

Concert promotes spirit of togetherness

US Festival a success despite problems

Editor's note: Scott Griffin traveled to California to cover the US Festival for the Battalion.

by Scott Griffin
Battalion Staff

The end of a great cultural event has approached, and with it marks the ending of the almost assured decline of brotherhood among the youth of this country.

The event I'm talking about is the 1983 US Festival — a three-day rock concert/computer expo which attracted over 600,000 music fans who ate, drank, slept, sweated, cheered and did other things (some not exactly legal) together in a spirit of camaraderie much like Woodstock.

While I didn't go to Woodstock, I talked to several people who did. And all of them agreed that the US Festival was different than the rock fests of the 70s in that both the participants and concert officials promoted a sense of togetherness — something not found in the last decade.

The 70s was the "ME" decade,

so concert officials decided it was time to unite the young people in song by using a theme of cooperation and friendship, thus the use of the term "US Festival".

It worked. Young people from all around the world were united this weekend for one purpose — to listen to good music. They were also forced to live together for three days. They had to share bath facilities, living space and breathing room in a campground more suited to 6,000 inhabitants than 600,000.

I was one of the lucky ones who spent Memorial Day weekend at the US campground. Granted, it was sizzling hot in the day and bone-chilling cold at night, it was crowded and the portable bathrooms were perpetually occupied. But this group had a spirit not found in the last 10 years among large rock audiences.

Everywhere I looked I saw people helping each other — building tents, spraying each

other with water to help keep cool during the Southern California days, building fires in the cold nights, sharing food and water — anything to keep each other going.

It was almost Woodstock reborn.

The Vietnam War was a catalyst for much of the music of the time, and many came to Woodstock to protest — to show everyone that they could get along for several days without total chaos and to send a musical message to everyone to stop the war.

While those of us in the 80s have no war to denounce, we have a similar political goal — to end the nuclear arms buildup and the potential for nuclear war. And we still have to show the older generations that we too can assemble in large numbers without bedlam.

We did it, and that's one similarity to Woodstock. (Before everyone starts pointing to the 80-plus arrests and one killing, let me remind you that we were a group of over 600,000 in a compact area and in sweltering heat for three days during a holiday

weekend. Go to the police file for a city of over 600,000 on Memorial Day weekend and look at their number of arrests and then try to tell me we were rowdy.)

We had the spirit and energy of the Woodstock generation in us, and it was a good feeling to see all those people getting along with one another.

And as part of our peacekeeping, togetherness theme, a segment of the Men At Work show was beamed live via satellite to Moscow. In exchange, Russia beamed us their finest — a group called Arsenal, which was quite impressive.

Another similarity to Woodstock was the fact that the US festival was a financial flop. Concert officials said a crowd of 800,000 would be required just to break even. And even though they knew it wouldn't happen, they still put on a show for us.

And what a show it was. Twenty-five groups played over the three days, and while some were not exactly in top form, none failed to totally disappoint the crowd.

Day one consisted of the Di-

vinyls, INXS, Wall of Voodoo, Oingo Boingo, The Beat, Flock of Seagulls, Stray Cats, Men At Work and the Clash. Notable performances from this day included the eight-member, Los Angeles based Oingo Boingo, The Beat — an English-based, reggae-tinged group, and the folks from Down Under, Men At Work.

Lead singer Danny Elfman and Oingo Boingo delighted the crowd with sizzling versions of "Grey Matter," "Violent Love," and a new tune appropriately entitled "Heat."

Following Oingo Boingo was The Beat with some hot reggae dance numbers, English style. "Save it for Later," their latest hit, was a hot one on stage.

And Men At Work sounded just like they do on record. Sweet and clean — nothing fancy, nothing overemphasized.

Day two was slightly different — lots of heavy metal. While I found myself struggling to pay attention to some of the acts, (Quiet Riot, Motley, Crue, Triumph, Van Halen) other performers proved to be of some value.

While his voice couldn't hit some of the higher notes as it does in the studio, Ozzy Osbourne did come on strong with Black Sabbath classics like "Iron Man" and "Paranoid." (And he didn't bite the head off of some helpless bird or any of that stuff.)

Judas Priest put on a good show with a multiple of metal classics such as "Living After Midnight" and "Green Hell."

And the German-based group called Scorpions was really cranking with some of their older songs — "Lovedrive" and "Loving You Sunday Morning."

Day three was perhaps the best overall. All of the groups gave performances that, on a scale of one-to-10, were fives or better. Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul sounded like their forefathers, the E Street Band, but came through with a solid performance.

Berlin followed Little Steven and were in top form — yes, they did play "Sex."

Oregon-based Quarterflash was next and vocal/saxophonist Rindy Ross was a crowd pleaser, especially on their hit "Find Another Fool."

U2 was next. An incredible performance ensued with rough, sincere versions of "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "New Year's Day," "Gloria" and their first American hit, "I Will Follow." Lead singer Bono Vox enticed participation with a jaunt out into the audience and by climbing a 30-foot ladder to place a white flag, symbolizing peace, atop the lighting deck.

The L.A. group Missing Persons was enjoyable, with drummer Terry Bozzio keeping the crowd hoppin' with some incredible solo work on "Noticeable Ones," "Words" and "Walkin' in L.A." were two of the more popular performances of their set.

The US festival was also honored with the return of the Pretenders. And while lead singer Chrissie Hynde and her crew

weren't dazzling, they did age some respectable tracks. "Back on the Chain" and "Message of Love" and "Pretender" from the first album, "Pretender."

Joe Walsh came out there away with the hits at the "Life's Been Good" and "Mountain Way," even as he overplayed on radio, were hot live, and on the large Walsh proved that he is still king of the slide guitar niche.

The first lady of rock, Stevie Nicks, was going as usual. So was her "Edge of Seventeen" and got the best reception.

And the main-man of rock, David Bowie, profans with an uninspired, smooth performance. "Tom," "Fame" and the last "Let's Dance," were undeniably great, undeniably Bowie.

Musically, the US Festival was a success, but financially devastating. Financier Wozniak reportedly lost a million last year. He is not that much this year. He reportedly didn't make any money.

And earlier in the year, Wozniak said that he would continue to produce US Festivals, he lost that much money.

Unfortunately, it looks like the end of an era — a chance for young people to get together, a rock show and to provide care about the generation of the future.

But our generation, like the 60's, got to show the world we could do it — we're the generation.

Father questions shooting of son

United Press International
HOUSTON — The father of a man killed by a policeman for driving a backhoe in a reckless manner, smashing other vehicles and allegedly threatening the policeman, is questioning the necessity of the killing.

Carl Kent said Kenneth Kent, 32, was not armed when he was blown off the backhoe tractor by a shotgun blast fired by Officer William Knox about 3 p.m. Monday.

One policeman was hit by the rear wheel of the backhoe, Knox was slightly injured dodging the machine.

Kent said police should have tried some non-fatal way to stop his son, a former firefighter who Kent said had not been the same

since a nervous breakdown in 1974.

Kent said he asked police why officers could not have used a stick to knock his son off the tractor. He said he was told it was against the law for police to use a stick on suspects.

"Then why a shotgun?" Kent asked. "Why couldn't he have gotten pistol and shot him in the leg."

Kent said his son had called him from his Liberty home Sunday saying he "just needed help."

"He was scared. He was trying to come back to me. That was the only way he could get back to my house was on that tractor," Kent said. "I went to look for him, and when I found him he was dead."

Grand jury to investigate Dallas sherriff's car wreck

United Press International
DALLAS — A grand jury is investigating whether Sheriff Don Byrd should be indicted for drunken driving in an accident in which he smashed his car into a traffic light.

District Attorney Henry Wade said Tuesday he referred the case to the Dallas County grand jury after University Park Police Chief David Beidelman gave him evidence concerning the wreck.

"There is some possibility that he (Byrd) was intoxicated, and they had some statements — from some people, at least — that indicates that there was some drinking. How much, we don't know at this time," Wade said.

The accident occurred April 17 in University Park, a posh Dallas suburb. The grand jury subpoenaed 13 people, including paramedics who treated

Byrd after the accident and

Byrd was hospitalized several days after the accident, hid from reporters for more than a week. Four witnesses the wreck contradicted the official explanation of the accident and said Byrd ignored the light.

Byrd has said he was drunk but did not remember the accident. University Park filed no charges against Byrd.

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