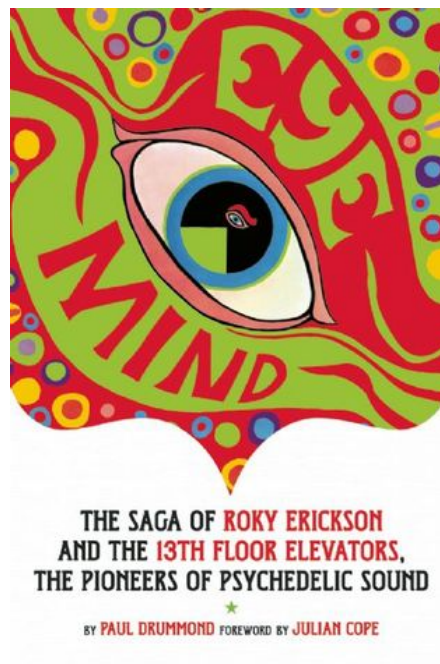




Eye Mind: Roky Erickson and the 13th Floor Elevators

Paul Drummond , Leon Kagarise , Julian Cope (Foreword)

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“One of the most exhilarating and important rock ’n’ roll stories ever told.”—Julian Cope

The trailblazing 13th Floor Elevators released the first “psychedelic” rock album in America, transforming culture throughout the 1960s and beyond. The Elevators followed their own spiritual cosmic agenda, to change society by finding a new path to enlightenment. Their battles with repressive authorities in Texas and their escape to San Francisco’s embryonic counterculture are legendary.

When the Elevators returned to Texas, the band became subject to investigation by Austin police. Lead singer Roky Erickson was forced into a real-life enactment of *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and was put away in a maximum-security unit for the criminally insane for years. Tommy Hall, their Svengali lyricist, lived in a cave. Guitarist Stacy Sutherland was imprisoned. The drummer was involuntarily subjected to electric shock treatments, and the bassist was drafted into the Vietnam War.

This fascinating biography breaks decades of silence of band members and addresses a huge cult following of Elevators fans in the United States and Europe. The group is revered as a formative influence on Janis Joplin, Led Zeppelin, Patti Smith, Primal Scream, R.E.M, and Z.Z. Top.

Roky Erickson is the subject of a heralded recent documentary feature, *You’re Gonna Miss Me*; a box set of remastered Elevators CDs with liner notes by author Paul Drummond will be issued in fall 2007.

Eye Mind: Roky Erickson and the 13th Floor Elevators Details

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From Reader Review Eye Mind: Roky Erickson and the 13th Floor Elevators for online ebook

Greg Swallow says

Thorough. The screeds about religion and numerology, etc. - trying to explain the records where Tommy Hall failed - I just had to skip, but that was less than a dozen pages. I would have scoffed at the albums listening to them, too, for their hopeless fake intellectualism. That the Elevators' careers were such a letdown gave the book an anticlimactic feel at the end; the final 100 pages were slow. But you certainly can't fault the author. Well done.

Jason says

Tommy Hall: "So, man in the future is going to be sitting in front of one of these albums, not necessarily ours, and the album will do a thing to him that would be like music and would not normally be expected. It would make him totally dissociate his actual ever-continuing self from his perishable eggshell earth presence, and he would go to a completely different world. And the more he does that, the more he can learn about that world of immortality, which is just a feeling. That's what we're trying to play in our music, the immortal theme, because it's like Christ said, "'We're already immortal from in front.'" (p. 296) Are these the words of a visionary in the American shadow culture tradition or an addled drug survivor?

Duke Davis: "It was a pretty unique experience, and of course that was the connection with the audience, because probably 75% of the audience was on LSD as well; it always amazed me to watch the audience. We could sound great and we could sound terrible, and the audience was still being right with us. They'd sing every word Roky sang but there were times when Roky would be singing one song and playing another and the band would be playing a third song. It was that crazy, but the audience would be right with it and know exactly what was going on. Weird." (p. 302)

Patrick Neylan says

First things first: if you like the Elevators and want to know more, then buy this book. I did, and I'm not sorry, but it isn't a very good book for all that. It's rather ironic that the band could have been enormous, but were let down by unprofessional management, sloppy recordings and a slapdash approach that meant they were cooling their heels on bail in Texas while their moment came and went in California. Ironic because the book that documents their career is itself slapdash and unprofessional.

Sure, Drummond has gathered a huge amount of data and images, and he throws everything in willy nilly. Every image he could find is printed with regardless of quality; whole pages are given over to rambling transcripts of interviews instead of short, telling quotes; and the layout looks like it was done cheaply at home. Just like the recording of the first album, in fact.

It's all readable enough I suppose, but I felt like I was reading the author's notes - albeit tidied up a bit - instead of an actual story.

Kerry says

Well, first off, who's afraid of the big bad wolf? And who here has even heard of the 13th floor elevators?! If you haven't, educate yourself. Meet one of the founding bands of alternative-punk & psychadekic music. Get in it to win it kids.

Second, after reading this book, I felt like I was on an acid trip for week after...it's 11 o'clock somewhere and mama needs her sugar. In fact if mybloodstream were to be tested for any illegal substances after reading this book, I'd surely be doing at least five years for the hot mess I became just off contact with these pages...I mean, there aren't "drug references" in this book, there are 50 pg chapters of drug-induced haze & insanity. This thing should come with warning stickers.

Now, if you did acid daily or even more often than that how do you think your story is going to end? In a mental ward? Check. Jail? Check. An LSD mafia cult living in a cave? Check. Involuntary electric shock therapy? Check. All of the above of which happened to this band. And you thought the Stones were fucked up. They were cupcakes in comparison. Make you wanna rock with the Elevators yet? Or you scared?

This band ingested copious amounts of drugs & were some of the first to tell the authorities to f*&k themselves. Lead singer Roky Erickson was committed to a criminally insane ward, the lyricist lived in a cave w an LSD mafia cult (yea, wrap your head around THAT one), the guitarist was imprisoned & their drummer was involuntarily subjected to electric shock treatments. If you aren't googling and listening to these guys on iTunes right now to at least hear what that amalgamation of insanity melded together to sound like (short story: pretty f*ing good), I'm a failed writer. I'll keep my day job.

What people don't know: in the 60s there weren't so many drug laws (dirty hippies). In fact, hallucinogenics were handed out like candy from chemical manufacturing corps. And THEN people went and blamed the kids and their music for the heavy free love & drug induced haze of the latter end of the decade. Pure comedy.

Now, Roky, unlike the rest had schizophrenic tendencies. Took drugs to retain contol of his mind, if that's not some real out-there punk rocking I'm not sure what exactly is... essentially the 13th Floor Elevators had the talent and ability to become one of the biggest bands of the era and yet they tore themselves apart with drugs and debauchery. But then, aren't we all suckers for debauchery?

Russell says

Many articles and rock encyclopedia entries have been written about the 13th Floor Elevators; how they were true believers in the transformative powers of hallucinogens; how they were busted more than once for drugs; how their lead singer, Roky Erickson, has spent time in and out of institutions; how their producer was Kenny Rogers' brother Lelan. This is the first comprehensive book about the band. The author includes many photos and a whole lot of facts. Unsurprisingly, when your book is about a band that was tripping on LSD during most of their live performances, it is not always possible to determine exactly what happened every step along the way. And, whether or not you choose to blame the drugs, it is evident that members of the band were not immune to making bad career choices. A somewhat depressing, but nonetheless fascinating book.

Robert W says

I had a vague mental notion of the history of the 13th Floor Elevators and Roky Erickson, but this book really laid out the promise and tragedy of this group. I first encountered Erickson's music as a college student in the early 80s, when I heard the song "Bloody Hammer." Lots of Erickson's songs from this era have an almost cartoonish horror-movie vibe to them, but at the same time have an urgency that undercuts the silliness. "Bloody Hammer" is a perfect example. I had the album *The Evil One*, which I liked a lot, but really didn't pursue any more of his work. I knew he had been in the 13th Floor Elevators, which was considered a pioneering psychedelic band and, amazingly enough, was from Austin.

Well, all the blanks on this mysterious band are filled in here in *Eye Mind* by Paul Drummond. Drummond is no great prose stylist, and the book has some obnoxious typos (the city of Addicks is hilariously referred to as Addicts), but like many superfans, he really digs up the details, extensively interviewing all the surviving cast members and unearthing up old interviews with those who have died.

The most interesting thing (and distressing in a way) was that the jug player, Tommy Hall, was the leader of the band and saw it as a way of pushing his thoughts of instant, acid-fueled enlightenment on the masses. So in addition to writing the lyrics to most of the songs, he was the one who pushed the band to perform on acid, and he seemed to have a certain devil-may-care attitude towards success or even getting paid (he had his own source of income, after all—he dealt acid). They were all babes in the woods, and were royally ripped off by their incompetent and dishonest record label, Houston's International Artists (which also put out records by Red Crayola and Bubble Puppy, who had the psychedelic hit "Hot Smoke and Sassafras"). And all the band members were reckless with drugs without Tommy's help. But still, one gets the feeling that if Tommy hadn't been such a dictator about spreading his gospel and thought a little bit about the well-being of his bandmates, a lot of financial, legal, and psychological problems could have been avoided.

Interesting facts—the band's first Houston shows were played at a joint called La Maisson, a teen dance club located in an old supermarket on Richmond at Mandel. If I am not mistaken, that is now the location of the Menil Museum's huge Dan Flavin installation. Janis Joplin almost joined the band in the days before she went to San Francisco. Her vocal style is said to have been influenced by Roky's, and the song "Splash One" was inspired by an encounter between Roky and Janis. Townes Van Zandt was invited to join the band when it was collapsing as a base player (even though he didn't know how to play base), and he and Roky shared a house for a while.

Indeed, one of the most interesting things that comes through is how interwoven the Austin (and to a lesser extent Houston) music scene was then. I'm sure this is true everywhere—musicians in a given city know each other and play in each others' bands, and if this state of flux seems unfamiliar to us fans, it's because we see only a preserved-in-amber version of it—preserved on record, in this case.

Bob Schnell says

Thank goodness for Goodreads, otherwise I might not have known this book actually existed. Like many fans of Roky Erickson and the Thirteenth Floor Elevators, I love the music but know next to nothing about them except what was written in the mysterious liner notes on various releases. The documentary "You're Gonna Miss Me" helped to fill in some of the history but there was still much to know. As "Eye Mind" by

Paul Drummond showed me, I knew nothing.

At first I was wondering if there was enough of a story to fill the 414 small font pages of this trade paperback. Indeed, there was. It is all here, the music, the drugs, the arrests, the bad management and worse relationships. It is also the story of Texas in the 1960's, a place of great musical innovation that kick-started the psychedelic San Francisco scene but could never quite fit in there. Even Janis Joplin felt more at home with her fellow Texans than the opportunist hippies of Haight-Ashbury. As pot and LSD gave way to speed and heroin only the strong survived and Roky must have the fortitude of an elephant to live through it all and make it to the new millennium still able to write and perform songs that still enchant. To be sure, there were many years when he was little more than a vegetable but friends and family never gave up and have been rewarded for their faith.

Although the dark years get a bit repetitive and depressing with the endless cycle of brief sober-ish triumphs for the Elevators followed by ever-worse relapses, these are stories that need to be told. This is essential reading for music fans in general, not just garage-heads like me.

Marti says

I consider myself to be a super fan of this group since I first heard "You're Gonna Miss Me" on WNEW in New York in about 1977. Their debut album actually took a while to track down because it was rare and only available at record shows for about \$100 which was a little pricey back then. It was only later when reasonably priced re-issues came out that I actually acquired the music. Since I knew almost nothing about the band's actual story, I had assumed they were much more obscure in their heyday than they were.

The 13th Floor Elevators could have been at least as big as Jefferson Airplane or Janis Joplin if they had only not flaunted their excessive substance abuse. Not only was taking LSD for every performance not conducive to playing well (although amazingly they managed more often than not), it attracted all sorts of unwelcome interference from the Texas police who viewed them as Public Enemy Number One and were anxious to put them behind bars. Although they made it as far as San Francisco and "You're Gonna Miss Me" reached number 55 in Billboard in 1966, they were unable to organize a proper tour due to label incompetence and later, because guitarist Stacy Sutherland was on parole and could not leave Texas without being considered a fugitive.

Between the police and the draft boards, these Texas bands had a lot to be angry about which is probably why almost all the garage rock from the Lone Star State was especially good. Still, the Elevators were almost like the Beatles in their home state which is why their subsequent descent into Skid Row poverty is pretty depressing reading.

If you are a fan, don't let this book pass you by.

Vaughan says

sweet Jesus...for 20 plus years I've been praying for a book that would reveal the confusing and convoluted acid-clouded history of the 13th Floor Elevators, and this far surpasses what I'd even dreamed of...I've only read 60 or so pages, but just looking at the photos makes you realize what a SERIOUS work this is--I mean this guy didn't just zerox a bunch of the known Elevators photos and it is this attention to detail that is paying off, at least for rabid fans like me. Wisely, Drummond lets the band members and their

friends and contemporaries tell the tale, intruding only when context is needed. If only this had come with a cd....And hopefully he'll do a companion volume and write the definitive Roky Erickson bio. I'm giving it 5 stars based on what I've read so far; I'm sure it will deserve at least 10. July 15: okay, I finished this months ago and it was, indeed a 10. The Roky Erickson story will break anyone's heart, as will the story of the Elevators. The good news is, Roky is back and better than ever. May the circle remain unbroken...

Daniel says

As many other reviewers have noted, this book is an amazing achievement: remarkably well-researched, with some incredible interviews and photos, but it could also seriously use some editing and I hope there's a revised edition eventually. Many facts and observations are repeated, or presented according to a slightly peculiar chronology, all of which could be improved by some simple pruning and reorganizing of the text.

The title is a slight misnomer as the book goes into great detail about all of the principle players, their parents, wives, girlfriends, etc. with Roky by no means being the sole focus. Tommy Hall in particular is a fascinating character in his own right and the considerable attention that he receives here is merited, even though he's not nearly as lovable as Roky and can come across as downright unsavory at times. The picture that emerges of Roky is fascinating indeed though. Like Brian Wilson, one suspects that he's a genuinely troubled soul who is nonetheless not above playing up his own weirdness and "dialing it up a notch" as a specific strategy for dealing with the world.

As with many biographies, the book is at its best when it focuses on reporting and interviews and at its weakest when it gets mired in the author's own opinions and analysis. But if you have any kind of love for this band and its place in the history of psychedelia, you'll probably enjoy this.

Michele says

Ok, I'll be honest. I haven't quite finished it. I started strong and was having a blast. The interviews are incredible! The author thoroughly researched this book and tracked down as many people as possible associated with the band - friends, family members, fans. In-depth interviews with band members, tons of photos. If you ever wanted to know the truth about Tommy Hall's influence and or the mysterious Clementine or the stories behind some of the songs this is your reference. What slowed me down was perhaps it is too well-researched or not edited enough. Maybe more detail than I needed.

Rob says

occasionally over-intellectualizes to (and past) the point of unintentional humor.

the most annoying thing about this book is the author's total buying into the tommy hall schtick. uhhhhh, sorry, but tommy hall isn't/wasn't any kind of a visionary genius, or whatever it is you're trying to make him out to be. more like a shit-talking control-freaking drug addict with a BA in philosophy. big deal.

otherwise, this is fascinating stuff.

Kurt Reichenbaugh says

Every fan of '60's garage or psych should be familiar with at least a few of the Elevators' tunes. This book details their history out of Texas and into rock 'n roll myth. The book has its faults but, considering the source material, fans of the Elevators and Roky Erickson should get something out of it. It's a rather sad story about talent, especially Erickson's and Sutherland's, squandered and sidelined by drugs, legal difficulties and poor management. Think acid tests and cuckoos' nests. Still, The Elevators remain a terrific band of their time. They kicked a boot-heel into American music and remain worth looking up and listening to. If this genre is your thing I'd also recommended the film YOU'RE GONNA MISS ME about Roky Erickson's life and career beyond the Elevators.

Ma says

Eye Mind is a detailed account of kids on drugs running from the pigs while bringing forth the message of psychedelia through rock n roll in 1960's Texas. More than just a mouthful, it was a crazy time swept under the carpet by the more sought out San Fran freaksplosion but now this truly insane group's tale has been brought to light. Through the inquisitive yet respectful digging of Drummond via interviews with everyone and their mother, we get in many areas of the groups evolution that we previously have been denied. A couple pages in, we gather that this biographer has done his homework. Over 400 pages, I never once wanted the book to end. One of the better rock bios I've read in awhile.

Mark Winkelmann says

It probably helps that the Elevators story was wilder and weirder than 98% of other bands, but ist well written too. Interesting to separate myth form reality. Though given how little documentation and the ravages of time, the grim reaper and drugs there's elements of the story which will never truly be understood.
