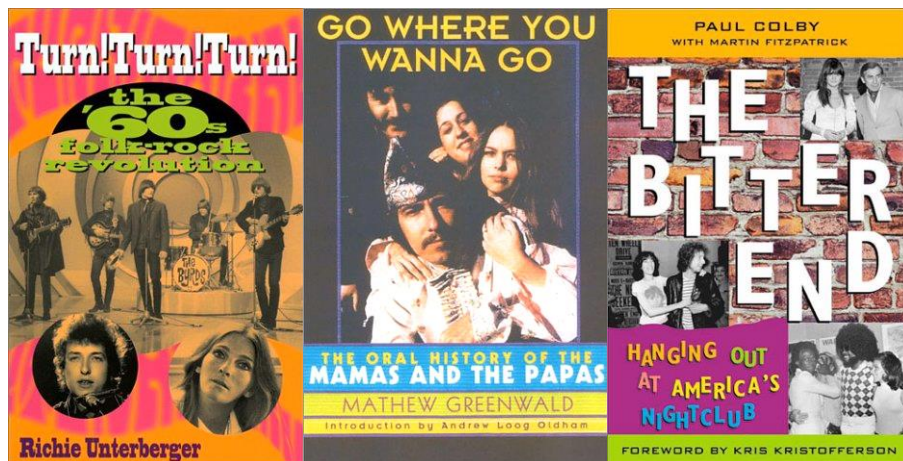


## Santa's Gonna Fill Your Stocking With Paper – A Trio of Book Reviews



**“Turn! Turn! Turn! The 60’s Folk Rock Revolution”** - Richie Unterberger, published Backbeat Books, 304 pages, softback, ISBN 0-87930-703-X

**“Go Where You Wanna Go: The Oral History Of The Mamas And The Papas”** – Matthew Greenwald, published Cooper Square Press, hardback, 300 pages, ISBN 0-8154-1204-5

**“The Bitter End: Hanging Out At America’s Nightclub”** – Paul Colby with Martin Fitzpatrick, published Cooper Square Press, hardback, 230 pages, ISBN 0-8154-1206-1

If the foregoing trio of titles possess a commonality, it is *the sixties*. The nineteen-sixties, that is. The decade of which Wavy “Hugh Romney” Gravy once said, *“If you knew where you were or what you were doing in the sixties, you probably weren’t there.”* A number of sixties events turn up in more than one book. Book to book, the details of *what happened* vary greatly. History!!!

**“Turn! Turn! Turn! The 60’s Folk Rock Revolution”** - Richie Unterberger

Unterberger’s **“Turn! Turn! Turn!: The 60’s Folk Rock Revolution”** is actually the first of two books in which he plans to trace the history and essence of the music form, folk-rock. The second book, **“Eight Miles High: Folk-Rock’s Flight From Haight-Ashbury To Woodstock”** will appear in 2003. Apart from acknowledging *the coals to Newcastle* British Invasion of 1964 in “Meet The Beatles,” plus Donovan’s significant contribution to the genre, the contents of **“Turn! Turn! Turn!”** in the main, focus upon American bred acts. In the five-page Introduction, Richie quotes the August 1965 Billboard headline *“Folk + Rock + Protest = An Erupting New Sound”* and then sets out his aims for the book. The focus here being from the summer of 1965 through to the end of 1966.

The Prologue, “The Great Folk-Rock Clash: The 1965 Newport Folk Festival,” reaches no real conclusion as to whether Dylan’s *trifle with electricity*, at the foregoing event, was – no pun intended - received positively or negatively, by fans, the press etc. It’s true to say that, Folk Music USA circa the early sixties consisted of two polarised camps – the *experimentalists* who wrote their own songs or covered contemporary ones, and the *traditionalists* for whom any change, even a note or a word, was anathema.

“Before The Revolution” sets out the history of American folk music from 1910 onward. There’s mention the McCarthy House Un-American Activity Committee trials that effectively ended the career of The Weavers and placed the four participants in *purdah* for a decade. Bob Gibson’s use of a twelve-string guitar is rightfully acknowledged as an inspiration to future Byrd, Roger “Jim” McGuinn. Gibson’s manager Albert Grossman planned for Bob to be part of a boy/boy/girl trio. In his stead, Peter Yarrow, Paul Stookey and Mary Travers got the gig. Gibson’s 1960 Elektra album **“Ski Songs”** is noted as the first folk recording to use electric instruments. Sic, a marriage of folk and rock. In fact that’s the question posed by this book – *when precisely did the marriage occur, and who was involved?* While Richie presents a mind-boggling myriad of detail regarding the electrification of folk music Stateside, he, wisely, draws no absolute conclusion. It was a *time of experimentation* and he describes the work of numerous protagonists, major and minor.

The thirty odd pages of **“Mr Tambourine Man”** are dedicated to the birth and rise to fame of The Byrds, while **“The Folk-Rock Boom”** and **“Folk-Rock, Coast To Coast”** survey recordings by the duos Sonny

And Cher and Simon & Garfunkel. As for bands The Turtles, The Lovin' Spoonful, The Mamas And The Papas, Buffalo Springfield and The Beatles 1965 *crossover* collection "**Rubber Soul**" are all given space, while the solo acts mentioned include Dylan, Tim Hardin, Janis Ian and former *traditionalist*, Judy Collins. "**Folk-Rockin' Around The World**," surveys Donovan's early career recordings and sundry Brits who never made the grade internationally during 1965/66, then fills the remaining space by focusing on American acts. Greenwald raises an issue of contention regarding Jill Gibson's temporary membership of The Mamas And The Papas, while Unterberger provides insight into a whole other *can of worms*. I would have interpreted the initial recordings by The Fugs, Love and a few others mentioned, as peripheral to the folk-rock movement but Unterberger includes them nonetheless. In fact having dug deep into folk-rock history, he fills the nook and cranny of every page with insight upon insight.

Apart from the Acknowledgements and Index, the book includes a comprehensive ten-page Discography of recommended folk-rock albums, a list of the individuals interviewed for the book, and an extensive Bibliography of sources employed by Unterberger. If folk-rock is your favourite musical poison, "**Turn! Turn! Turn!**" is a book which you will devour with delight.

**"Go Where You Wanna Go: The Oral History of The Mamas And Papas"** – Matthew Greenwald,

To my knowledge, excluding songbooks, Greenwald's book is the fifth to focus on the history of the Mamas And Papas as a group, and/or as individuals. The late John Phillips entered the fray in 1986 with "**Papa John**" [ISBN 0-491-03277-3] and the same year, Michelle replied with "**California Dreamin' – The True Story Of The Mamas & The Papas**" [ISBN 0-446-34430-3] which she dedicated "*To Cass Elliott In Loving Memory*." Jon Johnson's 1992 book "**Make Your Own Music**" told Elliott's story [ISBN 0-940-84901-1], while in Y2K Doug Hall's overview "**The Mamas & The Papas – California Dreamin'**" [ISBN 1-55082-216-0] was published. The foregoing quartet retold the groups rise and fall principally through narrative text. This book employs short interview transcripts, opens in the late nineteen-fifties and doesn't seek to go beyond the quartet's fourth recording "**The Papas And The Mamas**" [1968].

Greenwald's interviewed forty-one individuals – band members and associates, and relates the story in chronological order by way of their recollections. Obviously Cass Elliot's contributions are archival – the dust cover states, "*via an extensive, rare, never before published interview*," yet does not credit the interviewer. It's also worth noting that the recollection of a particular event often varies greatly from person to person. The passage of time [more than three decades] and the intake of numerous exotic substances have obviously, dimmed/wiped out/significantly altered the memory. Variance in recall repeatedly occurs throughout this text, and is to be expected when dealing with historic events.

I remain to be convinced that this book was adequately proof read prior to publication. The print errors arrive in waves. Page after page, makes total sense and follows the outline of what is, after all, already a well-known story which I don't intend repeating here. Every so often, there's a series of irritating clunkers. For instance pp. 133/134 includes as "*He didn't catch me in any kind if compromising situation,*" "*And I understood them signing it the letter, especially Cass*" and "*it may have bothered here, but I don't think it bothered her that much.*"

While the interviewees include the band members and principal players such as Lou Adler, Scott MacKenzie and John Stewart, whither I wonder was input from Cass' sister, Leah Kunkel, or for that matter Phillip's first wife and offspring. The *family* aspect of the story is certainly covered for Michelle, with significant input from her sister Russell Gilliam. All in all Greenwald's book is a good *warts'n'all* read, the misprints are however an irritation.

**"The Bitter End: Hanging Out At America's Nightclub"** – Paul Colby with Martin Fitzpatrick

In the opening Chapter, Colby covers the first forty years of his life. Born in Philadelphia in 1917, raised in New York City, Colby completed military service and became a *song plugger* at Barton Music. There's a friendship with Sinatra, a move to Chicago, and then California. Returning to NYC during the early 1950's, Colby established a successful furniture making business. In 1965 he re-entered the music business by way of managing The Bitter End for owner Fred Weintraub. In 1974 Weintraub fired him. A few months later Colby bought the club and still owns it today. That's his story.

The dust cover of his book bears the legend, "*Hanging Out At America's Nightclub*" and this book boils down to Colby's recollection of precisely that, allied to third party recollections, general comments and

music business insights. Early on the Who's Who of NYC artist managers and agents through the late 50's and into the sixties, makes for reading that is as entertaining as watching paint dry. Apart, that is, from Colby's detailed recollection of how Weintraub came to purchase 147 Bleecker Street and name it, The Bitter End, in the summer of 1961. Comedians as well as musicians played the venue, and almost equal space is given in the book to *who, what and when*.

The chapter "*What's A Hootenanny ?*" defines the origin of the term, quotes *happenings* at Tuesday night BE hoots and looks at ABC tv's less than successful "**Hootenanny**." "*The Great Folk Music Scare of the Sixties*," "*Folk Rock And Its Inventors*" and "*Bob Dylan : The King And His Court*" are the chapters of most interest to Folkwax readers. The former charts the evolution of the Greenwich Village clubs through the fifties and into the sixties. Recalling the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, on page 30, Colby writes "*That was the year Dylan went electric and was almost booed off the stage. Pete Seeger tried to cut the cables with an ax.*" Colby repeats the statement on page 170. In fact there are countless [annoying] instances of factual repetition throughout this tome. The Dylan/Seeger/Newport '65 saga was *done to death* in Unterberger's tome, via a twenty-page long Prologue.

In "*Folk Rock and Its Inventors*" Colby quotes the transition by The Modern Folk Quartet in 1966 into a rock band, and how they played acoustic and electric sets. I quote "*That's when they recruited John Sebastian as a drummer. John would be playing his own stuff at the Night Owl and then would run over, in between shows, and play for the Quartet.*" Frankly, It can't be 1966 since The Lovin' Spoonful recorded their debut album during July/August 1965. In addition, Joni Mitchell did not close her debut solo album with the song "Tin Angel," but she did open her sophomore disc "**Clouds**" with it. An easily corroborated fact, that's a glaring error on page 103. The latter apart, this chapter is a tour-de-force of singer/songwriter recollections – Ochs, Hardin, Chapin, Mitchell, Andersen, Lightfoot, Kristofferson and many more. Based however on the Mitchell/Sebastian errors, what degree of truth that can be placed on the recollections? Much of the "*Dylan*" chapter concerns the Rolling Thunder Tour. It was conceived at The Bitter End, and the club also became the pre-tour rehearsal space. On page 171 of the "*Dylan*" chapter, there's the statement "*Whenever Danny Kalb wasn't busy falling off rooftops,*" with no explanation as to its meaning. It's not the only *unanswered* statement in this book. Kalb was guitarist and member of The Blues Project [1966 onward], and worked with Dylan in NYC circa 1961.

The pre-1965 Bitter End recollections come from third party sources, while they're mainly Colby's own circa 1965 through 1974. Relatively speaking, the book relates scant detail of who played the club, post the mid-seventies. To ensure financial survival, post 1975 Colby had to embrace numerous other genres of music. As for the closing chapter, it seemed a rushed affair that tried vainly to tie up the loose ends and draw the book to a conclusion, by way of mentioning the proposed Greenwich Village Folk Music Museum and the Bitter End record label. All in all, this book principally focuses upon the sixties and precious little else and, apart from the already stated *good parts*, has the feel of an opportunity missed.

The seven-video box set "**Live From Greenwich Village**" featuring 60's musicians, is a neat visual support to Colby's book. Originally issued in 1996, the box set is available from Folk Era Recordings at the princely sum of \$35.00. Details are at <http://www.mailordercentral.com/rediscovermusic/> where you should carry out a product search for "greenwich village."

**Arthur Wood.**

Kerrville Kronikles 11/02

[2000 words]