



# Weird Scenes Inside the Canyon: Laurel Canyon, Covert Ops & the Dark Heart of the Hippie Dream

By David McGowan

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## Weird Scenes Inside the Canyon: Laurel Canyon, Covert Ops & the Dark Heart of the Hippie Dream By David McGowan

Laurel Canyon in the 1960s and early 1970s was a magical place where a dizzying array of musical artists congregated to create much of the music that provided the soundtrack to those turbulent times. Members of bands like the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield, the Monkees, the Beach Boys, the Mamas and the Papas, the Turtles, the Eagles, the Flying Burrito Brothers, Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, Steppenwolf, Captain Beefheart, CSN, Three Dog Night, Alice Cooper, the Doors, and Love with Arthur Lee, along with such singer-songwriters as Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins, James Taylor, Carole King, Jackson Browne, Judi Sill and David Blue, lived together and jammed together in the bucolic community nestled in the Hollywood Hills.

But there was a dark side to that scene as well.

Many didn't make it out alive, and many of those deaths remain shrouded in mystery to this day. Far more integrated into the scene than most would care to admit was a guy by the name of Charles Manson, along with his murderous entourage. Also floating about the periphery were various political operatives, up-and-coming politicians, and intelligence personnel - the same sort of people who just happened to give birth to many of the rock stars populating the canyon. And all of the canyon's colorful characters - rock stars, hippies, murderers, and politicos - happily coexisted alongside a covert military installation.

Weird Scenes Inside the Canyon is the very strange, but nevertheless true story of the dark underbelly of a hippie utopia.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"David McGowan is among the smartest and funniest researcher/writers in our intrepid Alternative Media." -  
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#### About the Author

David McGowan was born and raised in Torrance, California, just twenty miles south of Laurel Canyon. He graduated from UCLA with a degree in psychology and has, since 1990, run a small business in the greater Los Angeles area. Currently single, he is the proud father of three daughters. He is also a lifelong music fan who still frequently keeps his radio tuned to classic rock stations. McGowan's previous books include *Programmed to Kill: The Politics of Serial Murder*, and *Understanding the F-Word: American Fascism and the Politics of Illusion*. Still at home in LA, he can be reached at [davemcgowan@roadrunner.com](mailto:davemcgowan@roadrunner.com)

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#### ALTAMONT PIE: GRAM PARSONS

"No one could recall ever seeing or hearing about Gram being involved in a protest of any sort." Author Ben Fong Torres, who interviewed scores of people close to Gram Parsons while researching *Hickory Wind*

Let's begin with the obvious: Gram Parsons was far from being the biggest star to emerge from the Laurel Canyon scene. In his short lifetime, he failed to achieve any significant level of commercial success. None of his albums, whether recorded solo or with the International Submarine Band, the Byrds, or the Flying Burrito Brothers, climbed very high on the sales charts. But to many fans and musicians alike, he is considered a hugely influential and tragically overlooked figure.

It is safe to say that Parsons does not have nearly the number of fans that David Crosby or Frank Zappa have, and compared to contemporaries who died during the same era and at roughly the same age-legendary artists like Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix-Parsons is all but unknown. His life story, nevertheless, is a fascinating one, primarily because it contains all the classic Laurel Canyon elements: the royal bloodlines, the not-so-well-hidden intelligence connections, the occult overtones, the extravagantly wealthy family background, an incinerated house or two, and, of course, a whole lot of curious deaths.

We begin back about 1,000 years ago, with Ferdinand the Great, the first King of Castille on the Iberian Peninsula. It is to him that the wealthy Connor family claims their family lineage can be traced. Also in the family tree was King Edward II of England, son of Edward I and Eleanor of Castille. According to some sources, Eddie II was murdered by having a red-hot iron rod shoved up his rectum, though most of his loyal subjects probably didn't shed many tears for the hated ruler. Bringing the royal bloodline to America was one Colonel George Reade, born in the UK in 1608 and married in Yorktown, Pennsylvania, sometime thereafter.

Reade's offspring would ultimately spawn Ingram Cecil Connor, Jr., a well-to-do gent who settled in Columbia, Tennessee. Like his father before him, Cecil attended Columbia Military Academy. In May 1940, at the outset of WWII, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force as a Second Lieutenant. In March of 1941, Cecil, who during the war would become known as "Coon Dog" (though no one seems to remember why), was shipped off to Hawaii. Nine months later, Pearl Harbor came under attack by Japanese bombers.

Not to

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