

The Trips Festival 23



Stewart Brand
The Whole Earth Man

In January 1966, Jerry Mander, an associate of ad man Howard Gossage, held a meeting at his office in North Beach; it was a cosmic clutch—Jerry, Stewart Brand, Ramon Sendor and Ben Jacopetti. They had come together to discuss a program of fun

and games soon to be unleashed on the general public. Until that meeting, the so-called underground action had been a few “benefits” and “Acid Tests” with limited gates. The audience had been made up of friends, friends of friends, and a few deserving worthies from U.C. Berkeley and S.F. State.

Kesey was at the head of a circus. A literary cult star, his first novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, made Kesey a personality for the press to follow. Ken's bohemian behavior was observed and recorded with growing interest. More so than some of the other craziness that was going on around town, Kesey's cannabis arrests had also made front page news.

One morning in the fall of '65, prankster Mike Keegan, in the merry band of Kesey's circus makers, was at the door of Stewart Brand's North Beach apartment on Vallejo Street. Keegan had dropped in to tell Stewart about a Stinson Beach “Acid Test.” One of a series of events that the “Captain,” Ken Kesey, had been holding around the Bay area. This latest event had not come off too well, said Keegan. It wasn't “together.” Events should be indoors for better control, he told Stewart. The decibel range was important. But people were responding in some far out ways. Stewart Brand could relate to that. Stewart was a photographer and a visionary. He could see the new wave coming. That got Stewart to cogitating and considering.

The time had arrived for consolidation, to stop and develop the new planes of consciousness that were emerging around the Bay area. There were a lot of people making some interesting discoveries, but the domains of these energies were widely

separated. No one really knew how many people “out there” wanted to be turned on, but things were changing. The success of Bill Graham's Appeal I and Appeal II had helped prove that. Kesey's “Acid Tests” were getting revered whispers; so had Chet Helms' 1090 jam sessions and his California Hall dance; Bill Ham's Pine Street “lights” had been noted, and several local rock groups were gaining in popularity. A new day was dawning.

There was a need to celebrate the new feelings, the higher consciousness that people were trying to express. The time had come to commemorate all the good trips with a “Trips Festival.”

The meeting at Jerry Mander's office was called by Stewart Brand. Stewart had been amazed at the amount of work he could accomplish just by picking up the telephone. He had talked with Kesey and others about joining together for a big public event. Mander would help with the promotion. There was no real model for the program that Stewart had in mind. There were no agents or promoters or places that could work within the framework of the programs that he wanted. It was an all-new form of show biz.

