

CATCHING THE HIGH AGAIN

WOODSTOCK '94



A fan goes "crowd surfing" during a **Roguish Armament** performance at Woodstock '94 in Saugerties, New York. The New York-based band helped open the three-day event.

By **MACK HARRISON**
Special to The Battalion

SAUGERTIES, N.Y. — *The people. The music. The mud. The drugs. Woodstock is dead. Long live Woodstock.* No way, people said, that you could ever duplicate the original Woodstock. Not today. Different generation, different music.

Wrong. Through the three days in the mud and drug-induced haze, concert-goers at the festival Aug. 12-14 in Saugerties found the same experience as their spiritual ancestors did 25 years earlier at the original Woodstock in Bethel, N.Y. — a weekend-long party.

THE SECURITY

Advance coverage and conventional wisdom had suggested massive security measures at the site, but our group boarded the shuttle buses after an hour's wait, a cursory sweep of the metal detector wand and some perfunctory questions:

"Do you have any contraband on you?"

No.

"Any guns or knives?"

No.

"Any drugs or alcohol?"

No, of course not.

The rules said no weapons, drugs or alcohol, no aerosol sprays, no open fires, no this, no that. In reality, however, security was lax enough that people brought in pretty much whatever they wanted. Once ticket holders stepped off the shuttle bus at the concert site, another brace of security guards wearing Woodstock "Peace Patrol" T-shirts casually searched the disembarking passengers' belongings, looking for any contraband, drugs or alcohol hidden in bedrolls or tents.

As we trekked down the path toward the stage, we saw swarms of people scaling the fences around the woods.

"Environmentally Sensitive Area," the signs mounted on the fences told the ecologically apathetic crowd as hundreds of people broke through the barrier to camp in the wetlands under the trees.

We continued down the path toward the music. As we topped the rise, the sights, sounds, smells and spectacle of Woodstock '94 embraced us.

THE SCENE

We wandered into the field, adrift in a sea of tents. Far, far away, we could make out the north stage and the twin towers of speakers flanking it. Overhead, helicopters carrying VIPs swooped toward the backstage area, a camera-laden chopper swept over the crowd and a blimp floated high above in stately silence.

To our left were the food booths, the port-a-potties, the south stage and the Eco-Fest area — where all the tree-hugger groups had their booths. To our right stretched more tents, food, restrooms and the Surreal Field — a computer geek haven of computer company pavilions and a couple of "virtual reality" attractions which were the equivalent of the Star Wars ride at Disneyland.

THE DRUGS

Woodstock '94 seemed to redefine the term "casual drug use." No one worried about cops. Marijuana was everywhere. You couldn't walk five feet without stumbling over someone smoking weed.

In an odd parallel to the first concert, announcements from the stage warned the crowd about tainted drugs — not bad acid this time, but laced marijuana.

One unconventional intoxicant came in gaseous form: Peddlers sold balloons filled with nitrous oxide — laughing gas. People would buy the balloons and breathe the gas; it didn't make your voice high-pitched like helium, but it did provide a lift of its own.

Entrepreneurs offered any manner of intoxicant desired — and the crowd desired. Individuals carried handmade signs reading "need acid," "need 'shrooms," or "need doses." Possibly the best sign rested in the hands of a young man seated next to a main path: "Don't need anything," it read. "Just like to hold signs."

And those substances — although of dubious quality or authenticity — were available. For a price. Single hits of acid sold for three to five dollars; one young entrepreneur sold hashish for \$15 a gram.

THE COST

In fact, capitalism seemed to run rampant at this so-called "revolutionary" event. Evidence of the "corporateness" so dreaded by detractors of Woodstock '94 was all around. From the Pepsi logo slapped on the concession stands and paper cups to the Phillips Electronics CD-I pavilion in the Surreal Field, sponsors abounded.

Prices were not outrageous, however — they were usurious. The \$135 tickets were just the start. Soft drinks went for two dollars and meals cost anywhere from six to eight dollars. Our group, unwilling to spend \$10 on lunch, had brought in canned goods and granola bars, which lasted us through the weekend.

Beer, of course, was banned from the festival, so its price went up accordingly. People jumped the fence, bought it at nearby convenience stores and smuggled it back onto the site. Back there, budding brewmeisters sold two beers for five dollars; a 12-pack went for \$20.

But this was at the start of the fes-



Concert-goers stand atop some of the 2,800 portable toilets at Woodstock '94 in efforts to get a better view of the stage. The swelling crowd strained the carefully laid plans of the festival's organizers.

tival. By Sunday all the local stores had sold out of beer, and those lucky individuals who had some stockpiled wouldn't part with it for any price.

Souvenir booths sprouted like psychedelic mushrooms across the festival area. Vendors offered everything from tie-dyed shirts to jewelry to clothing made from hemp. Some individuals braided hair or sold jewelry on blankets spread on the ground. One woman with only a chair and a sign read palms by flashlight.

there actually was a sense of brotherhood among the people at Woodstock '94. Everyone felt a kinship with everyone else at the festival, and people were happy to help each other out.

In fact, the wide variety of individuals in attendance is what made the event unique. All age groups — from infants to senior citizens — were represented. Bikers, hippies, rednecks, Yankees, parents, children, students, professionals — all contributed to the synergistic gestalt that defined the event like some Aquarian melting pot.

THE PARKING

The situation at Woodstock made parking at Texas A&M seem like some kind of nirvana. Man, what a mess.

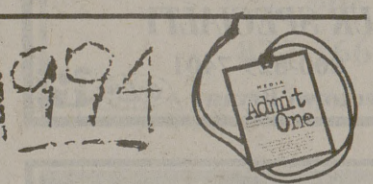
When we arrived at the site we followed the directions on the back of our parking pass. Unfortunately, our assigned lot had filled up and the parking powers-that-be had taken the sign down. We drove around for an hour until we asked a worker where to park.

The lot we pulled in was already over capacity, and the ground soft as we left our vehicle. Little did we know we'd have to spend the Sunday night after the concert in the car. The ground was so muddy after all the rain that we couldn't leave until a tow truck winched us out of the mud the next morning — for \$50.

THE MUD

It just wouldn't be Woodstock without the mud, would it? The first day, the mud was a result of runoff from the water fountains, which the concert planners had thoughtfully placed at the tops of the hills. The overflow ran straight down the dirt paths leading up to the faucets, immediately turning them into Slip'n'Slides.

THE BODY COUNT



- Estimated population at Woodstock '94: 350,000
 - Tickets sold: 200,000
 - Deaths: 2
 - People treated for first aid at the event: 5,000
 - People taken to area hospitals: 75
 - Arrests: 24
 - Marriages: 1
- Source: MTV News

THE PEOPLE

At night, after the music ended, we returned to our tents along with 300,000 of our closest friends and neighbors. As cheesy as it sounds,

PHOTOS
GRAPHICS
BY AP

