

NOW WE'RE TOLKIN'

By Helen Marketti

INTERVIEW WITH ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHER, HENRY DILTZ

We have undoubtedly poured over favorite album covers, concert photos, and music magazines to absorb details of the images. When we see a certain photo, we are taken right back to that moment in our lives, how we felt, the music that was playing and what was going on in our lives. Henry Diltz, music photographer can be given credit for many of those iconic images that we have seen and come to know as an old friend.

"I was in a folk band at first but after The Beatles played The Ed Sullivan Show then we went electric and became a folk rock band," laughed Henry. "My group was The Modern Folk Quartet. I played the banjo, harmonica and clarinet. We were together for about five years and released two albums with Warner Brothers. We toured nearly every state and played mostly for college audiences. In 1966, we took a break. The other guys became record producers and I became a photographer."

"We had done a concert in Lansing, Michigan. We were touring in a motor home and pulled up to a second hand store. A table was set up with an

assortment of used cameras for sale. One of the guys said he was going to buy a camera and I thought I would, too," recalls Henry. "We were bored and looking for something to do. We took pictures of everything such as cows in a pasture, a junkyard and so forth. I thought it was fun. I didn't realize how much fun it really was until we returned to LA, got the film developed and had a slide show at my house. It was at that moment when I realized that I was definitely going to be taking more pictures because I liked how they looked. Seeing those images was like being right back where we were. Every week I would take photographs and then have a slide show. There were usually around thirty or forty people who would come over and they would comment how much they liked the photos."

"Among my friends were Cass Elliot (The Mamas & The Papas), David Crosby and Stephen Stills. I knew these people because we had all lived in the Laurel Canyon neighborhood and were fellow musicians," said Henry. "The first photo that I ever got paid for was of Buffalo Springfield. I had met up with Stephen Stills in Laurel Canyon one afternoon and he invited me to go with them to Redondo Beach as they were going to do a sound check at a club. I agreed to go because I wanted to take pictures at the beach so I would have images to use for my weekly slide show. It never occurred to me at the time to take their picture. (laughs) After some time at the beach, I went back to the club. I noticed a big, colorful mural in the back of the building. It was a huge painting of a man riding a bicycle. I thought it was cool so I decided to take a picture. Shortly after, the guys from Buffalo Springfield walked out the backdoor and I asked them if they would stand against the wall because I wanted people to see the size of the mural. That was my first accidental rock and roll shot. Teen Set Magazine contacted me about the photo and said they would pay me \$100 because they wanted to use it in their publication and that is how it all started. People refer to me as a rock and roll photographer but I consider myself a music photographer because not all music is rock and roll."

Henry takes a few minutes to share what he thinks made the 60s a special era and why people are still interested. "It was a flowering renaissance of singer songwriters. Musicians such as Bob Dylan and The Beatles were writing and recording their own material. That was a sea change. We now have singers who are



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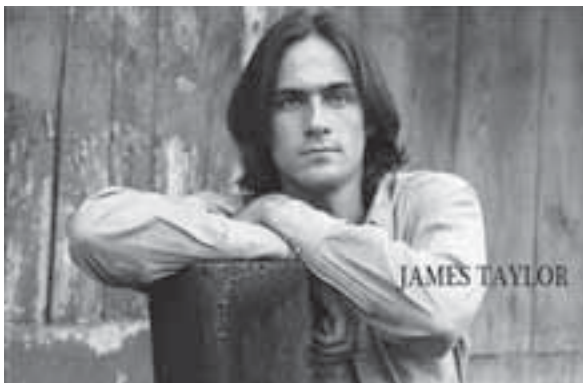


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JAMES TAYLOR

singing their own thoughts and feelings. I think of Joni Mitchell and *Both Sides Now*, Stephen Stills and *Love the One You're With*, James Taylor and *Sweet Baby James*, which I believe was written for his nephew. This kind of concept was new in those days. I once asked Jackson Browne why he thought the 60s were so interesting to people and he said, "Because it was new." We now take that for granted."

It was indeed a time of fresh ideas, concepts and connections. "We all used to hang out at The Troubadour which was a club in Hollywood. We went there every night," remembers Henry. "One night I ran across David Crosby and he introduced me to Gene Clark who had just arrived from Missouri. He said they were going to form a band and call themselves The Beefeaters (*laughs*) which they later became known as The Byrds."

Henry was good friends with Cass Elliot. "She was warm, witty, funny and intelligent. She was an earth mother who liked to take care of everyone," said Henry. "She was also responsible for bringing people together. She introduced Graham Nash to Stephen Stills and David Crosby which they went on to form Crosby, Stills and Nash."

He continues, "I also recall one summer I was in New York City shooting the Lovin' Spoonful when Cass called and wanted to know if we were going to be around for a little while because she had some friends she wanted to bring over. Well, she brought over The Hollies! They were on tour and didn't know anyone so they were just staying in their hotel room. She already had met them because they were on the same TV show with The Mamas and The Papas. Anyway, she brought them over and we had a great afternoon. We shared stories and drank margaritas. That is when I had first met Graham Nash. He commented how they needed pictures so I took a few shots of them and one of the photos was used as an album cover for The Hollies in England. One thing always leads to another but you have to be open to it and wise enough to see it."



Henry had always preferred color images as opposed to black and white but over the years, he has changed his mind. "In the beginning I had no use for black and white. I wanted my images to project and so I preferred color shots. The more photos I took of bands, the press wanted black and white images because newspapers couldn't print color," he said. "Now almost 50 years later and I have to say that I do like the black and white images better. There's something evocative about the images that draw you in. I think

you could compare it between radio and television."

2016 will make the 50th year that Henry has been taking photographs. "People are always contacting me for use of my photos for various projects which is great!" Henry is co-owner of the Morrison Hotel Gallery with locations in LA and New York. He will be going on tour for a few show dates in September with the lovely Pattie Boyd. Pattie was once married to George Harrison and then later to Eric Clapton. She is one of 125 photographers that have images at Morrison Hotel Gallery. "We thought we would try to take the images on the road, give a talk and see how this works. Right now we have a few dates scheduled in September which includes Chicago and New York City." The show is called "Behind The Lens" which features images from both Pattie and Henry mixed in with sharing stories and good times. If anyone were interested in planning a road trip this would be a great event to add to your traveling calendar.

Henry never seems to have a dull moment. "I am working on some lay outs for a few books. I stop and look back at all that has happened, the pictures I took and think of it as a happy accident. It all happened at the right place at the right time."

For more information on Henry Diltz and Morrison Hotel Gallery, images and events, please visit: www.morrisonhotelgallery.com
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