

The Acid Test Posters



by Michael Erlewine

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INTRODUCTION

This is not intended to be a finely produced book, but rather a readable document for those who are interested in in this series on concert poster artists and graphic design. Some of these articles still need work.

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The Acid Tests were an important series of events along the way to firmly establishing the dancehall scene and its psychedelic genesis in the San Francisco area. The first such test was nothing more than a meeting in the home of Prankster Ken Babbs on November 7, 1965. A single note was posted in the "Hip Pocket Bookstore" in Soquel, California, near Santa Cruz. It was an attempt by Ken Kesey and friends to somehow reach out and communicate, and share their experience and knowledge about LSD that they were so enthused about. The Acid Test was also about taking LSD together. That first meeting was attended by Ken Kesey, the Merry Pranksters, Allen Ginsberg, and a number of the Grateful Dead (then the 'Warlocks' and girlfriends), including Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh, and Bob Weir.

A second Acid test was held in the home of another friend on the University of Santa Cruz campus. This time there was a fee of \$1 and special identification cards were made for it, that showed Uncle Sam pointing at you, along with the phrase: "Can YOU pass the Acid Test?" This was the first Acid Test at which the Grateful Dead played. They played on almost all subsequent Acid Tests.



Can YOU pass the Acid Test?"

Successive Acid test parties took place more publicly, the 3th being at the Big Beat Club in Palo Alto and the 4th at Muir Beach in Marin County. A small one (5th) was held in Portland, Oregon at Beaver Hall and the 6th at Sound City Studio in San Francisco. All of these were not so much sharing in words, as in substance. Everyone got high.



Can YOU pass the Acid Test?

Essentially, what happened at most of these events is that those attending got dosed and hung out together. The 7th and 8th Acid Test parties were huge affairs, one being held at the Fillmore Auditorium and the 8th at the 3-day Trips Festival. These were very significant events and very much attended by the public. After that, there were a small number of other Acid Tests, most held in Southern California, in the Los Angeles area.

The so-called Acid Test Graduation was supposed to take place at the Winterland, starring the Grateful Dead. Instead, it ended up in a warehouse, with music by the AAA (Anonymous

Artists of America). For those who attended, a diploma was awarded.

1st Acid test, 1965-11-07, Ken Babbs home, Soquel, CA

2nd Acid Test, 1965-12-04, Big Nigs home, San Jose Center

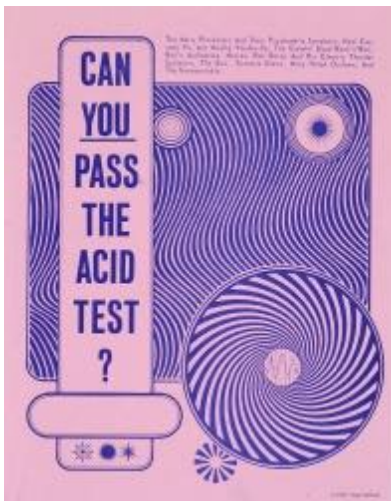
3rd Acid Test, 1965-12-11, Big Beat Club, Palo Alto

4th Acid test, 1965-12-18, Muir Beach

5th Acid test, 1965-12-24, Beaver Hall, Portland, Or

6th Acid Test, 1966-01-01, Sound City Studio, 363 6th Street, San Francisco

7th Acid Test, 1966-01-08, Fillmore Auditorium



Can YOU pass the Acid Test? Fillmore

8th Acid test, 1966-01-21/23, Trips Festival,
Longshoreman's Hall



Trips Festival

9th Acid Test, 1966-02-05, Northridge Unitarian
Church, Paul Sawyer, Los Angeles

10th Watts Acid test, 1966-02-12, Youth Opportunities
Center, Compton, CA

1966-02-?? Sunset Acid Test, Empire Studios, Sunset
Blvd., Los Angeles

1966-03-12, Pico Acid test, Danish Center, Los
Angeles

??? Acid Test, Cathay Theater, Los Angeles, CA

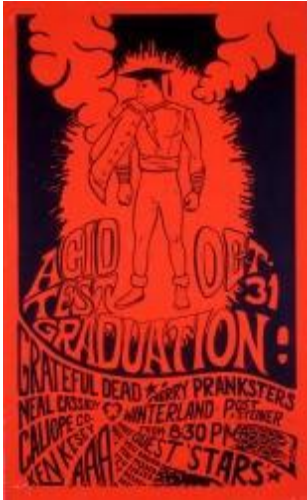
S.F. State University Acid Test, "Whatever It Is"
Festival, 1966-10-02,

San Francisco State College



Whatever It Is

Acid test Graduation, 1966-10-31, Commons, San
Francisco State College



Acid Test Graduation