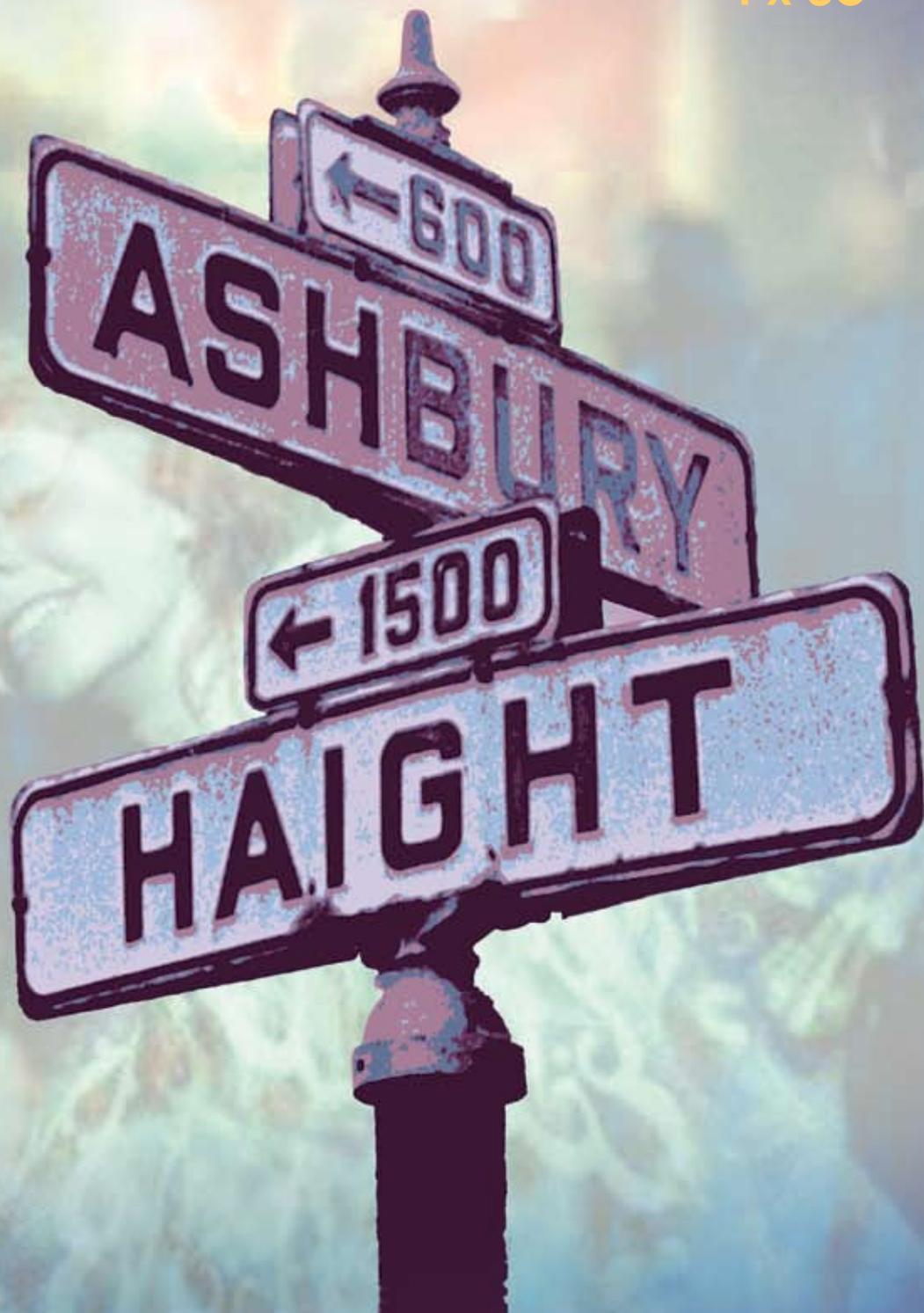


SUMMER OF LOVE

1 x 60



International

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CONTACT

Tom Koch, *Director*
WGBH International
One Guest Street
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL 617-300-3893
FAX 617-779-7900

tom_koch@wgbh.org
wgbhinternational.org

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE presents *Summer of Love*, a striking picture of San Francisco's Haight Ashbury district during the summer of 1967—from the utopian beginnings, when peace and love prevailed, to the chaos, unsanitary conditions, and widespread drug use that ultimately signaled the end. Academy Award-nominated filmmakers Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco examine the social and cultural forces that sparked the largest migration of young people in America's history.

"Thousands of kids were ready to go through those doors and find out what was on the other side," says Franco. "The cliché of 'Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll', often used to describe the Summer of Love misses some of the more profound new horizons being explored. Love, personal growth, mysticism, community, and authenticity were at the core of the experimental society." In January 1967, the thousands of youth already in San Francisco descended on Golden Gate Park for a "Human Be-In." The media flocked to the event, putting hippies in the national spotlight for the first time. And once the press offered a window into the world of Haight Ashbury, even more young people flooded in. "The city of San Francisco has been warned of a hippie invasion come summer in numbers almost too staggering to comprehend," declared one TV news reporter.

The new arrivals were looking to "turn on, tune in, and drop out," the popular refrain that invited people to an existential experience courtesy of LSD. "We really thought that drugs were going to change the world," recalls Mary Kasper, who was in the Haight from the start of the movement. "We thought if you turned on, if you took acid, you would really change, because we had changed from those experiences of cosmic oneness."

San Francisco was fast becoming an outdoor society where free music was as readily available as free love. The Grateful Dead became the poster children for a generation, offering free concerts to anyone who wanted to listen. The music coming out of Haight Ashbury only served to draw more young people to the movement. But along with free music, free love, and "cosmic oneness," the onslaught of people also brought a lack of housing, shortage of food, rampant drug problems, and sexually transmitted diseases. Free clinics and soup kitchens served the massive population, estimated to be from 50,000 to 100,000 at its peak. Hundreds of young runaways wandered the streets aimlessly. For many, the center of the counterculture no longer seemed a shimmering wonderland. By fall, the numbers began to drop as precipitously as they had grown.

The Summer of Love was a fleeting moment in the turbulent history of the 1960s. But its underlying message left an indelible impression on those who witnessed it. Says Kasper, "I thought we could change the world, and I thought we could make it a better place. And I think in some ways we succeeded."

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CREDITS

Series Producer: Sharon Grimberg

Executive Producer: Mark Samels

Writers, Producers, & Directors: Gail Dolgin & Vicente Franco

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