

NOW WE'RE TOLKIN'

By Helen Marketti

Interview with Bobby Hart

PSYCHEDELIC BUBBLE GUM

Boyce & Hart, The Monkees and Turning Mayhem into Miracles

Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart were a songwriting duo back in the 60s and 70s who created a powerhouse of hits that we still hear and sing along with today. Writing hit songs for The Monkees including the theme song for their television show ("Hey, Hey, We're the Monkees") is one of many that fans remember with fun memories. The writing duo is responsible for many hit songs for Chubby Checker, Jay and The Americans, Little Anthony & The Imperials, Linda Ronstadt and many more. Bobby composed music for other television programs such as *Days of Our Lives*, *The Partridge Family*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Josie & The Pussycats*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Saturday Night Live* and *X-Files* which is only the tip of the iceberg. Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart had their own hits, "I Wonder What She Is Doing Tonight?", "I Wanna Be Free", "Out and About" and "L.U.V." among other great compositions.

In his recent autobiography, *Psychedelic Bubble Gum* (Select Books, 2015) Bobby Hart along with Glenn Ballantyne tell an incredible journey that takes the reader through a time when rock was new, when a generation demanded change and when hit songs came streaming in with rapid succession.

"I listened to country radio when I was growing up. I listened to country more than I did pop radio," remembers Bobby. "I did listen to the hit parade and the top ten usually on Saturdays but mostly enjoyed listening to country artists like Hank Williams. I also like the music and work of Spike Jones."

Songwriting seems to have come naturally to Bobby who did not start out with intentions to write songs. "I never really thought of it as a career. I enjoyed listening to music but never really thought about writing. I had wanted to become a disc jockey. That was my goal when I left home and moved to California. My dream at the time was to attend disc jockey school but then I became sidetracked because rock and roll was big and then I started thinking that maybe I could have a career as a recording artist."

Cleveland was a stop along the touring route several times for Tommy and Bobby during the 60s. "Cleveland was a great music city for us," recalls Bobby. "We did the Upbeat Show and made lasting relationships. We knew Jeff Kutash who did the choreography for Upbeat. Tommy and I were guest DJ's for WIXY. It helped fulfill the desire I had as a kid to become a DJ."

When asked where the inspiration came from to write so many hit songs, Bobby said, "It was more perspiration than inspiration. (laughs) Tommy and I did a job we loved. It did not seem like work but you had to remain disciplined. We would be told that a certain group needed a song by next Thursday and we got the job done. We had the wonderful advantage of radio that played everyone's songs so you could hear what else was out there."

He continues, "The 60s was a pivotal time. People's minds were open to new possibilities. There was an interest in spiritual thinking partly because The Beatles had shown an interest. It was a euphoric time where something new was uncovered. The 60s broke loose what every generation goes through without glossing it over. It was a time when people wanted to make a statement and champion causes. There was a lot of great music released during that time. You look back at the songs we had on the charts and the younger kids now know the words. It will still be that way 50 years from now. It's a privilege and a joy."

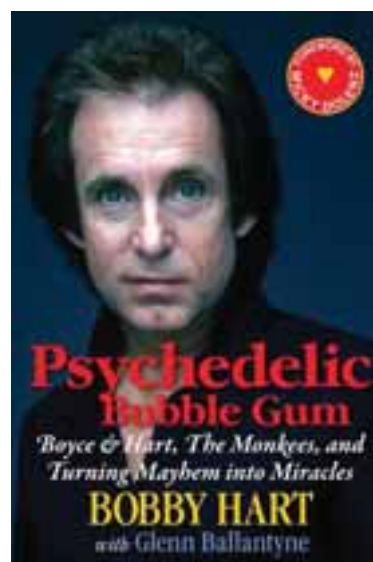
Psychedelic Bubble Gum is a well-suited yet crafty title for a book that encompasses the celebrations and pitfalls of the music industry. "I had been telling many of the stories for several years and people seemed to take an interest," explains Bobby. "During interviews I was only able to share part of the story so I wanted the opportunity to go in more detail. Radio interviews have limited time for details. You have to answer the question in 20 seconds or less before moving on to the next. I had thought about writing a book over the years and had written a version of the book but was not happy with it. I have a friend, Glenn Ballantyne who runs an ad agency and PR firm. He agreed to help with the writing of the book. It was a pleasure to work with him. Micky Dolenz (The Monkees) wrote the foreword which was great. We have known each other for 50 years!"

Bobby continues, "We were looking for and thinking about catchy titles. Tommy Boyce and I were labeled as the Bubble Gum Kings during the 60s. There was a new kind of music that was prevalent down the Sunset Strip when we returned from a tour of the East Coast. It was called psychedelic music and Eastern Indian music, which we incorporated some of those sounds into our productions. I thought it might be appropriate to call our music *Psychedelic Bubble Gum* plus it makes for a catchy title."

It has been fun for Bobby to talk about the book. "The fans have been kind. It all has been gratifying. I enjoy the interviews and book signings. I listen to people's stories and I feel proud to know our music helped create memories."

Psychedelic Bubble Gum is available through Amazon.

For more information: www.bobbyhart.com www.officialboyceandhart.com





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