

# I GOT LEVITATION

I was asked by a friend the other day what I thought of the 13th Floor Elevator reunion at Psychfest May 10th in Austin and I replied, "There just aren't words." My publisher reminded me that there had better be at least 500. No problem.



Roky Erickson & The Elevators

After a 45-year hiatus, one of the most legendary and influential bands of the rock-n-roll world was going to take the stage again with all the surviving original members of the band on stage.

The current resurrection of the band is due to a number of causes. The entire catalog of the band's record label, International Artists, was acquired recently and all the old master tapes were lovingly restored and released on both CD and in limited edition vinyl box sets. Also a new generation of musicians were discovering the Elevator's magic and the band's expanded fan demographic dropped about 40 years in age almost overnight.

The producers of LEVITATION (the theme of this year's Psychfest) performed a booking miracle that many had tried in past to accomplish - getting the whole band together. Previous reunion attempts had come up short in gathering all of the surviving members.

The band's guitarist, Stacy Sutherland died in the 1980's and his work

would be hard to replicate but getting Tommy Hall, the visionary lyricist and electric jug player of the band, previously reluctant to do such a show, made the journey by train from San Francisco. A documentary of his life and work was filmed en route.

LEVITATION had to struggle uphill against our Texas weather with record rainfalls in Austin causing them to have to make major modifications to the festival site, including moving entire stages overnight. With a forecast of a 90% chance of heavy thunder storms I packed rain ponchos but not a drop fell on the day of the reunion.



Concert Producers/Promoters Left to Right  
Alex Maas, Briana Purser, James Oswald, bassist Ronnie  
Leatherman, Rob Fitzpatrick, Christian Bland

Getting in and out of the festival was quick and easy and all the staff at the festival knew their job and did it well. As an example the wait for a bathroom was about two minutes. Would be gate crashers were sorely disappointed by the sharp-eyed professional security.

The Elevators went on not long after sundown and the electricity of the crowd's vibe was tangible. When the lights came up, 9,000 plus fans erupted into a great cheer as the band fired up a perennial fave, "She Lives. (In a Time of Her Own)"

The band was cooking. All the surviving members, Roky Erickson, Tommy



## Review by Greg Forest

Hall, Ronnie Leatherman and John Ike Walton were onstage with a bit of help from their friends - Fred Mitchem and Eli Southard on guitars and Jeger Erickson, Roky's son helping out with vocals and harmonica.



Band lyricist & electric jug player  
Tommy Hall

The band played all the perennial favorites, *"Slip Inside This House,"* *"I've Got Levitation,"* and one of my personal favorites that is always on my set list too - *"Splash 1."*



9,000+ Psychfest Fans

One of my concerns before the concert was how the unique style of departed guitarist Stacy Sutherland was going to be duplicated. Stacy was one of a kind and had a special blues-roots style of pschedelic guitar. My worries were unfounded. Fred Mitchem held down the groove with Stacy's signature licks and the solo work by Eli Southard captured the essence of Stacy's magic and when Eli would go off the farm a bit his solos

were both appropriate and well-played.

One of the things lended to the authenticity of the performance was the producers of LEVITATION provided a back line of vintage amplifiers (heaven knows where they found them) from the 60s era. Another musical equalizer was the fact that all the bands shared the same back line making for a great 60s sound and quick band change outs.



Guitarist Fred Mitchum & Bassist Ronnie Leatherman

The band closed the set with the frantic "Roller Coaster," before returning for an encore of their biggest hit, "You're Gonna Miss Me." It certainly warmed my heart to see the new, younger fans heaping the long-overdue praise to this iconic band.

Hats off to LEVITATION's producers - they accomplished nothing less than a miracle. There are rumors in the wind of another show in Los Angeles this summer.



After almost a half century absent from the stage, The 13th Floor Elevators take a bow.