

Classic Posters Interview with Eric King by Michael Erlewine

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[Note: I want to personally thank Eric King for being kind and generous enough to act as my guide to the poster world and as a friend. Eric patiently answered endless questions by phone and email. When I visited the Bay Area, he personally took me around and introduced me to the players and the places. Thanks so much Eric!]



*Vicor Moscoso and Eric King
(right)*

Eric King: Anyway, one of the things I want to do is honor the people who have treated this thing as a science, as archivists. So I'm interviewing Jacaeber Kastor, he's agreed, and Phil Cushway and Dennis King and others, like Paul Getchell.

I am going to have a section on the people who know about posters. You are going to have a little area in it, where I talk about you and tell them about your book. Your work is indispensable for serious collectors of the Family Dog, Bill Graham, Neon Rose, and Grande Ballroom.

Eric King: It's not that this makes a lot of money for me. What it does, is that it

makes information available to people who want to buy posters, who then are able to buy posters more confidently and that's the whole purpose of this thing.

GOT INTO POSTERS

Michael Erlewine: What I need to know is how you got into posters?

Eric King: Well, I was into rock and roll from 1954 or 1955, right at the beginning. I was listening to the radio in New York and I was in love with the stuff.

I was getting my Masters at Cal. in English Literature. I was walking down Telegraph Avenue sometime in the mid/late winter of 1966 and a kid handed me a handbill for one of the Family Dog events. It was either the "Love" or the "Paul Butterfield".



Paul Butterfield Blues Band

And I am looking at this thing, going "What the hell is this?," and it was neat! I just stuffed it in a book. I managed to go to one of the early events.

Michael Erlewine: You don't remember which one it was.

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Eric King: No, I was stoned. I was working very, very intensely, and it was before acid was made illegal and I did it, you know once or twice.

Michael Erlewine: And this is what year?

Eric King: Early 1966.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eric King: And it was so totally different from the Times Square Paramountshows that Alan Freed did in New York, which were the premiere rock and roll shows in the 1950s. I mean, I went to see Little Richard and Fats Domino out on Long Island, when I was about 15, I think.

Michael Erlewine: What month and year did you come to California?

Eric King: I came here in late August of 1965. I was in the PhD program in English Lit at Cal., Berkeley.

Michael Erlewine: So we must have passed each other in the dark, because I had, I was there for the whole year of '64, into '65. I lived on Haste Street, near Telegraph.

Eric King: That's where I lived. I lived two blocks off of Telegraph.

Michael Erlewine: So did I, but in 1964.

Eric King: We may have walked past each other in the street.

Michael Erlewine: I worked at the Café Mediterranean, at Lucas Books, and was the assistant manager for Discount Records on Telegraph.

Eric King: I still go into the Med every now and then. It's crazy as it ever was. Still inhabited by old beatnik types, only now I'm old and one of them (laughs).

Michael Erlewine: So you came out in August of 1965 and you were pursuing, you were studying what?

Eric King: English Lit. I was gonna' be an English professor.

Michael Erlewine: Did you ever write a dissertation?

Eric King: Sure.

Michael Erlewine: What was it on?

Eric King: Lawrence Durrell. He wrote "The Alexandria Quartet," a major piece of Twentieth Century literature.

He wrote a lot about the creation of art. Durrell said: in order to create art, you have to begin with the notion that everything that was ever created before you, was created with the express purpose of you borrowing from it. The only problem is, you have to pay back the artistic debt, by creating something new. And in that, what he's saying is there is nothing completely new.

And the thing is, if you look at the psychedelic poster art, despite the fact that it is radically different than anything that comes before it, they're taking old images. They're taking old stuff, they're creating from things that are...

Michael Erlewine: Some of them aren't, people like Bob Fried weren't in general. Well Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley borrowed all kinds of stuff, which did not detract from the power of many of their posters.

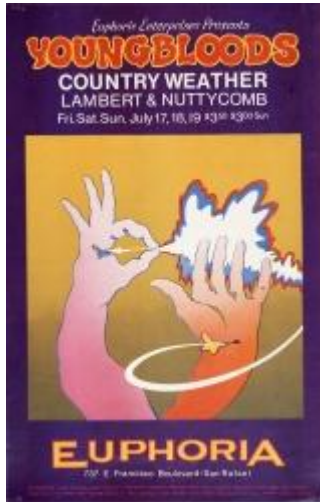
Eric King: The only one that really wasn't was Wes Wilson. Wilson did these drawings, that really did come out of his head. But a lot of Fried is borrowed.

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Michael Erlewine: Well, a lot of his paintings and some of his posters are abstract.

Eric King: No, his paintings are not; his paintings are geometric.

Michael Erlewine: I'm thinking particularly of the Euphoria poster, which is not geometric.



Bob Fried Euphoria

Eric King: Sure, those are things that are his own, that are out of his own head. But, if you look at, for example, the dolphins pulling, that is collage. He cut that out of something else and just did the lettering in the middle of the sunburst.



Bob Fried FD-D 14

Michael Erlewine: And he did the sunburst. I just finished transcribing the Kelley interview. He and Mouse just went to the Library and made copies. That's the stuff they traced and took it from there.

Eric King: Right.

Eric King: One thing, and I think that this is very important, and I make this point in lots of emails, when people ask me questions; my area of expertise is extremely narrow. I'm limited to the four venues that I have in my guide. Every now and then I have to pull rank and say this is what happened in 1966, I was there, and I did interviews with the printers in 1968.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eric King: I went and talked to Frank Westlake, no later than 1968 and I talked to him a number of times. He was Bindweed Press.

Michael Erlewine: Let's talk about some of these things. I think we should go back and pick up your story about how you got into this.

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Waiting for Posters

Eric King: I got the handbill. I got another one the following week and started saving these. I do have a collecting mentality and seem to enjoy putting things in pages and albums or something.

There was something electric when these things started clicking. When Wes Wilson started getting the rhythm of more than just lettering, when Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley started to click with the imagery that they were finding, and when Victor Moscoso started to hit the thing with color.

Every week, you would walk up, on Friday around Noon, on Telegraph and Bancroft and you would wait in a little line. There weren't a lot of people -- maybe twenty or thirty -- and the poster people would pull up in a car, hop out with a pile of posters and hand you one, and then go, you know, someplace else.

Now I don't know where else they were handing them out, but this was more than just sticking them in the windows of stores. They would stop, and if you were there at the right time, they would hand you a poster. It's like you're standing around, and Toulouse-Lautrec is hopping out of a coach and handing you a poster.

Michael Erlewine: But logistically, there were many different venues. Was one person bringing posters for all of them?

Eric King: No, each venue had it's own poster deliverer. They tended, I forget exactly the time, but there was some regularity about the time they would show up. And one of the places they would show up, was Bancroft and Telegraph.

Michael Erlewine: Do you know of any other places?

Eric King: No, it never occurred to me to wonder about it, because that is where I got them.

Michael Erlewine: So there would be more than one that came that day?

Eric King: Oh yeah.

Michael Erlewine: What other places were they put.

Eric King: Store windows, I mean, I don't remember a lot of them being on telephone poles, but they didn't try to cover Telegraph Avenue, the way they did the Haight-Ashbury. But Victor Moscoso's descriptions of, and I can really understand why people did this, Victor would stand on the other side of the street after he had put a poster up and watch people walk over to it, stand there and go wow.

And these had an electric effect on people. It's very hard to communicate in an environment where this just doesn't happen. There's nothing like this going on. People walked down the street, and they would cross the street to look at these posters.

I mean, as soon as something new showed up, because I didn't get everything, you know, handed to me on the street. I mean I wasn't there every time. This was hippie time, you know, twelve o'clock could mean one thirty. And if you waited around, you know, maybe you got it, or maybe you didn't. I'm just saying, I got a lot of posters that way. I'm not saying that this was scheduled.

Michael Erlewine: They would give everyone one? They wouldn't just give a

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pile and let you take as many as you want, or something?

Eric King: With postcards you could get a couple, sometimes, and they would put a stack of them in a store and you could take a couple. I mean, some of the little kids would take a bunch of them, but most people did not.

I can remember being handed "The Sound," the postcard by a little kid -- he was like twelve or thirteen years old -- and looking at that thing and going "My God this is incredible art!" I can remember being handed "The Eyeball". I remember waiting in line, somebody handed me this and I'm just going "what the hell".

Michael Erlewine: The poster or the card.

Eric King: This was the poster. I went home and taped this up on the wall of my living room. I didn't do that with very many of them.

Michael Erlewine: And how did you save them?

Eric King: I just put them in a flat, between sheets of cardboard.

Power of the Art

Eric King: The electricity of being handed this thing, and looking at it and going "wow"; and realizing intuitively, there's a tremendous amount going on in this. This moves on a multiplicity of levels. This is not something that is simply saying Jimi Hendrix is going to be playing at the Fillmore on Friday night. This is saying something tremendously profound and spiritual about the thought process of the guy whose name is at the bottom, Rick Griffin.

Unlike most of the people who were looking at these things, who were sixteen years old and hippies, I was twenty-seven years old and an academically trained critic of art. I was already working on a PhD at this point and it was immediately apparent something was going on here. You know it didn't come to me, right away, that this is 'God the Father' and he is dealing with his crisis, you know Jesus etc.

I didn't know Rick Griffin until somewhat later. I mean I knew Victor Moscoso very early, and I'd met the others. I'd met them, but I hadn't sat around and talked to them. It was only like, in the seventies that I did interviews with them. I started out mainly interested in acquiring information, so that my own collection of posters would be complete. If there were variations, I would know about them. I wasn't seeking to discuss art with them, except that's what happened.

I mean, you sit down with Victor and you ask him a couple of technical questions about printing, he'll answer them, but then, if you let the conversation flow, he'll start talking about art. He also is a very highly trained academic. He knows where he comes from, knows art history, and these are the conversations that I had that proved to be, you know, really meaningful and profound.

I started hanging around with David Singer. I mean it's hard to make, you know, comparisons between Singer and Rick Griffin from the art; but the thing is, they're both tremendously spiritual people. Singer did not focus it within fundamentalist Christianity. He obviously had a different focus, but he was a profoundly spiritual seeker of

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knowledge and he would spend hours, you know, talking with me about Mesoamerica, of what he saw in the architecture, in the petroglyphs. I mean he had spent an enormous amount of time studying, and he continues to do so to this day, studying and searching for.

Michael Erlewine: El Dorado.

Eric King: Yeah, he was into El Dorado thirty years ago. He was getting into that when he was getting into Mesoamerica. As far as I understand it, he had an interest in the Mayas.

I did an embroidery of the Aztec calendar. It took me 400 hours and it was on the back of a jeans jacket and somebody I know who does EBay and is into folk art has said to me, of all the things you own the one I want that in your will. I want that 'cause it will make me rich.

The thing is I discussed it a lot with David Singer before I did it. What's fascinating is that they later discovered that the stone was painted. It was all gray, because the paint had worn, but they were able to determine later what colors were on it, and I had gotten a lot of the colors right. It was interesting.

The Dancehalls by Michael Erlewine

Michael. So you started collecting posters, but what about going to the dances. Let's talk about some of the events you went to.

Eric King: I went to some of the events, and they were spectacular events. They were drastically different from rock and roll shows in the fifties, in that in the fifties, I mean Little Richard was the most, you know, with the possible exception of Mick Jagger or maybe Tina Turner, the most electric performer. I mean he has.

Michael Erlewine: No definitely, to me they are not even in the same category. I think Little Richard was a genius.

Eric King: Yeah, well Little Richard would, as a live on-stage performer... to have to sit in a chair and not get up and dance was one of the horrible parts of the fifties. Well, to walk into the Fillmore or the Avalon Ballroom.

Michael Erlewine: Which one did you go to first? I don't mean to interrupt, I'm just trying to get.

Eric King: I think I went first to the Fillmore. Well, this wall is jumping all over the place and there's all these people hopping up and down. And was just incredible.

Michael Erlewine: Because of the light shows?

Eric King: Yeah, it was like the wall was jumping back and forth. I'd heard people tell me about them. It was hard to describe these things, even to somebody who'd been to rock and roll shows; and it's very hard to communicate now, to anybody, what these things were like, because they really were something like nothing else. It really was the greatest party since the fall of the Roman Empire.

Michael Erlewine: Do you remember what bands you heard?

Eric King: Most of them, I do remember one thing, one night, Frank Zappa rented a thunder machine from a Hollywood studio and used it as a rhythm instrument. I mean it was noise. One night I saw Herbie Hancock and it was pain threshold, I actually couldn't bear to be in the room. I can see why some of these people went deaf. I mean, they have hearing loss as a result

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of how loud this stuff was. People were stoned.

People would shake hands, dance a couple of times and leave and (chuckle) go screw; there was a lot of sex going on. This was an intensely sexualized environment. All these people had lived through the incredibly uptight fifties. It was like -- in the words of a cousin -- like letting a lion out of a cage, meaning the sexuality of a large segment of the population was literally released. Remember there was this doorway between the coming of the pill and the coming of aids. People did a lot of screwing.

There wasn't a lot of conversation. You danced, you danced with people. It was like watching whooping cranes dance up and down and mate.

Michael Erlewine: What about drugs?

Eric King: Oh well, there was a lot of drugs. In the beginning acid and pot, but it evolved into smack and speed, and that was when the thing fell apart, because a junkie is just a junkie.

You could meet people who were wandering around the country, and would say "Oh man can I crash with you tonight," you'd say "sure." You'd wake up in the morning, they'd be there, you'd have breakfast then they'd leave for San Diego or wherever they were going next. When smack and speed came in, you'd wake up, they'd be gone and so was your stereo. And it didn't have to happen more than once or twice, before you stopped having people, who you met in the street, home. I mean, you know, it ended one aspect of it, certainly by 1968.

How the scene Ended

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, talk about that. One of the things that is most interesting, is how did the whole scene die? I mean how did it just end? How come it didn't just keep on going?

Eric King: Well, the concerts ended because the acts wanted more money. They didn't want to play three shows a night. They wanted to play one big show at the Oakland Coliseum and make 20 times as much money.

Michael Erlewine: Weren't there new acts coming along that would be willing to do that.

Eric King: Oh sure.

Michael Erlewine: But they still died out?

Eric King: Yes, because of the money.

Michael Erlewine: But that doesn't totally make sense.

Eric King: Well, it doesn't totally make sense, but everybody got greedy and there really was, among other things, the neighbors of the Avalon Ballroom became very hostile to the noise and to people urinating in doorways. It really did get irresponsible.

Michael Erlewine: So you'd say it peaked in 1967.

Eric King: It peaked from late 1966 through well into 1968. Exactly when and how it died, I don't know. I lived in Berkeley, and Telegraph Avenue continued to be flaky, crazy and fun into the Seventies. I mean a lot of it was going on, well after the ballrooms were closed. People, you know, there were still kids you know, who were 16 years old, run away from home, and come to Berkeley.

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Michael Erlewine: I was in Berkeley for a year in 1964, and I saw it recently, when I came out to visit you and so forth. But in 1964 and 1965 it was really beautiful in terms of the street. You know, It wasn't like a ghetto zone. It was very clean.

Eric King: Well, they are spending a great deal of money trying to clean it up. It's different now, but even the one block between Haste and Dwight Way, where you find a whole bunch of people who are, you know, kind of scrungy, you are not in any danger walking up the street.

Michael Erlewine: It has a different kind of feeling.

Eric King: It's not like East Oakland. You're not in danger walking up that street. You are right on the edge of a campus of one of the world's major universities, and you have a student body that walks up that street every day. The local government is not going to permit this to become some kind of war zone. Plus, according to several people that I know who hang out there more than I do now, if somebody did assault them and they screamed, there'd be a whole lot of people all over whomever was the bad guy right away.

Michael Erlewine: I used to live on Haste Street.

Collecting Posters

Eric King: That's where I got the nucleus of my collection.

I got my Masters in early June of 1966. I left for Florida for the summer, to spend time with the people I had lived with in Florida when I was an undergraduate at the University of Miami. I came back in late August of 1966 to go back to school in the PhD program, and realized I had missed a whole lot of posters. I put up a

sign, on a number of the telephone poles on Telegraph Avenue, saying "if you've got a pile of these posters, I'd like to buy them." A guy called me; he was living in one of the houses on People's Park. He had systematically saved, about thirty to thirty-five of the posters. I paid him a dollar a piece for everything. He didn't have a "Tribal Stomp". I paid a law student, who had gone to the "Tribal Stomp" six dollars for her "Tribal Stomp."

As far as I know, I was the first person to collect them. Now this guy saved posters, and I had saved posters as well. I was now systematically trying to find out what posters existed; what events had posters done for them; what did they look like ... what were the variations. I was looking around for this information. And, as far as I know, I was the first. By 1967 -- no later than the winter of 1967 or early in the spring -- I was in San Francisco trading with several people who were also collecting.

Michael Erlewine: Any still around that we might know? How about Dennis King. When did he start collecting?

Eric King: Dennis was a little bit later. I didn't know Dennis until the early Seventies.

Michael Erlewine: And how did you keep track of this information? How did you record it?

Eric King: In my head.

Michael Erlewine: Did you even have notes?

Eric King: No, it was all in my head.

Michael Erlewine: And how did you organize the materials themselves?

Eric King: Chronologically.

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Michael Erlewine: In a flat file?

Eric King: Mostly, a flat file.

Michael Erlewine: By venue, or all together?

Eric King: By venue: Bill Graham, Family Dog and miscellaneous.

Michael Erlewine: So you had them in many different files?

Eric King: I had three or four.

Michael Erlewine: And did you interleave them at all or just on top of each other?

Eric King: Just shoved in there.

Michael Erlewine: Handbills separate from posters?

Eric King: Handbills and postcards were in awful little black paper acetate. Get rid of those things, they'll eat the back.

But the thing is, I was on the mailing list very early 'cause I went to the events, just signed up and they started mailing them to me. When they came, I taped them to cardboard backers and stuck them on my wall. I mean, I had hundreds of the postcards on the wall.

It never occurred to me that these would be valuable. I used to pontificate: "you know these posters, they are a dollar, two bucks, some day they're going to be ten dollars apiece."

I mean I thought I was profound when I said that. The notion that the poster, I paid a dollar for -- "The King Kong" -- might be twenty dollars; I thought that was really something. The notion that that would be three or four thousand dollars, if you had said that to me I would have said, "You're crazy."



King Kong FD-002

Writing It Down and Other Collectors

Michael Erlewine: How did you transform into actually collating and cataloguing; how did that happen?

Eric King: Well, that's my nature. I studied archiving.

Michael Erlewine: You were keeping it in your head, I want to know when you went to writing things down on paper and how that went.

Eric King: Oh, when I went to paper. What happened was, that in the late Seventies, the poster reprints were still readily available in little print shops and they were three dollars. People, who were not particularly scrupulous and some deliberately malicious, started selling reprints claiming they were originals.

At this point the artists came after me. They said, listen, if this goes unchecked no one will collect this stuff, and we will loose out. It is not as though our art will die, but there will be much less interest in it, we will make less money and our reputations will be besmirched. You are the only person who has all this information and we gave it to you. We

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gave you hours and hours and hours; we put up with you and tolerated you, because we liked you, but you bothered the hell out of us. You owe us. Write a book. I said "Ah man, I don't want to." And they said, "Don't give us any shit. Our reputation for the future is going to rest on whether there is, or is not." They all had the foresight at this point to recognize that there had to be a guide.

Michael Erlewine: And what year was this?

Eric King: This was 1977.

Michael Erlewine: Ok, a long time. You were interviewing them?

Eric King: Oh, I was interviewing them. I interviewed Victor Moscoso in 1967.

Michael Erlewine: But you weren't taking notes?

Eric King: I was confident of my memory at that point. I mean I really had a good memory. I never bothered writing any of it down, because I never forgot it.

Michael Erlewine: So you were a walking encyclopedia of this information.

Eric King: Yeah, it was not written down. And there were two other people who were systematically accumulating information.

Michael Erlewine: Who were they.

Eric King: Randy was one of hem.

Michael Erlewine: Randy Tuten?

Eric King: Yeah. And the other was a fellow who is out of it, and has nothing to do with it anymore.

Michael Erlewine: Do you remember his name?

Eric King: No, I remember his name. He doesn't, doesn't want to be involved, he doesn't want to have anything to do with

it. But he also accumulated a massive amount of information, and what happened was that I took my entire collection over to this fellow's house. He had sold at the Marin Flea Market for years. ... People would come up to him and say "I've got twenty posters." and he'd buy them. He'd take anything that was different and put them in his own little pile. He tended to have the same mentality as Jacaeber, and I. He had a good eye and he would remember what he had seen. If he saw something new, he did not have to have the old one next to him.

Michael Erlewine: He didn't keep notes either?

Eric King: No, never wrote anything down.

Michael Erlewine: Fantastic.

Eric King: And we sat down and we spent more than a day. I mean it was back and forth. It was several days going through: "What do you think is the original? Why do you think this is the original?" We went through everything.

Michael Erlewine: What about Jacaeber Kastor? When did he click in?

Eric King: Jacaeber was one of the little kids -- who was I don't know twelve/thirteen/fourteen years old -- on Telegraph Avenue with a cigar box full of postcards.

Michael Erlewine: When did you meet him?

Eric King: In that time frame.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, you did. So you remember him from then?.

Eric King: Oh sure, I knew him all along.

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Michael Erlewine: So, he must have taken a very methodical approach to the whole thing.

Eric King: He did, but don't you know the story of the rats.

Michael Erlewine: I'm not sure.

Eric King: He had one of the most omnivorous and complete collections of the material in existence. Because he, and a couple of the other kids who collected this stuff really did well. They really had collected systematically and accumulated a lot of information themselves.

Well Jacaeber moved to New York, and he had this enormous collection under his bed, and either mice or rats came out of the wall and ate the collection. He simply didn't know they were under his bed, and this collection was destroyed, I mean completely destroyed.

Some time, around 1986 or 1987 or maybe 1988, I'm not sure exactly when, he got in touch with me, and said: "Do you know where I can get a collection of posters? My posters have been destroyed." Over a period of several years, I put him in touch with people. He fell in love with the stuff again, and decided to do something with the gallery.

Michael Erlewine: When did you meet Dennis King?

Eric King: When he opened the little baseball card place next to the Post Office on Durant Street. He rented a thing that was like, maybe eight feet deep and the width of a door.

Michael Erlewine: Right, he told me about this.

Eric King: It was like nothing. You could stand in it. He was into posters, and he

had obviously been saving them for a while. He obviously has an archiving and collecting mentality. I started going in there. He would turn up odd things and I'd buy one.

And at this point, my attorney, who is part of the scene in the Sixties, he had been to a lot of the concerts, was a graduate student at Cal., and lived in the Haight-Ashbury. About 1973 he said to me, you know those posters, I'd really like a collection of them. He said "Ben Friedman offered me such and such for such and such." I said "That's too much money. I can get it cheaper." I went through another collecting process for him, rounding all these things up. Some of the business involved Dennis King. That's how we did business together and over time we began to socialize.

Michael Erlewine: Can you say something about how readily available were these posters? You talk about Ben Friedman's shop. How many other kinds of shops carried these?

Eric King: Common.

Michael Erlewine: Very common?

Eric King: Common.

Michael Erlewine: In Berkeley and San Francisco?

Eric King: Yeah. Right across the street from the Med was the old Reprint Mint. It was called the Print Mint and then for some reason or other they had to change the name to the Reprint Mint. I can remember walking in there and going through the bins and seeing the "Toronto Poster", in the bin for three dollars. I didn't buy it. I had one. The notion I could have bought eight copies of the "Toronto Poster" for three dollars, put them in a portfolio and thirty years later, sell them for six thousand dollars

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apiece, never occurred to me. I mean this is 20/20 hindsight, but there they were. And this was right across the street from the Med.

Michael Erlewine: Interesting.

Eric King: And they had all the posters. And they had a little rack of postcards. I remember when I realized I wanted a set of postcards that was neat and not all taped up on my wall. I walked in there and bought the ones that are the nucleus of what's in my notebooks, you know the little binders from Light Impressions, for ten cents apiece.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, interesting, that's cool. Say a little bit more about how you put your book together.

Eric King: Well, I had all this information and I had to figure out what to do with it. I had a lot of training as a professional archivist. At this point, the originals were twenty or thirty dollars, with the exception of the "Tribal Stomp," which had sold for two hundred dollars. The Toronto poster was already something you could get maybe one hundred and fifty or two hundred dollars for. All the other stuff, say a number eight -- you know the Andy Warhol -- a really nice clean copy of that would be \$20. But you could get a reprint for three bucks.

Well, I sat down and figured out that. We first of all -- this other fellow and I -- agreed upon everything that was going into "The Guide". He didn't want to write, but he was willing to spend the time, to show me what he owned.

Michael Erlewine: Did he know more than you did from that time?

Eric King: No, he didn't know more, and I didn't know more.

Michael Erlewine: So you each knew different stuff?

Eric King: We each knew different stuff, but what was interesting, we came to. It's like one of the things about this stuff that makes the judgments that we've made valid, is that the people who did this did all their own research and came to the same conclusions. That's why it's valid. It's like science. It depends on independently verifiable, repeatable testing. Well, if, four people who are systematically studying this material came to almost entirely the same conclusions, then it's pretty clear. What we didn't have, I mean for example, we didn't have access to the invoices that indicate that Capitol Records bought 100,000 posters, we didn't know that.

Michael Erlewine: They did, eh?

Eric King: Yeah, Capitol Records, there is an invoice, Jacaeber Kastor, I had them at one point and I sold them to Jacaeber because he likes that stuff. I mean, I liked it, but he likes it more than I do.

Michael Erlewine: But you were the first to precipitate this on to paper.

Eric King: Oh yes, I was definitely the first.

Michael Erlewine: Before Jacaeber?

Eric King: Oh, Jacaeber's catalog dates from the 1990s.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah.

Eric King: This was 1978.

Michael Erlewine: Well, what was your first edition like and do you still have one anywhere?

Eric King: No.

Michael Erlewine: You have the Master.

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Eric King: I have the Master.

Michael Erlewine: That's too bad, because that's an historic document. You might want to run off a couple of them, just so there's more than one in existence. What year was that?

Eric King: In 1978, I spent six months typing all the information without a numbering system. I just said first, second, third printing. This one's got a number here; this one doesn't.

It was very slovenly in the sense that I knew that all the Family Dogs from forty-four to eighty-six had been reprinted. I didn't attempt to distinguish them, because Chet Helms had put "-1" at the bottom, and I wasn't going to call Chet a liar. And nobody cared. They were three dollars, whether they were this or that variant. .

I knew people knew that I was working on this thing. What happened was I said to everybody -- and I mean there's like two hundred people -- "I'm not going to lose money on this. You send me a check for twenty dollars. I will not cash the check until the book is done. And it'll take me six months." Over the period of about a month, I got a lot of support. People said: "Yeah, we really want this."

I sat down at that point and typed it -- it took me six months -- went to a photocopy place and printed it up, then cashed all the checks and mailed all the books. There are probably some people, who still have it but I don't. What I have is the manuscript.

Michael Erlewine: The annotated one.

Eric King: Right after I did it, people started saying "Oh I've got this; I've got that" and they'd show it to me. Well, I'd write in the margin, I would write in here I would write in there. You know I'd

scribble in hand in between lines; it's a mess.

Michael; Well some day, if you are feeling kind towards me, you can make a copy, send it so I can put it in the archive. You know how I build libraries; you've done it.

Eric King: Yeah.

Eric King: No, I think if you look around you'll find one of these.

Michael Erlewine: How many editions have there been? .

Eric King: I'm on the 5th edition, now. There were two editions of the original one. It's a little thin thing; it's only like one hundred pages long.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, that's how things start.

Eric King: Yeah, there were no illustrations in it and when I ran out of them, I'd go with the manuscript to a Xerox place and run off another hundred copies.

Michael Erlewine: Let me ask you this, why do you still call it "Volume One".

Eric King: Oh, that's a joke.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Eric King: The joke is there are all these other venues, that's "Volume Two". Somebody else can do "Volume two".

Michael Erlewine: Right, we'll do it on the web.

Eric King: I know my limitations. There's all this stuff from Santa Barbara. There's the Carousel Ballroom, there's.

Michael Erlewine: Everything. but your book.

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Eric King: Yeah, and I have reached the point where I'm not interested in devoting the massive amount of time to.

Michael Erlewine: You've paid your dues, and you did pioneer work. I'm going to try and document what you and a few other people have done.

Eric King: Well, I.

Michael Erlewine: I mean you've made it available to others.

Eric King: I was the first one who did it. But -- I say this, and I say this definitively -- the person who knows more about psychedelic posters around the world, than anybody else is Jacaeber Kastor. He knows as much as I do, about the Fillmore, Avalon, Grande Ballroom and Neon Rose, but he knows the rest of this material.

Michael Erlewine: But the difference is that you've actually published something that and shared it with masses of people.

Eric King: You are doing something very similar to what I think you're doing, academic research.

Michael Erlewine: I have for all my life, right?

Eric King: Yeah and this is who and what you are and this is why I'm comfortable speaking with you.

Michael Erlewine: Instead of academia, because I never got out of high school, I like popular culture. I was bored with high school and just left. Never finished. I was accepted at the University of Michigan, without a high-school diploma, went for a short time, and found it just as boring. No, I am not an academic.

Eric King: Yeah, but you got the smarts. My father, God rest his soul, had the equivalent of an engineering degree, despite the fact he never went past the tenth grade.

Michael Erlewine: I have a vision of trying to raise the bar for everybody interested in these posters, and if I can make it break even, I'll be happy.

Eric King: When I did the Guide, I said I'm not going to lose money on it. I am not going to make myself rich off this, but I don't want to lose money. And I think that's a reasonable statement.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, yeah I think that's fair.

Eric King: I mean, in the same way that I spent thousands of hours, I'm dealing with this FD-42 thing now, I've got five, or six, hours in this. I've got seven, or eight, hours in something to do with FD-101 within the last two weeks.

This is ongoing. The thing is: I don't need to make my sixty-five dollars an hour doing this, but I do not want to lay out lots of money. When I go to the printer, to print my guide, I'm laying out four thousand some odd dollars. And I do this every time I print the damned thing.

Michael Erlewine: But, it comes back right?

Eric King: That's my point. I'm not going to lay out five grand without some reasonable expectation that the money's coming back in.

Michael Erlewine: Cool, that's what you said.

Eric King: You bought all these expensive cameras, and you bought all this, you know.

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Michael Erlewine: Yeah, well I have a whole studio now.

Eric King: Your time, I assume was a labor of love. Your money is something else, you want to get your money back.

Michael Erlewine: Full time on this, right, for a long time now. I'm trying to get -- to do what you did -- almost the level of detail that you did, but for the whole field.

Eric King: Right.

Michael Erlewine: And it's very difficult.

Eric King: Believe me I am glad that someone else is doing it.

Michael Erlewine: If anyone can appreciate what I am doing, it'll be you.

Eric; Oh God, do I appreciate. Well Jacaeber Kaster will appreciate it. He's gonna' look at this thing and he's gonna' say "Oh my god there's another nut like us."

SHIPPING POSTERS

Michael Erlewine: Let me ask you some questions.

Eric King: Sure.

Michael Erlewine: Let's talk about shipping posters. What if somebody wants to ship an expensive poster?

Eric King: I think that what you do, is you give the customer the choice and charge them accordingly.

If somebody has a poster of lower or even middle level value, a large 4 inch diameter, or larger, mailing cylinder is adequate to the purpose; and you wrap standard brown paper around the poster.

Michael Erlewine: What does that do?

Eric King: If the poster moves around in the mailing cylinder, it keeps the poster from damaging the edges.

Michael Erlewine: Sometimes I notice, that people put tissue in both ends.

Eric King: Yeah, that keeps the poster from moving. If it is hit at one end, or the other, dropped and the poster slides and hits the end of the cylinder, it will damage the poster.

Michael Erlewine: What about flats?

Eric King: With flats, I go by what -- how expensive -- the thing is. I like refrigerator cartons; I've used bicycle cartons, I cut them so that the corrugations are at right angles.

I'll use four or six layers depending on how heavy the stuff is, and I'll make it at least an inch, or an inch and a half, larger than the poster. You put the poster in a plastic bag, tape the plastic bag so it snugly fitted length and width to the poster. Then you put each of the four corners in the corner of an envelope [that you have cut from an standard mailing envelope] and you tape that down so that the poster can't move. Then you tape the outside with several layers of that plastic tape.

Michael Erlewine: You're talking about when you close the corrugated cardboard together to make a package.

Eric King: Yeah, you seal it all around the edges. For a long time I used Registered Mail.

Michael Erlewine: US Registered Mail.

Eric King: Now the thing about that, is you have to use the brown tape that you moisten. There's a nuisance factor with this, but Registered Mail can be insured up to \$25,000.

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[Editors note: you no longer have to use brown tape]

Michael Erlewine: I see.

Eric King: I now use Express Mail on expensive posters.

Michael Erlewine: US Express Mail.

Eric King: And I ask the client to pay for that.

Michael Erlewine: Can you insure them?

Eric King: Five thousand dollars.

Michael Erlewine: Up to five thousand?

Eric King: But it's a dollar a hundred. So if you ship \$4,500 worth of posters, that's \$44 in insurance. You're talking about \$75 worth of shipping costs. But it gets there the next day and the theory that I go by, is that the faster it moves, the fewer hands that touch it, the less likely it's getting stolen.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eric King: And I tend to believe that the most expensive items, under five thousand dollars go by Express Mail.

Between five and twenty-five thousand dollars, I believe in Registered Mail. More than that, I'd rather hand deliver it.

Michael Erlewine: Hand deliver it, right?

Eric King: I mean I really didn't know who you are, until I met you. I felt one of the vulnerabilities of shipping, was not the loss or the damage, but the possibility -- please do not take this as any mean statement about any person - - that someone would say there was no number seven in this pile; this was a reprint.

Michael Erlewine: I see.

Eric King: And, you know, I couldn't replace it.

Eric King: You might want to consider something like feedback, so that if there were disputes and somebody did behave badly, over time, if either a buyer or a vendor proves to be a pain in the ass repeatedly.

Michael Erlewine: No, they would be asked to leave.

Eric King: They're out, but the way you're going to know this is feedback. Let's say Joe Jones in Philadelphia sells, you know, puts up on your site an original number twenty-eight and what shows up is a reprint.

Michael Erlewine: Well then, he's out.

Eric King: How do you know. You see the thing is you don't know if the guy in Cleveland who bought the thing is lying, or the guy in Philadelphia is lying. You don't know.

All you know is that the guy in Cleveland complained about the guy in Philadelphia.

Michael Erlewine: So what do you suggest? I mean I see the problem.

Eric King: That's why you should keep track of the feedback.

I have a little number after my name on eBay, its one hundred and fifty nine. That means one hundred and fifty nine separate individuals have said nice things about me, 'cause they are all positives.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I'm, I'm not going to invite anyone to be a vendor who cannot produce references. One reference that I will accept, is a very good auction record.

Eric King: I get dozens of emails from people saying "I just found eight posters in my attic. I want to sell them;" and "I'm

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really broke, I lost my job I'm in deep crap, I've had these posters since 1968, can you help me?"

Michael Erlewine: I may not be helping them myself, but I will send the to someone who wants to do that.

Eric King: No, but the thing is, if they want, they want to sell their posters: there's a lot of nice, decent people, who are in trouble. The economy is not in good shape, and I think one of your main markets for what you want to do, is these people who have eight posters. I want to be able to say "Why don't you check out "ClassicPosters.com."

Michael Erlewine: I am not sure how much I want to inventory anything. But what I will do is find someone who has more time and who wants to gamble a little bit and take over the responsibility. I'll make a deal with them that I send these people to them and they work something out.

They will become the broker and decide if they want to work with these people or not. And his agreement will be that he will put them for sale through this site, so I still get my commission. But I don't want to handle too much. I will be pretty busy, as it is.

Eric King: This strike[s] me as a very intelligent way to do this. It would have to be somebody who really knows all the material and who would, if you're offering a number twenty-eight original, be able to look at a scan, and say, oh yeah, that's right.

Michael Erlewine: I may go to people like Phil Cushway and Jacaeber Kastor and say: are there any venues that you want to be the gatekeeper for, and they may say, yeah I want to be the gatekeeper for The Grande Ballroom, or

something. Also, I will keep a thing that as these things come through; I'm able to look at what it is, so I can see if it is something that I want.

Eric King: I'm still interested in looking for a small number (Laughs) of Grande things. I'm wondering whether it would contaminate my status acting as the gatekeeper on this.

Michael Erlewine: Well you might want to be Grande gatekeeper, or something like that. After all, you know the stuff better than anyone.

Eric King: No, I think that it's tempting, but it would be bad judgment on my part. I do think you ought to ask Jacaeber Kastor to be some sort of referee of disputes over authenticity. Because, if the guy in Cleveland claims it is not an original, he should be required to ship it to somebody, who will say this is an original, this is a pirate; this is a reprint. This is what the seller has claimed it is or it's not. Whoever is wrong pays the expense.

I think you ought to have that as part of the site, and personally, if Jacaeber is willing to do this, he's pretty much the only person competent to.

Michael Erlewine: Right, well we'll work up to that. I think that I'm going to start with vendors that have lots of material and are on the money. If someone says it's not their thing, they have no right to destroy the poster; they'd have to return the poster. I'd figured out I may have to eat the costs of some disputes, just because I don't want to cause trouble.

Eric King: Okay, this is your judgment.

Michael Erlewine: I think I will delegate. There must be people who are lean and mean and hungry, who want to have people bringing them posters to buy and

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can go on this site and identify the poster very clearly.

Eric King: I believe that this is true, and I believe, from the nature of e-mail that I get, that you are going to get people who want to put eight posters up. When they're done with their eight posters, they're gone. I believe this will be a considerable source of your income.

Michael Erlewine: Here's one thing I want to do. Anyone can come and use the site. No problem. If someone wants to buy a poster then we have a secure socket, credit card information like anything else.

Eric King: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Now, there's one other little caveat. One of the features on the site, is going to be that you can go to a poster, like the Cincinnati Pop Festival, and turn on a flag that says buyer waiting, "I want this poster, if anyone has it please know that you've got a buyer."

Eric King: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Now, I'm not going to let just anyone do that, because nuts would go in there and turn on a hundred of them. So in order to do that, they have to register as a buyer in some way.

Eric King: You'd have to be really careful about this. What I can tell you, is the number of people who want to buy good stuff, without paying for it much, is legion. You are going to find legions of tire kickers, who are going to want to do this and even if they have to put up a credit card number, they are going to do that. And you are going to have twenty people waiting for this poster.

Michael Erlewine: That's good,.

Eric King: Yeah, but the thing is.

Michael Erlewine: It'll be first come, first served.

Eric King: If you've got multiple copies, maybe you want to consider the possibility of auction.

Michael Erlewine: No, I don't know if I want to get into auction, unless perhaps with runs or sets of posters, or special posters.

Eric King: That's your choice.

Michael Erlewine: Let's just say "The Cincinnati Pop Festival." You've already got it; I don't have it. Let's say that ten people, who are registered as buyers, come in and they say they want that poster. And it comes up for sale; it pops up on the site. The moment it is up, those ten people get sent an e-mail, that says that poster is available. It's up to them to go to the site and be the first person that buys it, gets it.

Eric King: Oh, that's interesting.

Michael Erlewine: I think that that's a fair way of doing it.

Eric King: I will tell you, that in the world of postcard collecting, there is one who's identifier is Postcard Man France. What he does, is he has a large mailing list, and he sends out, maybe two or three times a year, a little notice that says I have new material that may be of interest to you on my site. And he sends this to what must be thousands of people, and it's first come first served. And it works.

Michael Erlewine: It's all going to be automated. So that as something comes up, if somebody signaled that they wanted to know about it, they would immediately get an email and depends who's vigilant enough on their email, as

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to who gets in and whether they want to pay the price.

Eric King: I really think this is a great idea.

Eric King: But I've said, you've heard me say this to Gary Grimshaw, if Gary created this art in San Francisco, it'd be the big six.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Eric King: It's as simple as that. He is on that level, and entitled to that kind of recognition, and an art book of the Grande would be nice. I have to be very careful because I have a great deal of personal loyalty to Jacaeber Kastor. I will not do anything.

Michael Erlewine: I am not suggesting a book.

Eric King: Okay. The thing is what I write, you know; I don't want to give up.

Michael Erlewine: If you write something for the site, you can do whatever you want with it elsewhere.

Eric King: Oh, I wasn't clear on that.

Michael Erlewine: Oh no, totally. I am talking about something on the Grande for the site, written by someone who knows something. I am not talking about exclusivity or any kind.

Eric King: Okay.

Michael Erlewine: The ideas where you and I don't see the same way and have different visions, is that to me this kind of website is what has replaced most books.

Eric King: I'm not sure that I like that, but I agree.

Michael Erlewine: It is not an opinion; It's just a fact, and I'm not sure I like it either. I would much rather have a six

foot shelf of books, each on a poster venue, but it's not going to happen, at least not soon enough for me to use it, which is now.

Eric King: No, that's not going to happen, but I do believe that it is entirely possible that there be a book, a serious coffee table book, on the Grande Ballroom.

Michael Erlewine: Jack Bodnar is working on a book, with Gary Grimshaw and with Leni sinclair. But it is not going to be a Grande book.

Eric King: The best of Gary's art is what he did for the Grande. No actually, what he was doing later -- for some of the other venues -- that is great work.

Michael Erlewine: You know that Dennis King and Paul Grushkin are making the second edition of "The Art of Rock".

Eric King: Yeah, I've been told that.

Eric King: I am at your disposal, and I was not aware that you wanted me to write something about collecting of the Grande.

Michael Erlewine: I think it would be a wonderful thing and it would inspire people.

Eric King: I will go with the notion of how I encountered the stuff and how it suddenly jumped for me and said wow!

Michael Erlewine: And talk a bit about what's hard to find and what's easy to find.

Eric King: I am more interested in writing about it as art.

Michael Erlewine: Well do it. I think I have to let people know what collecting is. What are the dreams of the collector? How do they think? What do they do? People want to learn how to collect,

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catalogue, and do all this stuff. You see, I'm a facilitator, that's how I see my role.

Eric King: Well, you certainly are, and one of the things is that, from what I gather, you are arranging some kind of numbering system.

Michael Erlewine: I think that it will have to be a date; but for shorthand you need something more, 'cause people can't remember dates.

Eric King: I agree with that.

Michael Erlewine: I still am confused about it, but not totally.

Eric King: Use your own judgment.

Michael Erlewine: I am.

Eric King: If anybody knows how to set something like this up, it's you. I trust you. You're going to do a good job.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, I hope I'm going to do a good job. There's going to be a lot of errors in it because there are errors in everything. Data is not cleaned in a linear fashion, starting at "A" and going to "Z." It is cleaned iteratively, a pass at a time, the way you would focus a telescope to bring it into perfect resolution. It will start rough and gradually be refined, as people comment and contribute.

Eric King: Don't worry about it.

Michael Erlewine: In fact I just found some errors in your book.

Eric King: Yeah I was going to say, you found eight pages of errors in my book after somebody else had already gone through it.

Michael Erlewine: I just found one the other day. I think what I am going to do is go through your book one last time

and when I do, I'm going to make a new list of things.

Eric King: Please, I'd appreciate it.

Michael Erlewine: I may not get it done, but if I can as I go through it, I will try.

Eric King: Do it if you do it. If you don't, you don't.

Michael Erlewine: Well one of the things I've been working on is breaking out all of the light shows. I think the light show people have really been given a bum deal.

Eric King: I agree.

Michael Erlewine: I'm going to break out the light shows, the promoters, and presenters, you know. Plus each poster, if it has twenty events, I'm breaking them all out with each date, each group for each date. Some of them have, as you know, multiple venues.

Eric King: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: So anyway, all that's going to be broken out.

Eric King: I do know that a large number of The Grande Ballroom items simply didn't have the right bills, because they were changed at the last minute.

Michael Erlewine: Oh that's possible.

Eric King: Although I don't know if that's something you ought to be addressing.

Michael Erlewine: Well, I will do my best.

Eric King: This is what the handbill says.

Michael Erlewine: I start out with what's on the handbill.

Eric King: At the entrance to certain parts of the site, you could put a note "there is the other site that deals with this particular situation." Because there

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are a lot of people who seem to be interested in "who played, where, when." What are the, you know, such and such a group. What's a complete list of everything they played?.

Michael Erlewine: Just like the time I played at the Fillmore West, opened for Cream, I substituted for the Electric Flag -- BG-84.

Eric King: Right.

Michael Erlewine: So, of course, it's important -- to me -- that I was the one who played that night with Cream. I think it was their second date in this country. But for most, this is minutia.

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