.

"I think it needs to be established firmly, flatly and finally that what we call 'the '60s' would never have happened had it not been for psychedelic drugs," novelist Tom Robbins said during the recent UC Berkeley colloquium on the decade.

Lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD, was introduced to the Haight-Ashbury subculture courtesy of the Department of Defense.

Several historians, including Charles Perry, note that Defense Department researchers at the