

# SHOWCASE

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## Paul Kantner tagging along, not joining Hot Tuna

By KARLA TIPTON

Assistant Showcase Editor

**T**he San Francisco rock band Jefferson Airplane/Starship for years existed side by side with bluesy Hot Tuna, both sharing many of the same members.

But former Jefferson Airplane/Starship member Paul Kantner never had the inclination to sit in with Tuna — at least, not until now.

"It's not the kind of music I normally play," said Kantner in a phone interview from New York. "But it's a good challenge on a certain level — stretches you out a bit as a musician."

Since December, Kantner — who left the Jefferson Starship in 1984 and is currently between projects with his KBC band — has been sitting in with Tuna members Jorma Kaukonen and Jack Casady, who have been at the group's core since its inception in 1970.

Hot Tuna, along with violinist and former Airplane/Starship member Papa John Creach, will be performing Saturday at the Variety Arts Center, 940 S. Figueroa St., Hollywood; (213) 623-9100.

But Kantner denies he's joined the band: "I don't know if I'm *in* Hot Tuna. It's like saying you're *in* hot water. I'm tagging along with them. Mainly I'm just playing 12-string with them.

"I've always enjoyed Jorma's guitar playing and he can always teach me a thing or two," he added.

This time, Hot Tuna is presenting a two-week all-acoustic tour along the West Coast from Vancouver to San Diego. Some of the material they'll be performing is old and new Hot Tuna, KBC's "America," Jefferson Airplane's "High Flying Bird," some compositions by Papa John — and plenty of blues.

Just days before the tour started, however, Kantner was on the opposite coast to play at a service memorializing the late United Nations ambassador from Nicaragua.

Since a recent visit to the late ambassador's country, Kantner has become enamored of its people and their plight.

"They just won my heart," he said. "I went down there and found a very positive, innocent and very naive revolutionary situation. People who are immense artists — and I don't mean fat. And writers and painters and musicians all intertwined with the government and the people in a real 'early birth' sort of way. Similar to what went on in San Francisco when everybody was talking to one another. That sense of us against the world and maybe the expectancy of great things to happen. And even more so down there, because they're faced with death."

And as for the United States' policy on Nicaragua, Kantner said, "I think we're doing some very, very wrong things down there."

spired him so much that Kantner took some time off from music to write a book about his experiences in Nicaragua. This summer, his 17-year-old son will accompany him on a visit to the country, and he's trying to talk

his 20-year-old daughter China (whose mom is Grace Slick) into going along, as well. During the summers, China serves as an MTV VJ.

"Maybe we'll do MTV live from Managua," joked Kantner.

"A 'Win a Trip to Managua' contest on MTV — there's a thought."

Some of Kantner's other writing projects include an article for a San Francisco newspaper about traveling around with some homicide inspectors. "I call it 'Ride with Homicide' — instead of 'Ride the Tiger.'"

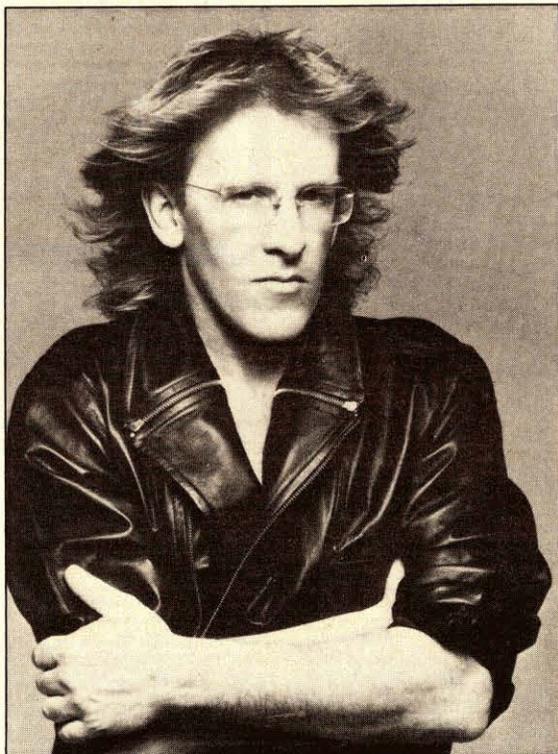
But he hasn't given up songwriting. And although he and the Jefferson Airplane may have been in their heyday in the liberated '60s, Kantner said he gets the best song material when the

country is conservative.

"It's like comedy. You get a lot more material for comedy when the country is extreme," he said. "It would be amusing to me to see Pat Robertson be president. I mean, that would be the height of sardonic amusement for me because things would just explode and the country would be so interesting."

And if the Rev. Jesse Jackson ran against Pat Robertson?

"That would be even better," said Kantner with a laugh. "Except they might cancel themselves out."



PAUL KANTNER will be performing with Hot Tuna Saturday night at the Variety Arts Center, 940 S. Figueroa St., Hollywood.