

cal and organ brilliance, Diane's straight ahead rock-and-roll drumming with a little country mixed in, Mary Ellen's blues and folk guitar styles, bassist Mary Gannon's Irish music and musical theater, and my own folk/rock/R&B guitar and harmonica roots.

As Patrick the Lama describes Ace of Cups music: "A tough folk rock/R&B blend with the eclectic flavor we've come to associate with the region."

In January of 1967 when The Ace of Cups met, I was emerging from a year spent traveling as one of the Merry Pranksters on the bus with Ken Kesey and Wavy Gravy. As part of that groundbreaking (and wall- and ceiling-breaking) exploration of cosmic connectivity, we staged events called Acid Tests to create a psychedelic experience where people could fluidify reality with or without electric kool aid. The Pranksters were all about dissolving the notion of the distinctions between audience and performer – between you and me. We created light shows with liquid projections, strobes and images, set up elaborate reverberating sound systems and made outrageous, Day-Glo costumes. The Grateful Dead generated and reflected the magic through their music while Neal Cassady, Wavy Gravy, Ken Kesey, Babbs, Mountain Girl and the rest of us played in the one mind flow as the illusion of separation dissolved.

At some point, I realized that being dependent on little pills to access luminous energy just didn't work any more. After evaporating into the mush many times, it became clear to me that I needed to learn how to merge into the mystery without chemical assistance. That was the beginning of my yoga practice, of giving up meat, of starting to meditate and of finding some wise teachers. As Wavy used to say, "When you discover the Management you don't want to work for anything else."

By the time the Ace of Cups formed we had all stopped taking psychedelics and were focusing our energies into the music. The Ace of Cups' first manager was the legendary Ambrose Hollingsworth who also managed Quicksilver Messenger Service. When I met him he was in Mt. Zion Hospital recovering from a car accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. He was a brilliant astrologer, mountain man and mystic. He suggested our name based on the Ace of Cups card in the tarot – the image is an extended divine hand holding a chalice with five streams of water flowing into the world. Ambrose, a Capricorn who actually looked like Pan minus the horns, helped us keep focused on our connection with the mystery. Before every performance, we held hands in a circle and prayed that our music

### *"Yellow Petalled Flower"*

*And the yellow petalled flower that's  
reaching for the light  
Does not have to decide the way that it will grow  
And it doesn't have to know it will  
survive the winter snow  
To be a flower now  
and it never was told how  
It only lives to quiver with caresses of the air  
It's not going anywhere.  
And the whispers of the breeze nestle deep  
within its leaves  
No division of the earth  
double image dying birth  
and the honey liquid flows  
and the light is all it knows.*

### *"Taste of One"*

*You say you have no love to spare.  
I tell you love is like the air.  
Why must you keep your love so rare when it  
surrounds you everywhere?  
There is no choice you have to make,  
there is no love you must forsake.  
A birth in every breath you take, only to  
know your love's awake.  
And if your mind is not at war,  
you'll hear a whisper at your door.  
You won't be asking what it's for  
The more you love, I love you more.  
And so you have no need to run.  
A touch of honey on your tongue  
To say your joy has just begun.  
How very sweet the taste of One.*

would be a love offering to the world. Then we went out and kicked butt.

What was so amazing in '66 and '67 was the radical shift in consciousness. There were "Holy Man Jams" where Yogi Bhaijan, Pir Vilayet Inayet Han, Swami Satchidananda, Alan Watts, Timothy Leary and Schlomo Carlebach were all on stage together sharing their teachings. It felt as though a wave of creative energy was nourishing us all. The Bay Area community was a circular force – people came to the ballrooms and clubs to enjoy and support the bands and the bands played benefit gigs to support the needs of the commu-

nity. We always thought the best music happened at the benefits. Kesey said "Put your good where it will do the most." The Diggers were feeding people in the park, the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic was providing health services and we were learning to take care of each other so that no one fell through the cracks.

The times I loved most with the Ace of Cups were when we sang together into the night, voices blending, adding harmonies, letting the silence hang 'til someone started a new melodic direction. Our children

learned to snuggle up in the circle and fall asleep to voices in harmony. Now they have children of their own and a new generation of jammers is on the rise. We need to create new circles for them. Wavy says "I have nostalgia for the future."

One of the things I feel has changed since the '60s is that too many people have become consumers of music rather than music makers. As humans beings, it's essential to our nature to move, to dance, to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord," to sing from our hearts and souls. Medical evidence shows that we're healthier and our immune systems are stronger when we sing together. Besides, singing is a completely environmentally friendly activity and might even juice our houseplants. Personally, I love when people linger at the end of a party until the energy settles, pull out some instruments and start singing. That's

when the magic happens. Those who hang in taste the nectar.

LAYOGA

*The Ace of Cups is featured in the new Rhino Records box set: Love is the Song We Sing as well as on their own CD on Big Beat, It's Bad for You But Buy It. [Theaceofcups.com](http://Theaceofcups.com)*

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*Song lyrics by Denise Kaufman for the Ace of Cups.*