

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Weird Scenes Inside the Goldmine

Rich Ferguson · Thursday, January 5th, 2017

Edited by writer David Kukoff, *Los Angeles in the 1970s: Weird Scenes Inside the Goldmine* is a collection of essays, stories, poems, and photos that recall Los Angeles in the 1970s—back during the days of the Hillside Strangler and the energy crisis. When the music industry was booming, and you could purchase a corner lot home in Venice for \$30,000. Family empowerment could be discovered through skateboarding, and The Doors were making the “L.A. Woman” a glittering, iconic, and enduring image for the ages.

It was a decade, as Kukoff states in his introduction, which represented “a tectonic, seemingly permanent shift in the country’s psyche.” Seventies LA roared in on the heels of the pot and patchouli-scented Summer of Love. Was a time filled with the burned out, but also those seeking bright beginnings. A new Wild West—the Z Channel screened movies like *A Clockwork Orange*, *Lisztomania* and *Rosemary’s Baby*. Cheap gasoline, car culture, and endlessly cruising Van Nuys Boulevard were the norm. Dr. Demento ruled the airwaves. Johnny Wadd’s cock held sway on the adult industry silver screen.

Weird Scenes digs down deep beyond the cultural stereotypes of seventies LA—the sleepy beach towns, cultural deserts, and Hollywood fluff—to explore a city in all its complexities. Writers, musicians, and poets such as Joe Donnelly, John Densmore, Bruce Ferber, and Susan Hayden, reveal a time when racial discrimination was challenged, yet the business end of a police officer’s baton also held sway. A child could go door-to-door borrowing sugar. LA was also the country’s largest manufacturing center: shipbuilding, aerospace, canneries. Union jobs with solid benefits. A “City of Workers” as LA’s poet laureate Luis J. Rodriguez tells us in his essay, “What Needed Screwing Got Screwed”. Those were the days when he faithfully donned safety glasses, a hard hat, work boots and a mechanic’s suit to make LA a sturdier, more well built city.

Eventually, seventies LA would end. The Doors would break up. In would roll the “greed is good” ethos of the Reagan eighties. Those \$150-a-month rents, two blocks from the beach in Santa Monica, would gradually rise into the millions. Yet there was that decade—those gritty and glorious years—so perfectly encapsulated in *Weird Scenes Inside the Goldmine*. Back when LA was a living, breathing B-movie playing at warp speed. A jasmine-scented, carbon monoxide-hazed sunshine-haloed dream factory. A city where anything and everything was possible. When everyone—from a teenager with braces to a tall skinny fellow named John Curtis Holmes—had a shot at redemption and reinvention.

This entry was posted on Thursday, January 5th, 2017 at 9:14 am and is filed under [Fiction](#), [Poetry](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.