

TIMEOUT

BOB WEIR

Living Dead returns with 'group gestalt'

By STEVEN SHAYMAN

Staff writer

Bob Weir says he can use some serious beach time. The former Grateful Dead guitarist and vocalist is taking a breather a short while after bounding off stage following a well-received set by his band RatDog at last weekend's Mount Fuji Jazz Festival.

Weir and company arrived in Japan for the last show of a five-week, three-continent tour, just a few days after playing the much-anticipated Grateful Dead reunion concerts at Alpine Valley, Wis., under the moniker of The Other Ones (as the Grateful Dead name was laid to rest with the 1995 passing of guitarist Jerry Garcia).

Even at his "advanced" age (he's 55 years old), Weir looks every bit the fit, energetic firebrand who contributed to 30 years of rhythm and power as the youngest member of the maelstrom that was the Grateful Dead.

Now, as a rockin' jazz elder statesman of sorts, Weir has set a course bereft of the destructive tendencies that resulted in the early deaths of several Dead members over the years (keyboardists Ron "Pigpen" McKernan, Keith Godchaux and Brent Mydland, and guitarist Garcia). He still retains, however, the zeitgeist of his generation, which valued positivity and humanism in music as mechanisms of societal change.

It is that "group gestalt," as Weir puts it, "that enabled the Dead, and now RatDog, to bridge the past and future and constantly reinterpret the music" to keep it fresh and exciting.

Nonstop touring was the Dead's

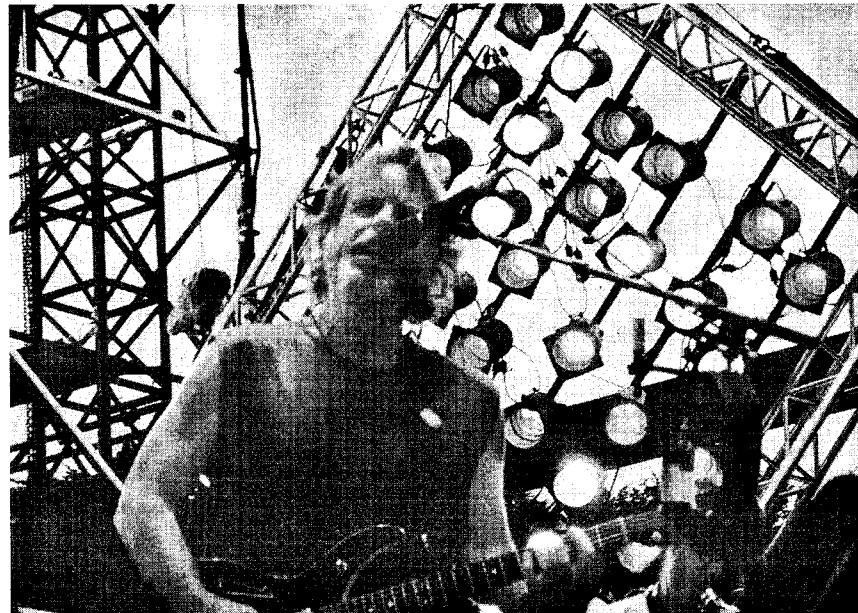
forte. Weir, too, "keeps on truckin' on." (Since the end of June, he's plowed through 26 shows on three continents.)

His band RatDog — with bassist Rob Wasserman, longtime Weir collaborator and Grammy Award-winner, drummer Jay Lane, guitarist Mark Karan, keyboardist Jeff Chimenti, saxophonist Kenny Brooks and occasionally DJ Logic — have two albums under their belt, and Weir says the band want to make further inroads in Japan in the wake of their recent successful touring debut in Europe. Weir had performed in Japan only once previously — a similar lightning-quick trip to Tokyo and Fukuoka in 1994 with an ensemble dubbed the Special K Band that included eclectic guitarist Henry Kaiser.

RatDog's Mount Fuji Jazz Festival appearance was taped for broadcast this autumn on NHK BS television, which meant that the band played only for one-third of its normal three hours. But what the performance lacked in duration, the band made up for in intensity, churning through what Weir calls his "back pages" — his own Dead-era and solo signature tunes, like "Truckin'," "Playin' in the Band" and "Estimated Prophet" (with a ripping guest appearance by the 1977 studio version's original sax soloist Tom Scott) — to more recent compositions penned for RatDog, such as the bouncy "Ashes and Glass."

Weir also assumed lead vocals on songs formerly the preserve of Garcia, including "Brown-Eyed Women," "Loser" and "Franklin's Tower."

"The Dead's legacy is in good



hands," Weir says. "We have a dedicated group of archivists working to organize the Dead's output for periodic release."

Weir also reserves special praise for Dead drummer Mickey Hart's efforts to rerelease a digitally remastered recording of the classic 1970 Dead albums "Workingman's Dead" and "American Beauty."

When asked about his own curatorial role (in Grateful Dead Productions), Weir is modest, saying, "I'm fairly hands-off in

terms of day-to-day operations, and just plain busy, as we [former Dead members] all are, with our own stuff these days; myself with RatDog."

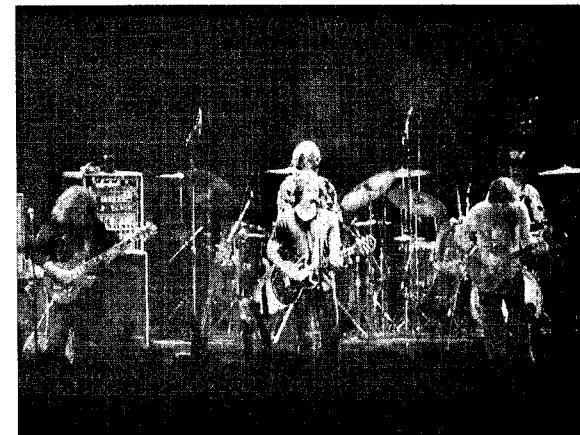
Yet the fact remains that Weir lends strong support to some Dead family projects that he feels important, such as this year's "Postcards of the Hanging" compilation of Bob Dylan tracks, detailing the Dead's longtime respect for Dylan, who they collaborated with in the '80s.

"Postcards" producer David

Gans says Weir supported the project from its inception, listened to many possible tracks and made critical decisions.

The Dead "got inside" Dylan songs as far back as the 1960s, and it is their mutual admiration for each other and their love for American folk music that infused the Minnesotan with a new regard for his own compositions and inspired him to perform some of the Dead's songs as well.

Stretching on a folding chair in postperformance relaxation mode,



Bob Weir on stage Aug. 11 at the Mount Fuji Jazz Festival, and stage center (above) during a Grateful Dead concert in New York in March 1981

STEVEN SHAYMAN PHOTOS (left); JIM ANDERSON PHOTO

Weir says it bodes well for the Dead's future that the band has confirmed additional shows this fall across the U.S. East Coast and Midwest.

"I'd also really like to return to Japan for a more extensive tour, either with RatDog or The Other Ones — but we'll just have to see what happens."

Now about that Hawaiian vacation ...

For more information, see <http://dead.net> and www.rat-dog.com for information

What a pair they are

WHEN EAST MARRIES WEST

THOMAS DILLON

If you are a viewer of Japanese televi-

si, Achmed Sukarno and herself a talk show diva, has called the Kano girls nothing but "monkeys from the mountains."

Words that have not unleashed a flood of female resentment.

Rather, the mountains have perhaps been inundated with men looking for more

'Operation Friendship' set for takeoff

By PAUL THOMPSON

Special to The Japan Times

The gates of the U.S. Air Force's Yokota base at Fussa in western Tokyo will be opened to the public next weekend, when the annual "Friendship



Among aircraft likely to be on show at the USAF's Yokota base "Friendship Days" (below) next weekend are the F-18 Hornet (bottom), the Sikorsky UH-60 rescue helicopter (bottom left) and