

D R I F T I N G

BY MARK PIESANEN

I was born in the summer of 1965, smack dab in the middle of the decade. I'm not of the sixties though, know what I mean? I'm not even sure that I understand what was going on then. I'm not hip to hippies, if you will. Near as I can figure it, some people were sticking flowers in rifle barrels and other people were napalming children. There's a song that helps to put it all together for me.

Music doth have charms and man oh man when I hear that song, the floodgates in my mind are swung wide open.

Remember Richard Dreyfuss in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? He got his face sunburned by a UFO and that was it; game over. He went around making mountains out of mashed potatoes after that. That's the way I've felt since I first heard this song. I was fourteen. I was driving around with some hoodlum friends of mine, not looking for trouble, just kicking up some gravel on some dusty country roads. Over the chatter and the hiss of a torch I heard these ringing, sitar-like guitar riffs and twisted, funky vocals. I only heard a little bit of it because something started to burn and everyone panicked. Although it was the first time I had heard it, I was overwhelmed by a serious case of *deja vu*. I'd like to be able to chalk it up as just one of those beautiful and eerie drug experiences, but I've always felt that there was more to it than that. The hook had been set. Mind you, they were great drugs.

After that first time, this song began to tease me. I would catch the tail end of it

during a Flashback Psychedelic six-pack or something like that. Somehow the title of it always eluded me. I asked around, but you know how that is. I mean, what do *you* say when someone asks, "Hey, do you know the name of that song; you know the one that goes, 'nut nah neer na neer, nut nah neer na neer,' you know the one I mean?"

For a long time I was puzzled. Puzzled, fuck! For a long time I was tormented, frustrated and obsessed. You see, its kind of an obscure song, not the kind that gets flogged on top 40 radio. Nor is it a staple in many album collections. How could I have asked for it at a record store when I didn't even know who did it, or what the title is? I guessed that it had the word, 'time' in it somewhere. That narrows it down to about half a million songs.

The last time I heard the song. . . yea, that's what this is all about. Now that I think of it, it was only the second or third time I had heard it from start to finish. I was driving home alone late at night. It was so foggy that I could only see two or three white dots on the highway ahead of me. I had to slow right down. I turned on the radio to relax and it started. No DJ, no commercial, just, BAM! The song began the moment I punched the button. So there I was, suddenly face to face with my obsession nearly eight years after I was first haunted by it. It was like when Richard Dreyfuss finally encounters his UFO again.

I have a friend who likes to wander around in the fog at night because he likes

being disoriented. Not me; I gotta know exactly where I am. I don't want to get weird on you, but just stop and think for a second. It was really foggy, so foggy that I was totally cut off from the rest of the world. It was like I was in outer space. I'm moving, but I'm not going anywhere because nothing outside is changing. And this song, this psychedelic head trip of a song is playing through all this weirdness. Jesus, it was spooky.

In the middle of the song, the tempo slows right down and the drummer taps his sticks to imitate the sound of a clock ticking. Then you get a blast from an echo machine. I know its gimmicky; the echo machine is probably the most overworked sixties music cliché. Nevertheless, it transforms the drummer's imaginary Twilight Zone clock into a hypnotist's pocket watch. Then the band begins to chant, "Time. . . time. . . ime. . . ime. . . ime. . . Time. . . time. . . ime. . . ime. . ." The bass and guitar are rumbling in the background, surging in a crescendo as the tempo quickens. Faster and faster now. And I still can't see anything. And it's late at night and I'm alone.

Then there's a scream or a moan or something, and the band hits the tune again, full bore, "The time has come today. . ."

When it was over, I suddenly realized that I had no idea how far I had driven. I shut the radio off because I didn't want to hear anything else. I couldn't tell whether I'd been driving for a few minutes or a half an hour. I just drifted along in isolation and silence.