

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

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Michael Erlewine: That's partly the reason why I'm calling is that there is...from my understanding from Eric King and from Dennis King and other people, that there was a point and time when you and Eric got together and compared notes. From that meeting, Eric King he went on, at some point, to make a beginning book of poster data and then make it more and more sophisticated as years went by.

Greg Davidson: Okay.

Michael Erlewine: I think he dedicated his first book to you.

Greg Davidson: Well, I think he gave me some credit...

Michael Erlewine: The way I understood it was that you compared notes over some period of time and... You have not been involved in posters recently?

Greg Davidson: No.

Michael Erlewine: Have lost interest in them?

Greg Davidson: You know they reached a point where I looked and I had these cabinets full of everything. And it was everything. What was I going to do? I couldn't even...more than I could do to cover the walls and ceilings. There was nothing left to be interested in [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: So you collected complete sets of what Bill Graham and Family Dog and...

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Wow. Well those are worth a lot of money today, as you probably know.

Greg Davidson: They weren't cheap then, but I'm sure they're worth more now. I just bought a poster that I remember was rare, but I...it was an auction...

Michael Erlewine: Which one?

Greg Davidson: The "Gathering the Tribes."

Michael Erlewine: Which one?

Greg Davidson: The one with the triangle in front of the person.

Michael Erlewine: Oh yeah, I've got that one.

Greg Davidson: This is interesting, because it's signed by Bowen.

Michael Erlewine: Really. That is interesting.

Greg Davidson: Yeah. I got a few people to sign stuff at different times, but I never even knew him or heard of him and I wouldn't probably have been interested much.

Michael Erlewine: You probably know Paul Getchell or Walter Medeiros?

Greg Davidson: Paul's still into it?

Michael Erlewine: They're still into posters and Walter Medeiros, of course, has written a lot about posters.

Greg Davidson: Who? Walter, I don't know if I knew him.

Michael Erlewine: Well, he was active almost from the beginning. Paul Getchell you probably knew.

Greg Davidson: Yeah I knew Paul.

Michael Erlewine: But I think you pre-date most of these guys.

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: I'm an archivist, so of course. I think that you guys that have done archiving early on deserve some special credit.

Greg Davidson: Well, I had a lot different background than everybody else. I have had an antique shop for the last 25 years. But my last paying job was a curator at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, no kidding.

Greg Davidson: So I got an M.A. in Art History, and a lot of background even before that.

Michael Erlewine: Did you recognize these posters as eventually collectible?

Greg Davidson: Probably, yeah. I did it for the art value, rather than... some people got into it the nostalgia value.

Michael Erlewine: So you saw them as art?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: See that's really cool because that didn't happen with everyone. Many view these posters just as memorabilia.

Meeting Eric King

by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: How did you meet Eric King. Who was doing this before you?

Greg Davidson: I went to school. I went to undergraduate school in Berkeley off and on for a very long time.

Michael Erlewine: What years?

Greg Davidson: I actually knew Eric King before I even got into posters.

Michael Erlewine: Just from being around? What years were these?

Greg Davidson: Well I...I came back in 1969. I probably met him around 1969 or 1970.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Greg Davidson: But I didn't start then. I went away and did like grad schooling in Michigan. I didn't get back to Berkeley until 1974 or 1975. That's when I started collecting them.

Michael Erlewine: So you started then. Had Eric already been collecting them, or do you know? I'm trying to get dates.

Greg Davidson: He evidently did a little bit of collecting before then and then stopped and then got active when I was hustling all over the place. There were a couple guys out at the Alameda flea market in those days that were dealing in them and I was collecting from them. I bumped into Eric and there was another guy, I forget, who had collected too. But, I think maybe he wasn't really doing any. He wasn't doing anything with the posters at the point and I think that maybe he was at loose ends to make a buck, I think. He started, and he had a friend.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I think he still does.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, and I think his friend got interested in putting together a set and I think that Eric decided this was a way to make money.

Michael Erlewine: Interesting. See, I'm trying to put together the history of all this and that is something that I have not heard before.

Greg Davidson: Well, he put together a set for his friend or a couple...and extras. I think maybe his friend put together two sets for himself.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: Were these complete collections?

Greg Davidson: No, we're talking complete collections.

Michael Erlewine: With variations?

Greg Davidson: Yeah. I was the person of variations. I was buying and selling for awhile like a junkie and if I bought a hundred posters, I'd put the 100 I bought next to the ones I had and they came up all different. Like there were some really weird color variations in the first, like 60-80, or to 100 numbers in Bill Graham. I remember where the colors could flip back and forth between different...probably the same printings, but just different mixtures of ink.

Michael Erlewine: True. And also just whatever paper they might do. Bill Graham kind of used consistent paper.

Greg Davidson: I don't really know what's happened with this one. I remember like one major difference with him on Eric on the Batman poster.

Michael Erlewine: Well Eric's thinks that's the poster that took him the longest to figure out the variations.

Greg Davidson: Well, I had one that was the original. I feel.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Greg Davidson: Because I feel it was really, really rare. The reason I did. It was the only one that had the same paper that the Batman paper was on, or not the Batman, one of the early Family Dog ones.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Greg Davidson: I forget which one at this point. And all the others were on different kind of stock completely.

Michael Erlewine: And they were all...

Greg Davidson: They were all fairly common.

Michael Erlewine: Right. Not anymore.

Greg Davidson: The reprints?

Michael Erlewine: Well, reprints yeah.

Greg Davidson: Well, the ones that I felt were reprints were not rare posters back in the 70's, Batman.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Greg Davidson: But this one that I had, was the only one ever seen and it was on the same kind of...it was a little softer stock than, it was like the same paper that was used on the fine weave pressed Family Dog ones.

Michael Erlewine: I see. Well he still has an incredible collection.

Greg Davidson: Oh, I'm not saying...

Michael Erlewine: And he's still-hunting down variations just within those...

Posters, Posters, Posters

Greg Davidson: I collect at this point mainly in 19th and early 20th century lamps and light fixtures, you know, different things.

Michael Erlewine: I thought I had been told you were in LA.

Greg Davidson: I was. I moved up here about eight years ago.

Michael Erlewine: So, I had searched LA, trying to reach you, and then I just happened to...I think I did some kind of Internet search and found your name connected to the Northwest, right? So I didn't know if you were the same one, but how many antique lighting people could there be.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Greg Davidson: Not many with my name, that's for sure.

Michael Erlewine: It's great to reach you finally and what you've told me already changes the whole way this thing comes together, a lot that I didn't know. Eric may have told me that he purchased from a lot of posters from you. I can't remember.

Greg Davidson: I had great stuff. I wished I had kept some of it, but I was more interested in other things. I mean I still am. I mean I'm not interested in posters at all, hardly. I still have a few up and just bought that "Gathering the Tribes" just because as I remember the big one was kind of always scarce.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I have that poster. It's a weird poster. Interesting.

Greg Davidson: Early Mouse.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah.

Greg Davidson: I got some interesting stuff. I tried to talk to some of the artists.

Michael Erlewine: So you actually...

Greg Davidson: See I...that was something.. I don't know if Eric ever kept them, but I had Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley sign some of those posters. First I had Mouse sign them, because according to Kelley, he and Mouse worked on everything together. According to Mouse that wasn't true [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Oh really [laughs].

Greg Davidson: So at that point I had one signed by Mouse that he claimed, only he worked on. That's the way I kept them straight, but that's probably all gotten confused.

Michael Erlewine: Well both those guys are still doing graphics. Kelley's doing

some incredible stuff even now, really beautiful things. Mouse I think is still doing things too.

Greg Davidson: I knew them when they were just starting to get into airbrushing and stuff and doing acrylics and they were getting too tied up into technique.

Michael Erlewine: Well Kelley never got very tied up, but Mouse has still been pretty tied up with technique and having fancy equipment.

Greg Davidson: Well, you know, at that point I thought their artistic vision..

Michael Erlewine: Well, yeah. I mean the whole scene didn't last a long time, the whole flower of it. See I'm from the Midwest, so I come from a different view. We had the Grande Ballroom out here and that's a...

Greg Davidson: I had some posters, that wasn't Midwest, that was Detroit.

Michael Erlewine: Well, it's Midwest in Detroit.

Greg Davidson: I meant to Ann Arbor. I don't consider it the Midwest, that was the east coast [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Well I grew up in Ann Arbor, and it is the Midwest.

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: We Ann Arborites think that it is the heart of the Midwest, right?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: But you think of more like out to the coast or something, some 1000 miles east.

Greg Davidson: Well, yeah.

Michael Erlewine: We don't think that way.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Greg Davidson: I went to summer school in Austin, Texas. I guess I hit the area.

Michael Erlewine: Did you go to the Armadillo and things like that?

Greg Davidson: Armadillo was on the way out when I was down there. In fact I think that was gone, the Vulcan Gas Company was still around, but...

Michael Erlewine: The Vulcan went before the Armadillo.

Greg Davidson: Okay, then the Armadillo was going and the Vulcan was gone. That's one of the few posters I kept, one of the best one's from the period, I think.

Michael Erlewine: Which one?

Greg Davidson: It's one by Gilbert Shelton.

Michael Erlewine: One of the Vulcan?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Well those are pretty valuable now.

Greg Davidson: I would expect it was a split-fountain, with these sort of wads of light coming out, it was sort of terrific.

Michael Erlewine: You remember by whom, which poster it was?

Greg Davidson: No, it's out and hanging, it's one of the few that's hanged.

Michael Erlewine: Wow. I love Texas posters. I can't afford to collect the Vulcan Gas, but I collect the Armadillo and I have hundreds of them.

Greg Davidson: The only ones I liked from Texas were, I think, Gilbert Shelton stuff.

Michael Erlewine: Really, so that's more Vulcan Gas.

Greg Davidson: Is it?

Michael Erlewine: Well, it's a little bit like the west coast stuff. But I like the stipple-effect, you know two-tone stuff. I think it looks good on the wall. And I just love it. I don't know why, I just do.

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Big sky country.

Greg Davidson: What else do I have on the wall? Not much. I've got a Big Brother and the Holding Company silk screen.

Michael Erlewine: Which one?

Greg Davidson: I think its Matrix.

Michael Erlewine: Mouse I don't think he did more than one poster for the Matrix, and it was Big Brother.

Greg Davidson: It was a rare poster. It's Stanley Mouse that definitely made this.

Michael Erlewine: And so you met all these guys, or most of them?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, before some of them died.

Michael Erlewine: What about Bob Fried. Did you meet him?

Greg Davidson: No, he died. I bought bunch of his posters from his wife.

Michael Erlewine: I went out and interviewed her. Nice lady. I like Bob Fried's stuff a lot. He's one of the ones I collect. Well, sounds like you actually had training in art and in archiving to some degree, museum work.

Greg Davidson: I guess, yeah.

Michael Erlewine: That's pretty cool. But, who taught you posters? Anyone? Who did you?

Greg Davidson: No, no. I mean I picked everybody's brain.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: When we say everybody, we mean?

Greg Davidson: What's his name was helpful. The two guys that bought...started with...that were dealing...one guy's name was Kingsley, I think.

Michael Erlewine: I don't know that name.

Greg Davidson: Well, he was probably...

Michael Erlewine: I'm going to write that down.

Greg Davidson: Probably doesn't survive.

Michael Erlewine: But you would go to people like Ben Friedman, was he?

Greg Davidson: He wasn't... He didn't know anything or if he knew anything it was totally self-serving. If he would...

Greg Davidson: What's his name? Randy was helpful.

Michael Erlewine: Oh Randy Tuten, of course?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: He's a wonder. I like Randy Tuten's work a lot. One of the few artists/poster experts that are still doing incredibly good work, I think he's struggling to make a living. But he's very funny, and I went out and visited and interviewed him. I talk to him periodically. I like him. His work is still pristine. He is the most consistent producer of all of them.

Greg Davidson: Well, I never liked those later ones, like Tuten, or whom did I hate the most? The guy who did all those collages for...

Michael Erlewine: Oh , David Singer?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Well, I like Singer and his work..

Greg Davidson: I thought Norman Orr's stuff was hideous.

Greg Davidson: My favorite was probably Lee Conklin.

Michael Erlewine: Oh so you like Conklin? Yeah.

Greg Davidson: Conklin, Griffin and Wilson and Mouse, and Kelley.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah. I've talked to most of those guys; Lee Conklin is living still...still living around there. Not doing much poster stuff, more into art prints. Did you know Jacaeber Kastor, who is an expert like yourself?

Greg Davidson: No.

Michael Erlewine: He eventually did the Psychedelic Solution Gallery out on the east coast, which is a major poster gallery. How about Phil Cushway? Did you run across him or was that too early probably?

Greg Davidson: No, don't know him.

Michael Erlewine: I think it was much later. Well he's Art Rock now, right?

Greg Davidson: Yeah. I knew people that...I got and traded stuff from Cohen.

Michael Erlewine: Now who's Cohen.

Greg Davidson: He was one, who was. They always give credit to for the Family Dog, that was the owner?

Michael Erlewine: Oh, Chet Helms.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, he was the co-owner with Chet Helms.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, I didn't know that.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Greg Davidson: Actually paid off their bankruptcy.

Michael Erlewine: Really.

Greg Davidson: He was a businessperson and he was still wise, because at least 25 years ago, he had many employees and was doing sound for concert productions.

Michael Erlewine: I don't know him. That's funny. I will make a note of this.

Greg Davidson: I mean it was interesting to talk to him, but... And he shared a place with one of the few people I hold in awe from the period, which is Janis Joplin, so I mean [laughs]...

Michael Erlewine: Oh really, so you met her?

Greg Davidson: No, no. I wasn't really into the music that much. The few concerts I went to, I couldn't stand because they were too loud.

Michael Erlewine: They were loud [laughs]. Yep. I can remember that, because I'm from that era myself. But just to be totally clear, that you basically developed your interest into variations and stuff without instructions...no one passed it on to you?

Greg Davidson: Well no, nobody passed it on. I mean I picked a little bit from everybody.

Michael Erlewine: But I'm trying to understand the 'everybody' would just be other collectors?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, and the folk wisdom that was going around, and then eventually you could see pretty much just because what was around and what was available and where you got stuff from. I went to a lot of people. There

was a guy that had the Oracle Newspaper I got stuff from him.

Michael Erlewine: How about Dennis King. Were you in touch with him?

Greg Davidson: The name is so familiar, I'm trying to...

Michael Erlewine: Well Dennis had a small shop in Berkeley, in the beginning...

Greg Davidson: Oh, he was the baseball card dealer.

Michael Erlewine: That's right.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, but he was just starting.

Michael Erlewine: Really. Wow. I'm trying to think who else you would have been in touch with. So Ben Friedman couldn't do much for you.

Greg Davidson: Oh no, he was...

Michael Erlewine: And I've established that pretty well, he was just making money.

Greg Davidson: And if it helped to lie [laughs].

Trading Posters and Data with Eric King

Michael Erlewine: Yeah [laughs]. I think I've heard that a number of times also. I'm just trying to think of who else was more of an archival person and then...

Greg Davidson: I mean Eric King caught on, or was doing it pretty quick. It's just he...if he hadn't been bankrolled by his friend he wouldn't have done anything.

Michael Erlewine: Right. Well they are still friends.

Greg Davidson: I'm trying to think of this one guy. See I...when I was at Berkeley, I was mostly a Frisbee player

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and there was one guy I used to play Frisbee with that was collecting early and collecting later who ...

Can't remember his name.

So he got involved with Eric and his friend at the same time too...I mean his friend wasn't selling, but mostly was buying stuff from Eric at the same time.

Michael Erlewine: I think he still is just accumulating posters, like a lot of us.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, well he's got the resources to do that.

Michael Erlewine: He does. Well, what you told me changes the whole picture... It certainly makes you a key figure in terms of trying to build the history of the archival element. I'm trying to find out who was interested in these variations. So I know Eric was.

Greg Davidson: Well I mean...anyone that was collecting at the time was interested.

Michael Erlewine: But not so knowledgeable from what I can tell. You guys took it to greater lengths.

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: So you would get together with Eric and then you guys would compare...bring your posters together and look at...put them all together?

Greg Davidson: We might have done that a little bit. I didn't have to do that with him. He didn't have anything for me to compare with.

Michael Erlewine: You mean he didn't have that much at that point.

Greg Davidson: He didn't have anything to speak of.

Michael Erlewine: So how much time did you spend with him. Was it over many years? Over a short time?

Greg Davidson: I was probably only doing it for a couple years.

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Greg Davidson: My dealings with him were either buying posters from him that he might have scrounged, or if he had bought a bunch of stuff for his friend, for me to go over and pick over and see what I could use or vice-versa. If I bought a stash of stuff, he'd come over and take a look and see what he needed.

Michael Erlewine: Right. Did you part on good terms whenever you moved away?

Greg Davidson: Yeah. Sure. I mean he came down and some material after I moved, down to LA.

Michael Erlewine: Oh okay, you went down there. I see. See all this is very interesting. I am trying to understand how the early collectors built their collections and related to one another.

Greg Davidson: Well, he got some material from me after he put together 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ set for his friend, I don't know what else...Wouldn't surprise me if, while he was putting together a set for somebody else, he kept the best for himself [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Most people might do that.

Greg Davidson: I don't think he had... He didn't have much money to do with stuff, or I don't think...he was on disability or something and making flutes for a living.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I've heard that, shakuhachi flutes.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Greg Davidson: Yeah. That can't be too lucrative.

More on Posters and Data

Greg Davidson: What I still might have... I'd have to find it, which is rare. I've got a couple of really rare things I kept.

Michael Erlewine: Well I would love to see if you had...

Greg Davidson: One's a little handbill for the Trips festival that Wes Wilson signed because he did it. There's no signature on it.

Michael Erlewine: I know that piece. I'd love to see images of any of that.

Greg Davidson: I'm not sure, but I hope I can still find it but a business card for the Charlatans which had the same artwork on it that the Seed poster did.

Michael Erlewine: I have a copy of the 'Seed' Poster, one of them.

Greg Davidson: I don't want to talk about it too much. I'd hate to find out how much they're worth now.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, yeah. I'm not an expert of prices either so.

Greg Davidson: The only posters I kept, because actually I think I ended up liking them more, but they turned out to be a worse investment were David Goines.

Michael Erlewine: Oh you have some of David Goines?

Greg Davidson: I've got a lot of them.

Michael Erlewine: Oh really, well isn't it a good investment?

Greg Davidson: I don't think so. I don't know.

Michael Erlewine: I mean I think he's very famous.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, I'm not sure his posters are bringing that much. I have the original artwork to one of his I kept that. I've got one piece of art by Wes Wilson, but it's not for a rock concert poster?

Michael Erlewine: Which one was it?

Greg Davidson: It was never used. He submitted it to ACT.

Michael Erlewine: Oh I love to get an image of it, a picture of it sometime just to put it in the database.

Greg Davidson: Last I heard he was moving to the Midwest.

Michael Erlewine: He's down in Missouri. I talk to him once in a while.

Greg Davidson: Well that's Midwest [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: [laughs] Oh, it's kind of lower Midwest...you have an interesting sense of geography, but, yeah, that is Midwest. But he's down there farming.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, and he was doing glass at the time or something.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, he's done different things. He did an image for this site that I'm putting together that's pretty interesting. Are you on the Internet. Yeah you have a site?

Greg Davidson: Well, the site is just under construction.

Greg Davidson: Did you say you're with somebody or are you doing this on your own?

Michael Erlewine: I'm an entrepreneur. I'm a database archivist of popular culture. I have done large sites on music and film, the All-Music Guide (allmusic.com) and the All-Movie Guide

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(allmovie.com). And now I am working on posters. I love posters right?

Greg Davidson: Fucking old hippies, I can't stand it.

Michael Erlewine: You must be somewhere in the same boat.

Greg Davidson: Yep [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: I mean I was a performer. I played at the Filmore.

Greg Davidson: Did you?

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, in 1967, opened for Cream.

Greg Davidson: What group?

Michael Erlewine: You never would have heard of us, called the Prime Movers Blues Band, it was from the Midwest, Iggy Pop was our drummer.

Greg Davidson: No, but I must have had posters for them. I didn't have all of them, but I must have had all the posters for the off-shows too.

Michael Erlewine: Oh really, god, I would have liked to seen all those.

Greg Davidson: Because they were really...because I remember they were on beige stock usually, but...for almost every date there was a poster. Eric King should have most of that stuff, because he got most...I mean I had, you know, probably 75 off-date posters. I mean off-numbered, un-numbered ones. I had some great stuff. I don't know if they still...there was...like the Wolfgang Grajonca poster, you know that one?

Michael Erlewine: Yeah. I do.

Greg Davidson: I don't know it's around the 100's or something, early 100's It's the same image that's on the Filmore poster and then this has got an 'A' or after it or something, and it's for a

birthday party for Wolfgang Grajonca in LA I believe.

Greg Davidson: Well that was Bill Graham's name.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, right. I had one run-in with him. It was awful.

Greg Davidson: Did you ever meet him?

Michael Erlewine: Sure. You know: a business guy.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, it was interesting, getting posters. The people that were into it, into posters for the music. I was just into it for the image.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, well, me too. I'm art oriented and you've seen, you probably have the Art of Rock book.

Greg Davidson: I might have.

Michael Erlewine: But you probably don't know theirs a second one about to come out this fall called the Art of Modern Rock. Paul Grushkin and Dennis King are doing it and that should be good.

Greg Davidson: King's not doing baseball cards anymore?

Michael Erlewine: He may still has a whole basement full of them actually, but, yeah I don't know what he is doing with them.

Greg Davidson: Oh I would have thought the Internet would have made that very easy.

Michael Erlewine: I went out and visited him. He knows a lot about posters at this point.

Greg Davidson: Well he should.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, he certainly should and he does.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Greg Davidson: You mentioned another name and I remember he called me down in LA a couple of times and he was always into handbills originally.

Michael Erlewine: Who's that?

Greg Davidson: Oh you mentioned, he's a collector and you mentioned his name.

Michael Erlewine: Paul Getchell?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, he's an attorney, or he was or something.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, he still is.

Greg Davidson: Yeah. I knew him when he was struggling through school.

Michael Erlewine: He bought stuff from you?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, but he didn't have any money then[laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Right. Well, he should now. He's a lawyer.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, but I don't have any stuff I want to sell.

Michael Erlewine: Right.

Greg Davidson: But I've still got a few things. I've got a silk screen for...the Matrix, that big one that's on cloth.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, I wonder what that is? You say it's a big one by Stanley Mouse?

Greg Davidson: It's a big Mouse one with the images of one... I thought that was interesting too. So many of these are lifted from different things.

Michael Erlewine: Oh well, totally, especially Mouse and Kelley. They went to the library.

Greg Davidson: Well, I mean, actually I grew up with the image in a book I had, but the Grateful Dead poster, Skull and Roses.

Michael Erlewine: Oh yeah, Omar Khayyam.

Greg Davidson: Was lifted from...

Michael Erlewine: Totally.

Greg Davidson: From my favorite poem...book it's an illustration of The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

Michael Erlewine: That's right, beautiful thing.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, that's one of the few-signed posters I kept.

Michael Erlewine: Let me see if I can figure out which poster you are talking about, I'm going to quick look in the database.

Greg Davidson: It's about five feet long and about a foot and a half wide.

Michael Erlewine: And you're sure it's a Matrix poster?

Greg Davidson: Oh no, that's one for the Western Front.

Michael Erlewine: Well then I know the one you mean. There is only one that size, a lobby card.



Western Front Lobby Card

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Greg Davidson: A man with big unruly hair?

Michael Erlewine: That's it. So you said you did have a Big Brother and the holding company?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, it's a split fountain on beige paper; it's a double-sized poster.

Michael Erlewine: And it's a Mouse?

Greg Davidson: Mouse-Kelley. Image of Janis Joplin.

Michael Erlewine: Okay I'm trying to look; let me see if I can quickly see it.

Greg Davidson: Oh you know it's funny. I must like Mouse more than I thought. The Cosmic Car Show; I always liked that one.

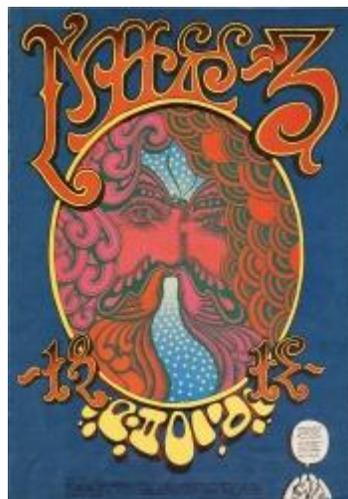
Michael Erlewine: Oh, that's a great poster. Yeah I don't think I have that poster.

Greg Davidson: That was never common. None of the ones I guess I put up were common. Well there is, there is one Bill Graham, Rick Griffin one... the Griffin-Moscoso poster for the Family Dog.

Michael Erlewine: I'm trying to remember.

Greg Davidson: The one's that got nonsense lettering on it.

Michael Erlewine: Oh yeah, that's a nice poster.



Family Dog FD-12

Greg Davidson: And I remember Rick saying, that we're laughing about how many people must have spent hours trying to figure out what it meant [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Right. Yeah I talked, interviewed his wife.

Greg Davidson: Actually there's a guy who was sort of his businessman guy. I wonder if he's still alive?

Michael Erlewine: Businessman?

Greg Davidson: Business manager for Rick Griffin. Was real big into orange crate labels and I can't remember his name. He was really the first person to start promoting him. This guy would have been down in Orange County.

Michael Erlewine: Oh okay.

Greg Davidson: I can't remember his name, but he wrote a few of the early yearbooks on orange crate labels.

Michael Erlewine: Interesting. It sounds like you were right there. I'll probably have some other questions to ask you at some point.

Greg Davidson: Well as long as business is slow, I've got plenty of time.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: How is business in antique lights; I know nothing about it.

Greg Davidson: Things in general haven't been great the last couple of years.

Michael Erlewine: That's true in general.

Greg Davidson: I have a house I like it. It's two and half acres on Bainbridge Isle. Lot better than living in Los Angeles.

Michael Erlewine: Is that where you are?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, so is the island connected by a bridge?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, it's a 35 minute ferry ride.

Michael Erlewine: No kidding. Wow, so that's isolated probably.

Greg Davidson: Well, it's the largest two-sided ferry in the world, big 220 cars and 2500 passengers. It's got Starbuck latte's on it, it's not exactly...

Michael Erlewine: Oh I see. How's the weather there, what is that like in the wintertime? Reasonable?

Greg Davidson: It's probably like San Francisco in the summer [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: So kind of cool.

Greg Davidson: I mean we haven't had any snow for a couple of years, Well, we did have a couple feet of snow one year, but in the last...but haven't touched any snow this year.

Michael Erlewine: So it's probably beautiful.

Greg Davidson: Oh, right now it's gorgeous.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah.

Greg Davidson: It rains a lot sometimes. A lot of times it will rain for a couple hours and then clear up.

Michael Erlewine: I'm just in the Midwest, where there's just like big sky, nothing particularly beautiful around other than its nice.

Greg Davidson: Well, San Francisco is beautiful.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, it is, totally. I just don't live there.

Greg Davidson: For some reason I thought you were calling from San Francisco.

Michael Erlewine: Like I tried to tell you I'm in the Midwest.

Greg Davidson: Where?

Michael Erlewine: In a little town called Big Rapids; it's in the middle of the mitten of Michigan.

Greg Davidson: Oh okay, I don't know it.

Michael Erlewine: No, no, you wouldn't. I guess I'm not unlike you that way. I'm just out there. I don't really need to be anywhere to do what I do.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, well.

Michael Erlewine: Its kind of nice just to... I don't like driving in the cities and stuff.

Greg Davidson: Your winters are a little bit harsher.

Michael Erlewine: Horrible. Yeah, no doubt.

Greg Davidson: I remember how long... I remember one year it was the end of May and it snowed or something, that was like way too late.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah that's way too late; it's doesn't happen much but it can

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

happen. Right now, we're just finally getting some decent temperature, it's 64 here today.

ANN ARBOR REMINISCENCES

Greg Davidson: Yeah, well I hate to think what Ann Arbor's like.

Michael Erlewine: It's more south than what I am.

Greg Davidson: No, I just mean in terms of the way it's grown in the last few years.

Michael Erlewine: Oh well I grew up there. Well yeah ,it's really busy now.

Greg Davidson: They were just putting in that shopping... they were tearing up ground for a big shopping center south of the town.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, but that's old stuff.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, that would date when I was there.

Michael Erlewine: What year were you there?

Greg Davidson: Well, I got my M.A. in 1973.

Michael Erlewine: 1973. I was there in town then. I moved in 1980. Yeah, a lot's happened. They've got a coffee shop on every... you know like a Starbuck every 10 feet.

Greg Davidson: Yeah my favorite place that I used to hang out and play pinball all the time, what was the name of that place?

Michael Erlewine: What part of town, on campus?

Greg Davidson: It was just off-campus.

Michael Erlewine: South U?

Greg Davidson: The part that was the main center, the main part of town.

Michael Erlewine: You mean State Street, near the State Theater, Michigan Theater?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, actually real close to there.

Michael Erlewine: I'm trying to think of what pinball. I'm not into pinball.

Greg Davidson: No, it was a coffee shop and just downstairs, they had pinball.

Michael Erlewine: Not Mark's?

Greg Davidson: Yes!

Michael Erlewine: Mark's Coffeeshouse. Gosh I was just looking at a poster that I did for Mark's two days ago.

Greg Davidson: I had my bicycle stolen from there.

Michael Erlewine: So you remember Mark's? My god.

Greg Davidson: Yeah. Spent a lot of time in there.

Michael Erlewine: Well me too. They used to have music in the basement.

Greg Davidson: I had a great place, I bet they have torn this down too. It was a wonderful. It was at the top of this three-story Victorian that was backed up on the cemetery on a dead-end street going down to the arboretum across from the dormitories. The backyard was the cemetery.

Michael Erlewine: Okay, well the arboretum is on Geddes, that's a road, but...

Greg Davidson: This went into the back way.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: So your saying the back way into the arboretum is down below the hospital.

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: So you were down there.

Greg Davidson: And the backyard of the house I was in was the old cemetery.

Michael Erlewine: Was the way into the arboretum right near your house, I mean the back way?

Greg Davidson: You just kept going down the street, you got into the arboretum.

Michael Erlewine: You know where the peony fields?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, exactly. They still got those Victorian's there?

Michael Erlewine: Let me think...I believe they are offices now, but still there.

Greg Davidson: No.

Michael Erlewine: But I'm not certain either, I can't promise you that, I think they have a couple, there was a path that went to the peony fields, there was a Victorian right there.

Greg Davidson: Well, I bet they kept one of them; there were about four of them there.

Michael Erlewine: But the path to the peony field wasn't right by your house, or was it?

Greg Davidson: Well you had to go down the street, like a half a block down or something.

Michael Erlewine: So you were near Markley Dorm?

Greg Davidson: Yeah, I think it was right across the street from there.

Michael Erlewine: You know I think they are still there. Now I know what your talking about, so what you're saying, no there's a parking lot up there and I think all the Victorian's are there. It's kind of a little cluster. I think they are still there.

Greg Davidson: Oh that's good.

Michael Erlewine: So you know Ann Arbor. So that's where I grew up.

Greg Davidson: I was there for two years.

Michael Erlewine: I was there forever.

Greg Davidson: Yeah [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: [laughs] Played music there, yeah that was where our band came from.

Greg Davidson: Then I went to Ann Arbor to grad school and I went to summer school during that time in Austin, Texas. I always thought Austin was...I liked Austin. I had a great time there. I thought it was kind of amusing how they thought they were the hip capital of the world.

Michael Erlewine: They do and in some ways they are one of them.

Greg Davidson: After having been to Berkeley and going to grad school in Ann Arbor, you sort of have to chuckle over that one [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: I've never been to Austin. How does it compare to Ann Arbor? I mean I love Ann Arbor and I lived a year in Berkeley in 1964.

Greg Davidson: Well it's hot and humid, but I think I prefer that to in terms of weather to Ann Arbor.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: I was in Berkeley in 1964 for the riots.

Greg Davidson: 1964?

Greg Davidson: Okay, well I was... I think I had flunked out just a couple of months before that.

Michael Erlewine: [laughs] Right.

Greg Davidson: When I was there the big political activity was...and this is Berkeley in a nutshell, the big political activity was a shop-in at the Lucky's Market as the corner of Haste and Telegraph...that later on became the one world commune or something, then a coffee shop and now it's probably a Burger King you know [laughs]?

Michael Erlewine: I used to live on Haste, just about a block and a half down from the Café Mediterranean on Telegraph.

Greg Davidson: Yeah. I lived across from one of those university parking lots, right next to a co-op.

Michael Erlewine: Well, the parking lot wasn't there when I was there, but...

Greg Davidson: There was a co-op and that probably wasn't there either.

Michael Erlewine: I know Berkeley and I know Ann Arbor well. I have never been to Austin, but I've studied the posters from there and there is quite an alternative community there, but you've actually been there.

Greg Davidson: There were some decent posters from here too, from Portland.

Michael Erlewine: Oh, you bet. Yeah, I have some.

Greg Davidson: Austin has some if I remember correctly. New York didn't have much.

Michael Erlewine: Right. Anyway, you've been around and what you've told me about this whole thing with Eric is I'm going to have to talk to him.

Greg Davidson: Say "Hi".

Michael Erlewine: I will, I will do that. What I'll do is send you an e-mail.

Greg Davidson: He must be getting a little long in the tooth. He was always an old man for me, now of course...

Michael Erlewine: How old are you?

Greg Davidson: What? I'm 57.

Michael Erlewine: Okay, well, he's 62. He and I are identical age; we're maybe a month apart.

Greg Davidson: Well when your 26...

Michael Erlewine: It can be different.

Greg Davidson: And he always looked old for his age anyway. [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: He's healthy. He has a funny sense of humor and very exacting about things. Probably was then too.

Greg Davidson: Yeah. I learned stuff from him; he learned stuff from me. He was not into posters at all when I started getting into it.

Michael Erlewine: What year did you start getting into them again?

Greg Davidson: I don't even remember.

Michael Erlewine: I wish we could remember.

Greg Davidson: Let's see...probably 1974 or 1975.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: But he says he started collecting when they were actually happening...

Greg Davidson: Well he did, but then he got rid of them all.

Michael Erlewine: Oh okay, I didn't know that. Wow. Anyway I certainly appreciate your taking the time to talk to me and you've told me stuff that has sent me running in 10 directions trying to figure it out, but you certainly have a place at the table for these archivists and I'm going to make certain that you get it.

Greg Davidson: Well Getchell will vouch for me. I think he remembers when I was out there.

Michael Erlewine: Yeah, so I will check on that.

Greg Davidson: And Eric's friend. He was always very nice. I'm just...and since he was probably the first patron of the collector [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: Right. Oh yeah.

Greg Davidson: Somebody that collected without going out and scrounging for them. He collected with a checkbook [laughs].

Michael Erlewine: No, he still is.

Greg Davidson: Yeah, well he would give you a different viewpoint, but that would definitely...last I heard he was in Oakland.

Michael Erlewine: He probably is; he's somewhere in that area I know. He and I collect some of the New Filmore's recent stuff, which is endless, endlessly going on. There's 900 pieces of it so far, if you can imagine that.

Greg Davidson: Interesting.

Michael Erlewine: Well good. It's really nice to meet you and I will let you know. I made notes here. I'll let you know, run some of these notes pass you at some point to make sure I'm not saying anything that is wrong. I do need to talk to Eric and just to find out a little bit more about how it all came together, because I'm writing an article about his.

Greg Davidson: Eric was like...I tried to...I don't know if I put the bug into him to get...I liked to have the artist sign it, where a lot of other people would actually rather the musicians sign the posters.

Michael Erlewine: I know.

Greg Davidson: Eric really was the one to take off and seriously go hunt up artist to get them to sign stuff.

Michael Erlewine: He really did; he's got a lot of them. He probably has more of that than anyone in the world, to my knowledge.

Greg Davidson: Yeah...I'm still not sure whether most of the collector's care about that.... wouldn't rather have the artists...the musician's signatures than the...

Michael Erlewine: Not anymore, it's the artist that is worth more than the musician's... Well, depends. The nostalgia people by definition are dying away and the art stuff is just coming on, because it doesn't have a death date. People that remember these people are going away, right?

Greg Davidson: Yeah.

Michael Erlewine: And so is the nostalgia part of it, which never can...

Greg Davidson: I would have thought that you know, Elvis Presley still brings a lot of money.

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

Michael Erlewine: Well that's true, the Grateful Dead is the main one.

Greg Davidson: See that's the one poster I really regret selling, that was part of the collection though.

Michael Erlewine: The one with...which one?

Greg Davidson: It was one just before. It was a benefit for the Mime Troupe...

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Greg Davidson: If Eric didn't keep this one, he's crazy.

Michael Erlewine: Oh no, I don't think Eric's ever parted with anything key.

Greg Davidson: What do you mean, he sold a bunch of stuff to his friend, so he had to part with a ton of stuff.

Michael Erlewine: Okay, maybe he did.

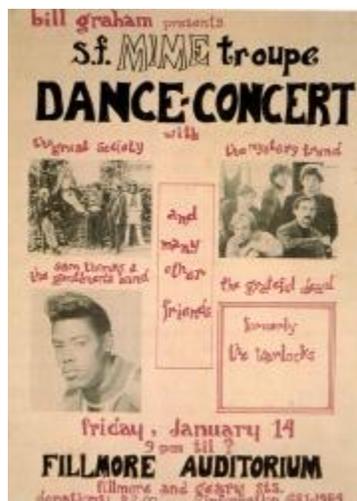
Greg Davidson: This...on the back somebody had done...painted a poster. On the other side was a benefit for the Mime Troupe and theoretically it was the one that Bill Graham got the idea to open the...

Michael Erlewine: So it was an early one?

Greg Davidson: To open the Fillmore.

Michael Erlewine: Was it the one with a little drum, a little tambourine?

Greg Davidson: No, it had four photographs. The first one is great society with Grace Slick in mini-skirt and a few other people, the fourth one, this is the real reason I wish I had kept it. It didn't have a photograph; it was all block lettering it was before the psychedelic stuff.



Mime Troupe Appeal

Michael Erlewine: Okay.

Greg Davidson: Where the photograph should have been it just said, "formerly the Warlocks".

Michael Erlewine: Oh yeah, I think I know which poster.

Greg Davidson: And above that it said the Grateful Dead.

Michael Erlewine: Wow, yeah, I know that poster.

Greg Davidson: There can't be too many, and I heard that after that, the benefit. Bill Graham picks up the money and it's in a couple of bags or something and the story was he spent all night walking around saying this could have all been mine.

Michael Erlewine: Oh really [laughs]. Oh wow...he got plenty would be my feel.

Greg Davidson: Then he opened his own.

Michael Erlewine: Well, which he kind of stole from Chet. Chet and his people were stupid enough to tell him about the Fillmore and he went underneath them and booked it, solid. Took it right out from underneath them and then gave

Classic Posters Interview with Poster Expert Greg Davidson by Michael Erlewine

them some dates, but then began to deny them dates. So, that is what he did. But, anyway, you've given me a bunch to chew on here. I'm going to go and try to sort it out. And I'm glad that we found you.

Greg Davidson: Well talk to Eric's friend. His friend is a real straight shooter.

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