

New Album previews here:

<https://soundcloud.com/the-mermen/sets/the-magic-swirling-ship-previews-formerly-fish-out-of-water>

<https://soundcloud.com/the-mermen/sets/previews-of-we-could-see-it-in-the-distance>

THE MERMEN

mermen@earthlink.net

<http://www.mermen.net/>

<https://www.facebook.com/themermen/>

415-971-7383

**Jim Thomas-Guitar
Martyn Jones-Drums
Jennifer Burnes-Bass**

The Mermen are an American rock band from San Francisco, California that formed in 1989. The group's sound was originally rooted in instrumental surf and psychedelic music of the 1960s. Although their music delves into many genres, the sound is non-commercial and is mainly influenced by the band's founder, songwriter and guitarist Jim Thomas' modern melodic visions. The band's music is entirely instrumental and "does a good job of defying description", not fitting neatly into any musical genre. In concert, the Mermen always perform as a trio: electric guitar, electric bass, and drums. (Jennifer Burnes on bass, Martyn Jones on drums) Their music is rooted in the kind of reverb "surf" music sound made by Duane Eddy, the Ventures, Dick Dale and Link Wray, and Jack Nietszbe. (i.e. The Lonely Surfer). Their sound is often described as distinctly of the American West (especially the West Coast) - This is an American sound, (think Aaron Copland and bluegrass (Jim played in the bluegrass flatpicking championships in Winfield, Kansas in 1977), a sound influenced by native american, cowboy and trans pacific sounds. One writer called the Mermen's sonic signature as "the sound of California". During live shows Mermen songs often morph into lengthy improvised variations on a theme ala the Grateful Dead with new pieces of music created on the spot. The Mermen have received an extraordinary amount of positive critical review from music press - where the songs are described as "instrumental tone poems," "sonic landscapes", "wordless odes". With well over 100 original compositions to their name, the Mermen have an expansive repertoire spanning many moods - Words used to describe Mermen music: "tribal," "melodic," "etereal," "soulful," "earthy," "poetic," "dreamy," "oceanic," "dramatic," "beautiful," "hypnotic", "beavy", "muscular," "deep," "emotional," "symphonic," "spiritual", and "mystical." The Mermen have toured extensively in the USA, headlining venues such the Fillmore in San Francisco and the Continental club in Austin, Texas. They have performed with artists as varied as David Byrne, Jimmy Buffet, Tiny Tim, The Cramps, Todd Rundgren, David Lindley, The Dirty Three, Morphine, Junior Brown, Nancy Sinatra, Lee Hazelwood, String Cheese Incident, Midnight Oil, Pennywise, Rancid, Agent Orange, Social Distortion, Cake, Dick Dale, The Ventures, etc etc. The Mermen have released 12 albums and have received numerous awards for their work. The music has appeared in dramatic films, plays, commercials, documentaries, surf films, television shows, and on radio. They have performed at the Burning Man Festival 10 years in a row. The Mermen have performed most years at the big wave surfing competition at Mavericks, in Half Moon Bay, California. Jeff Clark, famed local Mavericks big wave surfer called the Mermen - "the official band of Maverick's". Grant Washburn, big wave surfer currently working on a film about big wave surfing legend GREG NOLL (in production -release slated for late 2018) had this to say about The Mermen.

"Jim Thomas and his fantastic Mer-people have inspired me from the moment I heard them. They have the rare ability to create music that conjures the kind of adrenaline we find in giant Maverick's surf. Greg Noll is the ultimate extreme surfer, and this historic film demanded serious music. When I'm looking for Big-Wave sound, I come straight to Jim. Powerful, beavy, elegant; this stuff makes me want to charge! It fits Greg's legendary footage like a glove, and I couldn't be more stoked with the magic combination that has been created. Simply epic."

-Grant Washburn/ big wave surfer/filmmaker

The best Rock and Roll is poetry in motion, with or without words - and some of the best records of came without. The Mermen play an extreme brand of surf music, the black minor-chord moods of guitarist Jim Thomas are like a rough ride on the icy seas of the mid- Atlantic. Hints of Dick Dale filter through the cracked-sidewalk wave forms of Sonic Youth. But on long hauls like the nine minute "Obsession for Men" Thomas sounds more like Neil Young at the wheel of Crazy Horse.

David Fricke, ROLLING STONE

"I'm strolling across an artichoke field on the ocean side of Highway 1 at Four Mile Beach, just north of Santa Cruz. The day is awash in late afternoon sunshine, and as fresh as only April days can be. Behind me, the hills near Bonny Doon are screaming yellow with wild mustard flower. I arrive at a vista spot 40 feet or so above the beach. I gaze out at the silver Pacific, the diffused sun making a trail of diamonds on the water's surface to the horizon. The view is intoxicating. Then I put in my ear buds, and soon I feel something akin to flying. The song "Unto the Resplendent" opens with a pillowy build-up that suggests a gradual dawning of light. It then comes to one simple, majestic, tremolo guitar line that quickly sweeps me out of my body to some elevated vantage point above the ocean, above my life, above history. In that hypnotic melody, I'm feeling a sense of momentous arrival after a journey, of the thousand trails and mountain passages across the continent behind me, of Walt Whitman's "public road," of the migratory impulse that explains the American story. It's the bliss of being alive, sure. But it's also the communion of standing where nameless others have stood before me, the triumph of meeting the end of a long road, the wonder of being small and facing the immensity of natural forces. This is the music of the Mermen. This is peak California."

WALLACE BAINE, GOOD TIMES SANTA CRUZ

Jim Thomas builds crashing waves of sound that would do Pink Floyd proud. Thomas' unique vision has never sounded better than this.... sterling set of tone poems that swell up like the sea itself...the psychedelia dominates....Far from the calculating, cultivated rock so common these days. The Mermen's Road Show album is a tour de force by and inspired musician following his own vision"

Joel Selvin, San Francisco Chronicle

"...Heavier than surf, its got punch--Jimmy Page punch. And Jimi Hendrix punch. And lots of it...The Mermen, and particularly guitarist

Jim Thomas, have morphed surf music into a new age. Thomas will be a reluctant guitar hero, but he will be one nonetheless, and there's a lot of his fluid, water-like ebb-and-flow guitar to absorb in the 74 minutes that make up A Glorious Lethal Euphoria. Catch Thomas' wave now, because he's doing it first and, so far, best.....

A cult surf band? San Francisco's MERMEN are neither label conscious nor road warriors, which makes their regular beachings at the Continental Club a Statue of Liberty buried in the sand. Jim Thomas, self taught guitar savant and body suited Blue Crush titan, doesn't give a flying anchovy about the music industry, he just wants to pull you under the white water of his Sonic Youth tidal wave. Melodies like "The Goodbye" and "Merry Go Round" will wreck your vessel on the reefs of their beauty. All hail Neptune."

Raul Hernandez - THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

"...ferocious and haunting instrumentals of an almost orchestral density. Whether roaring through lethal little string-benders such as 'Pulpin Line' and the punkish 'Drub' or riding the mesmerizing waves of feedback and melody on...epics such as 'Obsession for Men' and 'Between I and Thou,' the Mermen never collapse into surfkitsch or fall back on the genres beloved but overfamiliar cliches...'The Drowning Man Knows His God'...mutates into a complex descending riff of barely restrained dread and finally wipes out in a squall of doomy guitar noise...The burbling underwater atmospherics...and the shimmering riffs...disguise intricate arrangements, and the muted arpeggios and grandiose leanings are a long way from Wipe Out...."

--David Dudley, NEWTIMES(review of Glorious Lethal Euphoria)

THE NEW ALBUM: "THE MAGIC SWIRLING SHIP"

**"Take me on a trip upon your
magic swirling ship.....**

**Out to the windy beach
Far from the twisted reach
Of crazy sorrow
Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky
With one hand waving free
Silhouetted by the sea
Circled by the circus sands
With all memory and fate
Driven deep beneath the waves
Let me forget about today
Until tomorrow"**

BOB DYLAN - 'Mr. Tambourine Man'

Since The Mermen are an instrumental band, you would think that guitarist/composer Jim Thomas' favorite artist would be a guitarist. Not so. Jim's number one has always been Bob Dylan. In addition to just loving all of Dylan's work, Jim says Bob Dylan's stage presence, for one remarkable minute at a performance in San Francisco, was the most powerful live-performance minute of all the shows he has ever been to in his life. Jim's favorite song of all time is 'Mr. Tambourine Man'. The song speaks to him about the trials and tribulations and the "sweet Mystery of life". 'Mr. Tambourine Man' is the closest he can get to an anthem for his life.

The album, 'THE MAGIC SWIRLING SHIP' began with Mavericks big wave surfer/film maker, Grant Washburn, asking Jim to put together some music for a film he was working on with big wave surfing legend, "DA BULL", Greg Noll. Besides his time spent as big wave surfer, Noll was also making surf films in the 60's alongside filmmakers like Bruce Brown, Bud Browne, and John Severson. Grant said that they dug out old film stock from Noll's archive, took it to Los Angeles and converted it to digital video. The film is in the works right now.

Jim's discussion with Grant happened only a couple of days before the latest MERMEN album release, 'WE COULD SEE IT IN THE DISTANCE'. Grant said he needed music right away, so Jim wrote a handful of new songs with Grant's film in mind, and recorded the songs in his studio over a couple of days. During that time, THE MERMEN recorded 5 brand new songs: 'THE SEARCHER MUST RIDE', 'FROM THE SHORES OF DREAMS', 'OVER THE WAVES ON THE MAGIC SWIRLING SHIP', 'TO A NEW WORLD', and 'ALMEJAS EN ME MOCHILA'.

During the recording, Jennifer suggested recording some her favorite MERMEN songs; 'DRIVIN THE COW', 'DRAGONFLY', 'THE WHALES', and 'LE JIZZ HOTT'.

We decided to add a live, new version of the song 'ISLANDS' which was written for the NOAA (National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration/National Marine Sanctuaries) film about the Farallones Islands, 'SANCTUARY IN THE SEA' by acclaimed filmmaker, Robert Talbot. The last song added, 'THERE IS A TEAR', was a track-recorded with MERMEN founding member and bassist, Allen Whitman, and drummer, Vince Littleton. Daniel Guaqueta plays drums on 'THE SEARCHER MUST RIDE', 'FROM THE SHORES OF DREAMS (Reprise)' and 'ALMEJAS EN ME MOCHILA (clams in my bag)', the latter named by Daniel. Daniel has Columbian roots and is at home with the Latin beats. We met Daniel in Hattiesburg, Mississippi when we toured through the South US. Daniel has since moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and developed a passion for surfing. Mermen founding member and drummer, Martyn Jones, plays on all other tracks.

NOTE ABOUT THE COVER ART- THE MAGIC SWIRLING SHIP:

The cover photo is of Jim Thomas surfing Ortleigh Beach, New Jersey, summer, circa 1983, early morning. The back cover is "Fishing Boats at Chôshi in Shimôsa Province" by Katsushika Hokusai. The CD disc art is "Masculine Wave" also by Hokusai.

THE NEW ALBUM: 'WE COULD SEE IT IN THE DISTANCE'

GUITAR. BASS. DRUMS. The basic elements of rock and roll. The new 2017 instrumental recording and 10th album by the The Mermen, 'WE COULD SEE IT IN THE DISTANCE' is about the essentials. The stripped down production on this new album is organic in nature: no samplers, no synthesizers, no big production values, few overdubs, only some songs with spare use of rhythm guitar— most of the cuts performed in one take. Here we have a trio performance fine-tuned after 30 years of the Mermen playing together.

The music is rooted in the kind of instrumental "surf" music made by the Ventures, Dick Dale and Link Wray. But the Mermen are more like the Modern Jazz Quartet of Surf Music with a diverse repertoire spanning over 100 original instrumental compositions. These songs run the gamut of expression. During live shows the songs may morph into lengthy improvised variations on a theme a la the Grateful Dead. Mermen songs can be short (2 minutes) or very long (20 minutes or more). Mermen music dips into a realm of symphonic form where the movements are parts of a bigger sonic picture. Words to describe Mermen music: melodic, ethereal, earthy, dreamy, dramatic, pretty, hypnotic, muscular, oceanic, sad, happy— from whisper quiet slow motion, beautiful to punk, speedy and loud. Here is a diverse and expansive music, music with ebb and flow, nuance and dynamics. It is music that echoes the moods of the ocean itself— variable and unpredictable. There has never been a setlist.

The music on 'WE COULD SEE IT IN THE DISTANCE' exhibits many influences. The song 'BOUND FOR A STAR WITH FIERY SEAS' is "Ennio Morricone meets Crazy Horse". 'WE COULD SEE IT IN THE DISTANCE', 'RIDE THE BLUE HORSE' are Neil Young-inspired. With the song 'BIG BIRD BACKSTEP', Jim takes a cue from his favorite guitarist, Clarence White, (of the Byrds, Kentucky Colonels). Jim played bluegrass flatpick guitar in his early days. (He competed in the National Bluegrass Flatpicking Championships in Winfield, Kansas in 1977). 'LAST FOREVER' is the sound of New Jersey and a nod to Bruce Springsteen, (Jim is originally from New Jersey and was born Sept 23, same day as Springsteen). Jim spent many years on the Jersey Shore surfing the coast around Asbury Park and going to local clubs at night. WILL has a taste of Wes Montgomery. 'SHOOTING COLORS ALL AROUND', The Rolling Stones. 'THREE THIRTY THREE' is a nod to Dick Dale, 60s surf music, and legendary SF Bay Area guitarist, John Cipollina (of Quicksilver Messenger Service).

The two new albums were recorded at Pleasure Point Recording, (The Mermen's studio), in Santa Cruz, CA and recorded and mixed by Jim Thomas.

NOTE ABOUT THE COVER ART- 'WE COULD SEE IT IN THE DISTANCE':

A couple of years ago Jim and Jennifer moved into a house on North Polo street in Aptos, CA on the day we moved we saw this beautiful painting of a mermaid with a guitar in the waves, with Santa Cruz's Lane's Lighthouse in the background, painted on the electric box at the top of our new street. We thought, WOW! this must be the place we are supposed to be. Strange coincidence. The painting is called, 'MERMAID WITH SIX STRINGS' by Ket Tom-Conway, local Santa Cruz artist and music teacher. This artwork resonates The Mermen's inspiration from our local coastal life.

ABOUT THE BAND MEMBERS

Jim Thomas (guitarist) is also the songwriter for the Mermen. He hails from New Jersey. The last town in New Jersey Thomas lived was Seaside Heights. He was dragged to California by a friend and arrived on the West Coast in 1987 with only two possessions: an acoustic guitar and a surfboard. He got a job in a music store in San Francisco and soon formed the Mermen with drummer Martyn Jones and original bassist and founding member, Allen Whitman (who eventually went off to play with Joe Satriani). The Mermen is the first band Jim was ever in. During

his time working in the music store, Jim was signed to 5 record deals, (2 with Atlantic records). Jim now spends his time surfing and making music. His favorite guitarists are CLARENCE WHITE, WES MONTGOMERY, NEIL YOUNG, DJANGO RHEINHARDT, JERRY GARCIA and JIMI HENDRIX.

Martyn Jones (drums) is from Liverpool England. Martyn is a founding member of the MERMEN. He thought up the name (from the JIMI HENDRIX song '1983 A Mermen I will turn to be'. He is a drummer of imagination and accomplished composer in his own right. He wrote a musical about the Donner Party, (he does have a sick sense of humor); writing all the songs, singing and playing all the instruments himself. He sings and plays drums in PLASTIC ONION, a BEATLES cover band. He also recorded Miserlou with the Kronos Quartet. He played blues for years and performed with John Lee Hooker and Deacon Jones. Martyn's favorite show was when the Mermen were the backup band for Tiny Tim. Martyn always has a book in his hand and loves good conversation.

Jennifer Burnes (bass) is from Northern California. She is one of 11 brothers and sisters. Her initiation to the bass took place when she was 16 when a legendary local musician needed a new bass player. (The legend was George Rios - known around Nevada City, CA for his black guitar, black clothes, black school bus, black drum set, black everything). George taught Jennifer 40 songs in 4 days and she played her fist gig that week. Jennifer has played with the Mermen almost 20 years. Her tribal stomping sound is reminiscent of bassist Jack Cassady, (Hot Tuna, Jefferson Airplane). Her playing has a raw, punk edge, characteristic of the Stooges. She likes Iron Maiden. She sometimes will bash her whammy-bar equipped Fender P-bass like a drum, but can be lyrical and melodic with rich chords. She likes to get down with distorted, gnarly, pulsating feedback. Her saying is "TURN UP THE FEELING". Jennifer is a jack of all trades—she likes fixing things. She will fix your car, build your house, fix your internet, fix your plumbing— whatever.

"Jim Thomas is a master of the ethereal, infusing his playing with textures from all corners of the progressive rock kingdom. Thomas is at one with his artistry, allowing his creative instincts—as vast as the sea itself—to guide him into new musical territory. Bristling sheets of guitar swell, then recede, then swell again, sometimes crashing in foamy sprays of feedback onto craggy rhythms, other times simply rippling toward the horizon on convoluted streams of reverb. The MERMEN have long played on the power of the cinematic, but Thomas virtuosity doesn't allow for chaos—it allows only for boundless beauty, awe inspiring compositions and a startling inspiration. To see the ocean through his eyes is to see it for all its mysticism, and to hear it from his perspective is to truly understand the musicality of its ebb and flow."

ALIBI, New Mexico

"Supposing a period of conscious abstinence did allow me to access the realms of the nature spirit voices, I would expect to pick up a seashell, hold it to my ear and hear the sound of the MERMEN. That experience would be as surreal as seeing these psychedelic-surf rock masters perform high atop a pirate ship in the middle of the desert, which I actually did see at Burning Man. One of the best modern surf bands, these mythical musicians can induce audiences into a trance or a dancing frenzy. Their watery expansive sound seems to bubble up straight from the seas briny depths."

METRO SANTA CRUZ California

"The MERMEN have managed to instill a level of zeal within a rarefied, but rabid core of followers, a fan base that includes not only some of the the most legendary figures in surfing but many of the nations most snobbishly particular record store clerks as well. For anyone who's ever felt like pulling the plug on the pushy points of view and in your ear mewlings of countless lead vocalists, the lyric-less MERMEN are nevertheless one of the more articulate combos working that vast no mans land that lies just beneath the nations celebrity radar. The MERMEN are never skittish about throwing their audience anything from a challenging curve-ball to a comfortable cover-tune cantaloupe."

ASBURY PARK PRESS New Jersey

"Whenever the term "surf rock" is uttered, one usually thinks of Dick Dale or The Ventures, Fender amps with a ton of reverb, and goofy guys in goofy Hawaiian shirts. This wasn't the case on Saturday night, though. Sure the MERMEN played a lot of up-tempo, heavily reverbed guitar and "Wipeout"-esque tunes, but this band had depth, warmth, humility, and more rock influences under their sleeves than one might imagine. I walked in expecting to hear the typical but in return got something that was at times alluring, powerful, classical, and rolled by at breakneck speed. I picked up a CD (which the merch girl could describe only as "good, really good") which has since turned into my new favorite."

CHARLESTON CITY PAPER South Carolina

Awards & Recognition

"Best of the Bay" 2002, SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN
"One of the Best 100 Bay Area Bands of All Time" (both critics list and Reader's poll) 2001 by SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE/ EXAMINER
"Bammie" awards (2 years) 1996-1997, BAM MAGAZINE
"Wammie" award 1996, SF WEEKLY
"Best Albums of the Year" list 1995, ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE
"Best-of-Year" list 1995, GUITAR PLAYER MAGAZINE
"Best-of-Year" list 1995, GUITAR WORLD MAGAZINE
"Goldie" Critics Award Winner 1995, SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN
"Best Local Band" (reader's poll--2 years) 1996-1997 SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN
#1 most played record album of the year, KUSF, San Francisco 1995
#3 most played record album of the year, KUSF, San Francisco 1994

Mermen Discography

2017 The Magic Swirling Ship (KMA)
2017 We Could See It In The Distance(KMA)
2012 Do You Hear What I Hear
2011 Blues Of Elsewhere
2009 In God We Trust
2001 The Amazing California Health and Happiness Roadshow (V2/MESA)
1996 Sunken Treasure
1996 Only You
1996 Songs of the Cows (ATLANTIC)
1995 A Glorious Lethal Euphoria (ATLANTIC)
1994 Live at the Haunted House(MESA)
1993 Food for Other Fish (MESA)
1989 Krill Slippin (MESA)