

Ed Walker

SF Rock Posters



with Michael Erlewine

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Interview

by

Michael Erlewine

INTRODUCTION

This is not intended to be a finely produced book, but rather a readable document for those who are interested in this series on concert poster artists and graphic design.

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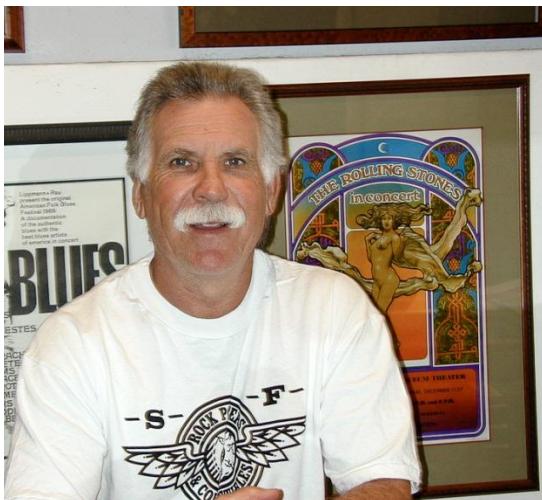
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Interview with Ed Walker of S.F. Rock Posters

By Michael Erlewine

E: Farm and my garden and my orchard I'm out there playing on my tractor and my loader and mullin' the weeds that's what I like doin'.

Michael: That's right.

E: I was born and raised on a farm that's all I learned how to do when I was a kid.

Michael: Well that's like a eh, my wife is a farm girl farmer.

Michael: let me set this over by you and we'll just talk for minuet. Ok ahh well, first of all what's your birthdate and year when were you born?

E: 5/25/45

Michael: And where?

E: I was born in Brush, Colorado.

Michael: and what was your given name?

E: Edward George Walker.

Michael: Cool, now, now what we want to know is a couple things, one would be and it can be in whatever order, I wonder how, how you got into this, we also want to know, how you were connected with the scene in the 60's and how did you intigrate to that, I mean what part of it did you see, or not see or how did you,

E: Well I

Michael: Same thing, how did you get here.

E: I got here I came from Colorado in 65 and lived in the bay area ever since, and ahh, started in the antique business in 73' started with furniture did that for 15 years did toys for a few years and in 89 I switched over to paper and posters and been in it ever since, and I just like collecting and I was, my like I said, cousin told me that these rock and roll posters are gonna be great and a good thing to do in the future, and I, went that direction, but I never got to be on the scene I moved here in 65 but I didn't really get into the scene until 1970 so I missed all the good ones I missed Janis, and Jimmy and all those, I missed um, I didn't get into the scene 'till after it's over.

Michael: And then so, so you came so if you could talk about ahh like what you like about the posters of what I mean sure recommend, it's an investment thing but, they're beautiful things.

E: They're beautiful yeah I, I, I mean I got into because of the, I like the art, I mean you know art is, it is a form of art that ahhh, came out of that erra that changed, changed this whole wold, it changed the whole united states then. In

the 60's and it's ahh, part of it is the posters and an bein' they're limited too, I mean you didn't print

Michael: hmm

E: Like baseball cards in thousands they you know they, small runs and ahh and it's had somethin' personal, you know everybody had to draw that, think about it whatever it's, it's art, and I, and I enjoy that to get, to get that part of it, I enjoy the art work of it.

Michael: And this stuff is ahh appreciating, right?

E: Oh definitely I've been you know it's, it hasn't ahh stopped rising as you know, I, I, I, it hasn't leveled off, still the, it's keeps getting better and better and ahh harder to find, it's the you know the

Michael: And more, would you say more and more people are interested in collecting this stuff?

E: Oh I got new people coming all the time, young people collecting old style I mean like

Michael: Really?

E: Oh yeah, and then people that were there at the time and now they've got a little money and they're into ye, you know the later year, man I'm gonna collect some of the stuff I had before then a few people really get into they see that, there is, it's not only investment but it's nice stuff, that you know a lot of people put investment and they go put it in a safety deposit box here you can buy your nice piece and enjoy it on the wall as it appreciates.

Michael: mm hmm and now, why what do young people see in the old stuff?

E: Well, the young people I mean the ones that are into music, music nowadays is pretty hard to create new music when you know the

Michael: It was all done.

E: It was done, and now they're just fine tuning it or distorting it, and ahh and it's not like a personal thing for the artist, in them days they ahh put it together and it's, but the new people that realize that they, the, that, the art of the music then they're collecting that because they were the founders the the early people you know?

Micahel: Now you carry the new, the new poster stuff?

E: Oh yeah, I carry all the

Michael: The blah bulls eye contiets and those, well that's not even new but

E: It's, it's new ah, but ah it's new and it's, I carry it because the people are colle, you know the people that like the new bands or whatever, they're collecting it now and then, down the road I'm sure that they'll keep collecting more, and all the new stuff now, even though it's new it's still collectable it's numbered a lot of it's numbered and then they got artists doin' it to, and it is good work, even though a lot of it's computer generated, it's still nice art.

Michael: Yeah, what about all the punk stuff? All the hand bills, and the gooly gardeb, gooly gardens and the kennal club, do c, carry any of that?

E: yeah I carry

Michael: Does that sell or is there?

E: It, it well, a few people it's not as, as popular as the common, you know the every day stuff, but there is people collecting everything I got customers for.

Michael: Do you think it will grow in the future?

E: Oh definitely

Michael: Because that's the way it looks in,

E: Right

Michael: And whether it's colorfull or not, that's

E: Yeah a lot of the Punk stuff was black and white or whatever but they, still it was so lividly produced that it is, it is good stuff and it will be popular, it's popular now because there's not a lot of it, you know I mean it.

Michael: Yeah but you guys don't ahm, you don't issue posters.

E: No.

Michael: you don't have

E: I don't reproduce, I, I, I produced two posters since I've been here, but I've never reproduced a poster, ahh we, you know, everything we just get off the street. And everything's authentic, I mean we, we try to strictly stay to the real stuff, I don't deal seconds and thirds or reproduction I don't advertise them even though I do carry some for the people that can't afford the \$1000 poster they can buy \$150 leaf print, or second printing.

Michael: Right!

E: Even though it was, they call it a reprint still done at the time, but you know it's all documented and whatever so, I

do carry some, but I like to deal the original rare stuff, that's that's what we strive here.

Michael: And you do handle some original art, I saw some out there today.

E: Yes, original art is ah, like I say one of a kind, things most of that is only done one time of the original art and that's kind of like what I stress I like to have the rare stuff and the original artists.

Michael: mm hmm

E: And getting, getting in demand too, a lot of people, well I got the poster, and maybe if I could find the original art I'll buy you know.

Michael: And your customers aren't just San Francisco people

E: No I deal with everybody all over the world.

Michael: Really.

E: B and I have a, my web site idea with people from all over the world, Ahh I get well you wanna deal with people all over the world want to trade, and what you know the web site has helped me tremendous in getting out to the world, and there is people all over the world collecting this stuff.

Michael: And when were you founded when did this start?

E: I started in ah 91, I started down on, at the Cannery, at the down on Fisherman's Warf at the Cannery I started and opened up a gallery there with a partner and I had ah Rick Griffin as a partner.

Michael: Really

E: And Rick Griffin had ah, we put 95 pieces of original art work on the wall and unfortunately Rick died three months after we opened up on the 1st of June Rick had his fatal accident on the 15th of August. And so it kind of drove me into a spin, I lost Rick he was my partner at the time and he was gonna do some art work for us at the gallery and do a few things for us and he ended up gone and kind of put us in a spin and then I broke away from my partner and I moved in this location and I've been in the same spot since 92.

Michael: Well what would you say just I'm sure some people would be curious, what are some of like the rarest posters now, without being, what are some of the most in demand rare posters. What are people if you really wanted a rare one without at the level they are of course only you might know of one.

E: Right

Michael: What are the most common really rare ones that people ask for.

E: All, a lot of people ask, or are trying to get the early family dogs and the early Bill Grahams. The, which is early like the first 20. Are, hard to get and people are, you know the early stuff that's in demand. Ahm Jimmy Hendrix stuff is always the best, hardest, hardest to ke.

Michael: more than greatful dead?

E: More

Michael: Oh reall!

E: I mean Hendrix stuff is,

Michael: Ah hah

E: is more in demand I think I mean Greatful Dead there's a lot of dead fans but Jimmy's still somethin' special it's ah, it's the hardest to find in ah probly the easiest to sell because it is in demand but ah all the stuff that they have people that have died, the Jim Morrison the Janis stuff any of that stuff that's really obscure, is really in demand collectable because well they are the one's that are gone and ah, and then you're ah acid test stuff which was done early, that is in real demand because it was printed so, not so much of it was printed you know and that was the start of it all that Ken Keezy and his acid test that was just. So that is in great demand and then ah, in the last two or three years Sonny Barger's got popular with his book of the Hells Angels and since that the hells angels stuff is really becoming rare and that stuff is getting impossible to find, I mean it's hard to find and it is easy to sell.

Michael: Hmm

E: It's goes right out, and it ah, you know it's one of those things. They put on a few shows and ah they were part of the scene at the time, the hells angels they helped them out and all that. The angels were part of it and ah that stuff is really ah hard to get ahold of and it sells real well and it's rare.

Michael: Is stuff still being, turn, turning up I mean is it still coming up?

E: Oh yeah I got stuff comes through my door just daily but ah it keeps turning up, especially with the internet people are aware and ah la, I get offered stuff off of the internet all the tiem plus I've been at the same location for 9 years and ah people know I'm here and ah I treat them fairly and I get a lot of stuff comes through the door.

Michael: And sure, if someone was a first time collector, and they don't even know where to start, they just kind of like the idea of collecting posters then you know creating an investment of some kind, where would you recommend they start. What are your first

E: Well if, if somebodies new I we got a kind steps we take them through and try to get what they're what they know of the past or what, you know kind of what their feelings are, and then start them off, find out you know, what you like and then tell them what's available and the variety available because there's tickets handbills, postcards, posters, banners, bumper stickers, buttons, you know there's so much of it that was produced that I mean a lot of the variety then you get an idea of what they're interested in and, and I usually step through people asking them what, what do you think your budget is and, and then try to fit them into something where they, they're happy and to get umm collecting you know for the future to see what they are interested in and ahh try to fit their budget and an to tell them that it, it, it's something to enjoy that's also a good investment.

Michael: And another question is umm, you had talked to me when we were out I think doing something. Just about let me just work with being here and I'll edit myself out is ahh yeah just how you feel about customers and treating customers and stuff, stuff like that I mean, what's your philosophy, or the collectable business.

E: Well I, I like, the collectable business is ahh it's not like ahh, a business you can call up on the phone or order off of a catalogue and restock your inventory so you gotta buy it off the street or from collectors or collections or whatever and so when I, to get the stuff... I lost track of what I, what were you asking me again?

Michael: I was asking ahh your philosophy or terms, in order to have happy customers or, and you know that, that one.

E: Oh

Michael: And I thought you'd say

E: Yeah I, to make the customer happy I've I've always tried to be honest in this business, that's what I was trying to say the collectable business is, it's ahh easy to not be honest because you have the knowledge and a lot of your customers don't so, but I've always been true to people and tried to treat them right by being honest because I want them to come back. And when they buy something I want to make them happy, and if they're happy and I've made a sale I'm happy so that's what I call good business, when both people are happy and they got what they wanted and I got what I wanted and we, we got a deal, and they come back and I try to treat people fairly so ahh in my philosophy like I said I'm gonna pay a little more for the people who walk through the door, and charge a little less, and it's worked out great for me.

Michael: That's a pretty good philosophy. Ahh are there things that you can think of that you'd like to tell me about that I might not think to ask, or might just be good for people to know about you, or maybe nothing in particular but if there's anything that as I'm talking you say gee I outta tell about this, is there anything that you just want to volunteer?

E: No, other than like I say my, the philosophy that I had is to pay a little more and charge a little less and just to be honest with people to let them know that ah, I'm hear to serve you not here to take your money and not be ah, and you know make the gurentee that whatever I sell is gurenteed as what I sell it. It's a first whatever and I'd back it 100% and ahh a lot of my deals are done on a hand

shake and a lot of that isn't done nowadays everybody you know an' and that it's more of your word, that's the, a man of your word is more important to me than your money or whatever. You know and, and that has really worked good for me over the years.

Michael: And what I found out what little I know about the poster business is the "word" is important in this case.

E: Right

Michael: You can't, you can't, you gotta have it, it has to be good right.

E: Right and ahh, and I just have the philosophy you, you tell people the truth if the posters got four tack holes in it you don't tell them that it doesn't have any tack holes, cause when he gets it it's gonna have four tack holes so you might as well be honest.

Michael: Right

E: And tell em the way it is, because the common person is not dumb he can see you know.

Michael: I love it, I think that when I write this I think I will put in bold this statement of yours I think is so great. That we pay more we sell for less I mean that's a wonderful philosophy.

E: yeah and it's working.

Michael: We pay you a little more we sell for a little less right?

E: An, an, an, an, and it's worked for me because I've, I've been successful and everybody is happy with what we've done because we've treated people fairly you know? And

that ahh, that's part of it, like I say success in business is not always dollars and cents, you know?

Michael: Right,

E: I, I, I've been in this business in the same location for 9 years I've only, ahh never had to hire a lawer and I've only had three bad insidence with UPS where I've lost stuff or whatever and get this in in 9 years I've only had 3 bad incidences. So you know.

Michael: I think that's pretty good.

E: Yeah that's, I, I, I feel I respect in that as, as a business part I feel is important to people. And I, I we haven't created no hassles you know haven't misrepresented ourselves, you know.

Michael: And you, you ship carefully, what you, some things go flat some things go tubes

E: Right I ship any way the people want it shipped. How would you like it shipped I'll do whatever you, you ask me. And if you'd let me do it I ship 3rd day air UPS or the US mail or whatever everything's insured gurenteed we've never had a bit of a problem.

Michael: Well cool I think this gives me some material to work on, I think we did good.

E: Right

Michael: Ahh I just a personal question what are these? This looks like a Bob Freid.

E: That's my coffee, that's my coffee cups that I, I, I, I, I, know I've got a

