

Foreword

The San Francisco recording community adopted me in 1978. But the big difference was I got to choose San Francisco! I think that is really the underlying connection we—the studios, the musicians, and the culture—all have with this area. Even those born here choose to stay because there is something absolutely magical about this place. Others, like me, chose to come here because we sensed there was something new and different and the possibilities were endless.

From the very beginning of our recording history, an independent and optimistic streak seemed to infect everyone involved with audio. Whether it was advertising, radio, or even something as basic as Ampex tape and tape machines, people felt then as they do now that they were on the cutting edge of recording and later, technology. I can't think of any other area that garnered so much attention from outside companies as San Francisco and the Bay Area. Of course Columbia Records would have studios in Hollywood and New York, but like so many others they saw great opportunities here to capture and promote whatever new was coming down the pike, as did Wally Heider and Chris Stone and Gary Kellgren.

I came to San Francisco to work with people I admired: Fred Catero and David Rubinson. But the city and its reputation had just as strong a pull. Whether it was Haight-Ashbury, the demonstrations at San Francisco State, the love-ins, Bill Graham and the Fillmore, everything seemed to be happening here, including some of the most adventuresome music anywhere. Roy Halee and I worked together in Los Angeles for many years, and he would rave about the sound of the rooms at what was then known as CBS San Francisco. “You think this is a patch bay?!?!?”, he said, pointing to the one we had at ABC Studios in Los Angeles. “Why, the patch bay we have in Studio B at CBS covered the whole wall!” Imagine how I felt when I got hired at what became The Automatt and walked into Studio B and saw “Roy’s patch bay.” San Francisco studios saw everything from seminal recordings by Big Brother & the Holding Company, Sly Stone, Herbie Hancock and the Sons of Champlin to the first digital multitrack recording with Carlos Santana.

From the soundtrack for *Apocalypse Now*, handmade consoles, and recording rooms that were sonic gems to companies such as Digidesign, Sonic Solutions, Lucasfilm, and Apple, that independence and optimism continues to this day. Heather Johnson’s book has captured the essence of the San Francisco studio and recording community for the first time in a narrative that contains all its glorious history. But be forewarned...after reading it you too will want to choose San Francisco.

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