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Summer/Fall 1994

The Unknown Concert:

Woodstock ?

Weedstock ?

Greedstock ?

Livestock ?

Wordstock ?

Rockstock ?

Lovestock ?

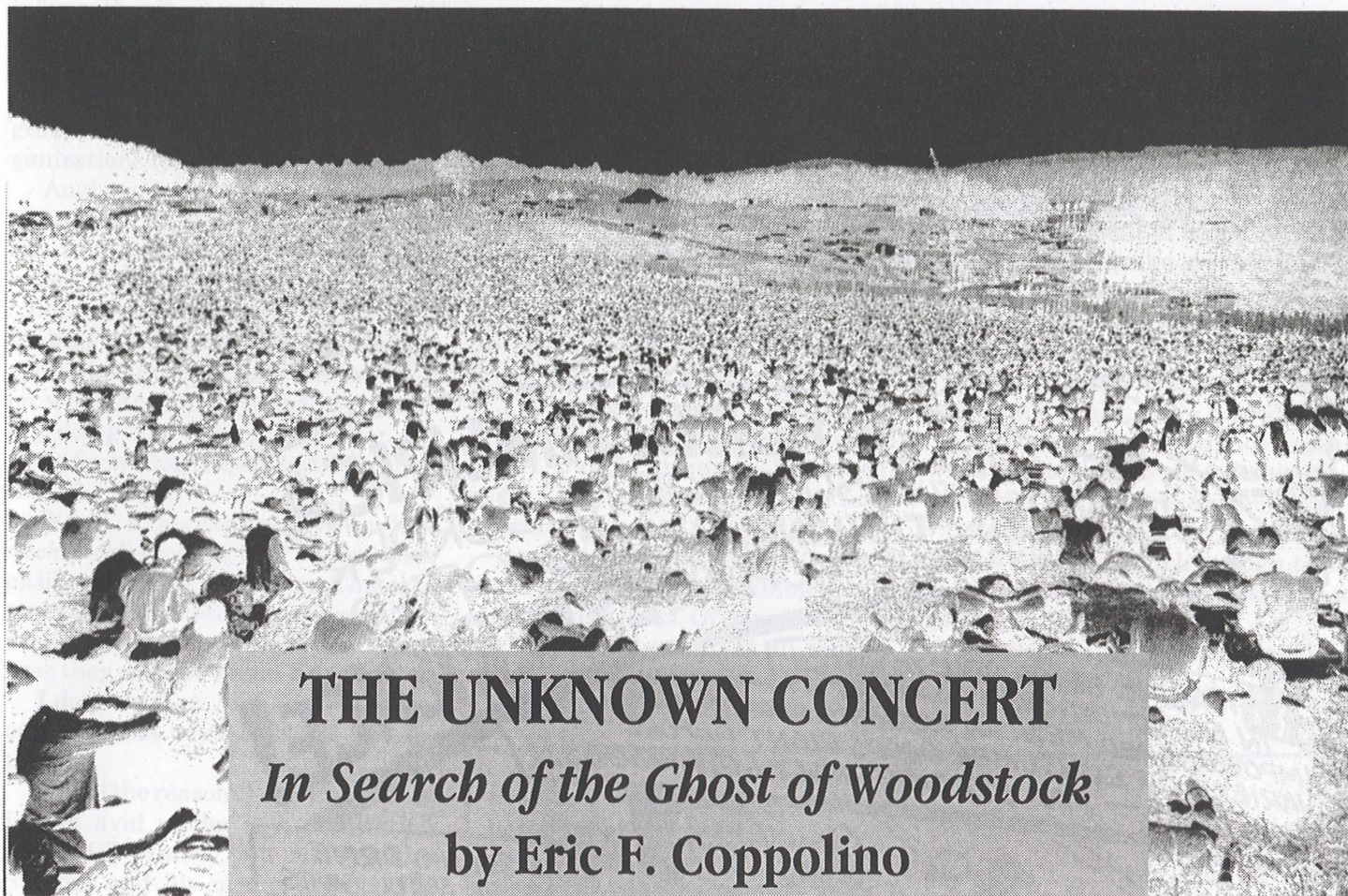
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THE UNKNOWN CONCERT

In Search of the Ghost of Woodstock

by Eric F. Coppelino

*original photo courtesy of Elliott Landy
(negative image by As We Are)*

"It was obvious to me that they were rank amateurs who were in way over their heads. But anybody who would have tried what they were doing would have been a rank amateur, because it had never been done before."

"By the third day with the mud and the food running out and the discomfort, it became like a camp of people who were in retreat from something, another kind of war."

— Bill Graham
(the late rock impresario)

Ulster County, near Woodstock, NY

For months, the question has been rattling around the heads of those people inclined to ask things, and there seem to be quite a few of them left around here: is it really Woodstock?

Can you really have "another Woodstock?"

Is it impossible, or will this concert truly capture the *zeitgeist* of the '90s as perfectly as the last one did the '60s, with its big-business atmosphere of venture capital, law-suits, corporate sponsors and expensive tickets?

With all the air-tight security, rules, rules and more rules, will it become, as performance poet and *Woodstock*

Times cultural czar Mickhail Horowitz predicts, the Woodstock Correctional Facility?

Will something magic happen? Will our "lost" generation finally "find" itself here?

No. And how could it?

As we'll see, Michael Lang, Joel Rosenman and John Roberts, the three original promoters who make up Woodstock Ventures, Inc. are not in the concert promoting business for any altruistic reason. Whatever their rhetoric, their purpose in staging a Woodstock Mark II is the same as their reason for holding the first one.

They're trying to make a buck. Well. . .several million bucks.

The only difference this time is that they can't leech off of an existing counter-culture climate because there isn't one. Three concert promoters, no matter how much backing Polygram Records and Pepsi give them, cannot mimic the combined societal impact made by the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-Vietnam War Movement, the Beat and Hippie subcultures, or the Black, Chicano, Latino, and Women's Liberation movements.

But maybe they can fake it well enough to draw a big enough crowd this time around to make some serious money.

Unless people refuse to go — particularly the young people that Woodstock Ventures is counting on to take up

the slack for the legion of their elders who figure that, to paraphrase that "Great Satan," Karl Marx: "The first time was history, the second time, farce."

As far as we can tell here at *As We Are*, Lang & Co. have already made great strides towards keeping people away from their lair of false promises. High ticket prices and the unattractive promise of sitting in a field for two and half days with several hundred thousand other people in the sweltering summer heat are enough to keep most of us away.

Yet, many people are still shelling out the big bucks and preparing to be treated like New Age cattle for an August weekend because, in the back of their minds, they are hoping against hope that something special is going to happen again.

Of course, the problem with that sentiment is that it's questionable whether or not "something special" occurred the first time around.

Ghoststock

There's a pretty good reason why it sounds so strange to talk about having "another Woodstock," and a pretty good reason so many people are so cynical about it. Apart from the fact that the Woodstock we've all seen pictures of was an event that was neither predicted nor planned for, there is some question as to whether the Woodstock of our memories and dreams ever really happened.

The 1969 event that we know as Woodstock, which really took place 90 miles away from the Ulster County community of Woodstock in the Sullivan County town of Bethel, turned out to be something quite different than what the promoters planned for. For one thing, a hell of a lot more people showed up than were expected. Consequently it lost money, mainly because while 500,000 people got in, just 150,000 paid for their tickets. It was supposed to make money, just like the current festival is succeeding at doing, but it turned out, quite by accident, to be a sort of impromptu "gathering of the tribes" — a kind of "concert takeover," if you will. The day before the great event was to occur, Woodstock Ventures, Inc. had fencing up around the entire site, but unfortunately only

1 of the 18 proposed gates were ever built. Since they could never collect money or tickets from half a million people without causing a really bad scene, the promoters gave up and took a financial beating to the tune of over a hundred thousand dollars.

And this, in itself, explains why Lang, Rosenman, and Roberts are trying to do it all over again. This despite the fact that as recently as the 1989 edition of the Roberts/Rosenman book, *Young Men With Unlimited Capital*, written by the two members of the original troika who actually had any money, they reveal a complete disdain for Michael Lang as a hustler and a bit of a charlatan. A carpet-bagger in hippie clothes who came to them in 1967 answering an ad they had put into the New York Times and Wall St. Journal which said, roughly, "Young men with unlimited capital seek interesting investment opportunities." These two sons of the Jewish-American nouveau riche eventually put some \$3 million of their trust fund money into the hands of Michael Lang — manager of an acid rock band called Diesel, and a concert promoter with one Miami festival under his belt — who came forward to them originally with the idea of building a recording studio in Woodstock, NY.

Lang, and his co-conspirator, Artie Kornfeld of Capitol Records, also thought it might be a good idea to hold a small rock festival up there, for maybe 5000 people, as a press event to help launch the studio. The original budget called for \$200,000 in expenses, and \$300,000 in clear profit from a two-day event.

That small festival, with the help of Lang and a few of his hippie-entrepreneur friends, became WOODSTOCK. And it was Lang, if we are to believe Rosenman and Roberts, who was responsible for the various disasters that nearly made Woodstock into a nightmare of epic proportions.

There is a priceless scene in the book where, a few days before the festival — with the fences incomplete, the food concessionaires fighting with their suppliers, the food concessions still under construction, the stage unfinished, and a million things going wrong — Joel R. goes up to the concert site and is unable to find Michael Lang.

Weedstock?

Sources close to festival preparations have suggested that smoking cannabis will, for all practical purposes, be tolerated at Woodstock 1994. This may seem like a remarkable concept during the Civil War on Drugs, yet it may have something to do with the impracticalities of attempting to prosecute thousands of people — many of whom will be able to afford lawyers — for smoking a little herb in a town with a court that operates just two nights a week.

Prosecuting some people for pot while letting others go would also tread on the shaky Constitutional ground known as "equal protection under the law" which says, essentially, that if I smoke a joint and you smoke a joint in the same place and the same time, the government, in theory, has to pop both of us or neither of us. If they bust me but not you, I can sue, and vice versa, the theory being that the government has to treat all its citizens equally.

For the record, please note: In New York State, simple possession of small amounts of marijuana (under 25 grams) is a violation, not a crime, and first-time offenders usually get off with a scolding and a \$100 fine. However, passing a lit joint in public, or possession of more than 25 grams of herb, becomes a Class B misdemeanor, which is a crime that, according to the Black Book, can land you in jail. Possession of more than two ounces of pot is a Class A misdemeanor, which can score you a year in the clink.

Possession of more than eight ounces of herb, assuming you're convicted, would be a Class E felony. And selling weed, of course, is a whole different story.

Without confirming the existence of such a weed policy, Woodstock '94 executive producer Michael Lang says, "There's no intent to harass anyone for anything that is not intruding on anyone else. That's our policy. We're not encouraging anyone to do anything, or taking a stand on the morality of anything, other than to say that drugs are illegal in this country. But we're trying to make

sure that if people are getting along, that nobody comes in and messes that up."

Yet alcohol, the great elixir of bad vibes and out-of-hand scenes, will not be for sale, which largely eliminates the possibility of mass drunkenness, and entirely eliminates the presence of beer and booze businesses. Expect the usual can and bottle search when you come in the gate.

If you plan to crash the gate, good luck getting near the place. A two mile perimeter will be secured, there will be thousands of cops, and the only way to even get near the entrances is by bus.

And the rules are that no food will be allowed in unless you have some special dietary or religious requirement. There will be lots of expensive food vendors, about one-fifth of whom will be from the local area. Even local residents will park in special parking lots and take shuttle busses to the gate.

Michael Lang personally told *As We Are* magazine in a June 1994 interview that if you had some special dietary requirement or religious requirement (such as keeping Kosher), you would not be hassled. So, get on the nearest computer and dash off a letter from your rabbi, guru or diet coach.

Oh, and in the true Woodstock spirit, condoms will be for sale by a private vendor. Since most people won't be buying them at the festival to take home as souvenirs, and since the sex police won't be invited in, then making whoopee will be endorsed, at least tacitly. But when you're rolling around on the grass or in the woods, remember the earth may be contaminated with Scourge and Roundup, two pesticides that are on the drawing board for potential use in woods and fields.

— E.F.C.



While everyone is waiting for his orders. Joel R. finds Lang strutting around in a nearby field in front of the cameras of the documentary crew who are to film the concert.

Lang's priority, it seems, has always been feathering his own nest. Yet, somehow, he has buried the hatchet with his two former sponsors; so they can all make the killing they missed the last time around.

It is in their interest, therefore, to foster the Woodstock mystique.

Woodstock was a cultural event, but it has become a culture-bearing event, which means that it has, in time, come to symbolize far more than it actually was. For example, it alone wasn't the entire 1960s, but in many ways, it represents the entire 1960s to a lot of people. As time has gone on, more and more has been loaded on its shoulders, to the point that now when you think of those "three days of peace and music," the picture of beautiful sunny afternoons and lots of happy people comes to mind.

Yet it was thundering and pouring rain much of that weekend, which flooded the stage and created a massive mud field and a lot of cold, uncomfortable people. There wasn't a lot to eat, and there was hardly anywhere to get comfortable. Many people had to walk 20 miles up the gridlocked Thruway just to get there. An estimated 1 million people never even made it to the site. A lot of folks were having bad LSD experiences.

Despite the extreme turbulence of the era, where riots and use of tear gas by the cops were commonplace occurrences at rock concerts and mass gatherings, a spirit of humanity prevailed, and the whole scene stayed exceptionally cool. Maybe it was because the National Guard would've had to para-

chute in to get anywhere near the site to start busting people. Or perhaps it was the rain. Had it been hot those three days, the scene might have ended up like Altamont, an out-of-control, death-stained Rolling Stones/Jefferson Airplane concert shortly after Woodstock that came to symbolize the 1970s such as Woodstock has come to symbolize the 1960s.

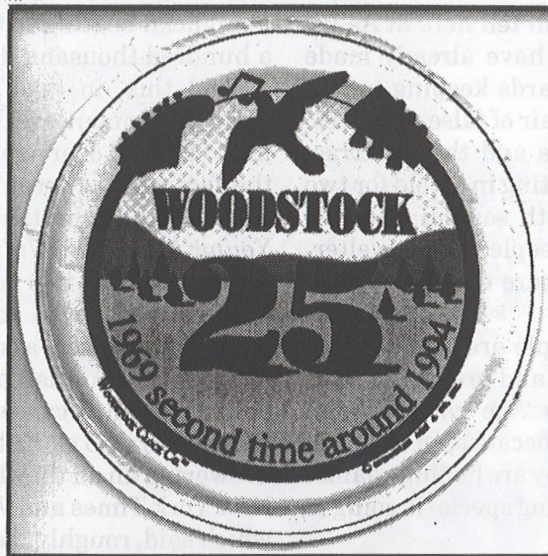
Out of the mire of

Woodstock, a myth grew like a bean stalk.

Today, when you say the word "Woodstock," and especially when you plan an anniversary event created by the original promoters and flash around the dove and guitar icon, you invoke all of that cultural baggage that Woodstock carries on its back.

The concept of "Woodstock" is like a ghost — and you can't invite ghosts with \$30 million investment capital, site plans, lawyers, vending permits, and even rain insurance. The painstaking planning necessary to create Woodstock 1994 in itself will preclude a lot of what was best about the first Woodstock, eliminating much of the unpredictability and spontaneity that led to what happened in 1969. Since television will be involved in the 1994 event, everything is going to be timed to the minute, unlike the extremely casual atmosphere of 1969.

And it's going to cost a lot more than free to get in, with festival tickets going for \$135 each, and available only in blocks of four. Then it's going to cost a lot of money to eat. Unlike the first Woodstock audience which was made up somewhat of hard-core anti-establishment youth (who would never pay for such an event) and a good chunk of genuinely poor people, but mostly of poor-by-choice middle-class hippie-types; the second Woodstock will be



Captured Sprocket Design

made up almost solely of middle-class hippie-types — this time armed with cash, and ready to use it.

When you plan an event such as Woodstock 1994 but subtract the counter-culture by virtue of economics, when you subtract the spontaneity by virtue of intensive planning, when you subtract the anti-Vietnam War Movement that helped spawn the counter-culture to begin with, and when you subtract the highly elusive Ghost of Woodstock, you're basically left with a potentially big festival—one which may make a mark in the history of the culture for its size, but one whose mark in American history is likely to be only a shadow of its predecessor, a follow-up mention.

When you fork over \$135 for a ticket, don't expect to be in Woodstock, or at Woodstock. You're going to be at a high-tech rock festival in Saugerties, New York, with computer screens flashing messages at you, telephones, expensive gourmet food, a virtual-reality exhibit and a lot of bands. A place where you can light a joint and probably not get busted [see sidebar]; where you can rent a tent and buy condoms in case you meet a nice girl or boy.

Deathstock?

But a lack of historical perspective, and a high ticket price are the least of Woodstock '94s problems.

A recent banner headline on page one of the Kingston (NY) *Freeman*, the county-wide daily which has covered, often in excruciating detail, virtually every aspect of preparations for the Aug. 12, 13 and 14 "Woodstock 1994" festival, read: "HERBICIDE TO BE USED ON SITE'S POISON IVY."

If "Woodstock 1994" ever seemed like a contradiction in terms, this was it. Forget about greed. Forget about MTV. Forget about Pepsi and two million freshness-dated 12-oz. cans full of hazardous waste emblazoned with the dove & guitar logo — a trademarked asset which festival promoters are protecting with private eyes, a federal lawsuit and goon squads who serve legal papers and impound contraband merchandise from local shops.

The issue of what festival planners were going to do about mosquitoes and "noxious plants" on the site had been lingering since late last year, when plans to use Monsanto's herbicide "Roundup" and the insecticide "Scourge" were made public as part of the festival permit application process. State law requires some kind of Final Solution for mosquitoes and poison ivy in order to get a mass-gathering permit, and dealing with pests usually means applying pesticides.

When the issue first surfaced last December, festival promoters and their lawyers sweet-talked about being "very sensitive" to the environment and not wanting to hurt anyone or anything, sending signals that maybe they weren't going to wage chemical warfare on plants, bugs, wildlife and folks, or those folks, anyway, who could afford to pay \$135 to get into the spray zone.

Suffice it to say, for now, that neither of the two chemicals proposed for use at the festival site is particularly good for you. Comparing them to Agent Orange would be stretching it a little, but only a little.

I picked up the phone and called the Woodstock Ventures office in

Saugerties, hoping to get an answer to the question that nobody liked to talk about: Were they really going to spray this stuff? And would they warn people in advance that the festival grounds had been treated? Instead, I got Crystal Zevon, one of festival promoter and front-man Michael Lang's top assistant's, asking me why everybody was picking on their festival.

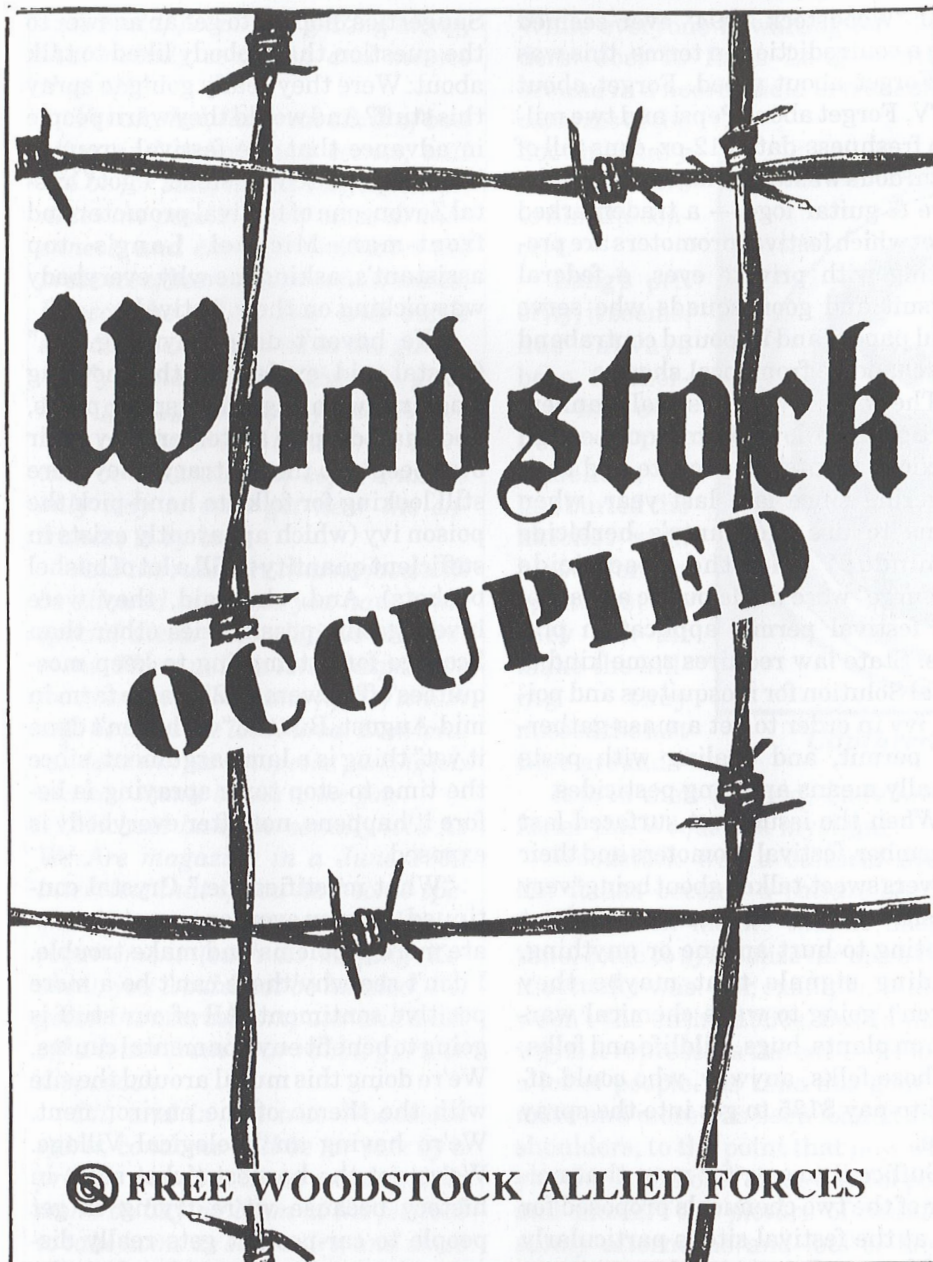
"We haven't done anything yet," Crystal said, explaining that nothing was firm with regard to spray plans, and that, despite statements by their own people to the contrary, they were still looking for folks to hand-pick the poison ivy (which apparently exists in sufficient quantity to fill a lot of bushel baskets). And, she said, they were investigating possibilities other than Scourge for attempting to keep mosquitoes off a swampy 250-acre farm in mid-August. But the "we haven't done it yet" thing is a lame argument, since the time to stop toxic spraying is before it happens, not after everybody is exposed.

"What mystifies me," Crystal continued, "is why everyone wants to create more problems and make trouble. I don't see why there can't be a more positive sentiment. All of our stuff is going to benefit environmental causes. We're doing this mural around the site with the theme of the environment. We're having an Ecological Village. We've got the hardest ticket sales in history because we're trying to get people to car-pool. It gets really discouraging working here when I see the efforts that are going into trying to do something good. Everybody wants to shoot us down. No matter what you do, it's wrong."

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100 of these posters appeared in Woodstock, weeks before showtime.

My head clicked into that mode that it sometimes does when I'm talking to a well-intentioned, sensitive person who might be complicit in poisoning people. I explained that I wasn't shooting at them, just trying to inform the public of the very serious nature of the toxic chemicals the promoters seemed likely to spray on the festival site. And I explained that I had been trying to contact David Weiss, the festival's environmental guy, for weeks, but the messages seemed to be falling down a well.

Crystal counter-explained that everybody was really swamped putting together the festival.

"I'm working here for a really minimal salary. You know why? I want to

be part of making Woodstock happen for my daughter's generation. I have a 17 year-old daughter who is doing the [Woodstock 1994] Youth Movement....The priority is to give something to this generation that's been labeled Generation X. You know? And give it a chance for expression that we had."

How adorable.

A little Woodstock for the kids. Their very own, brought to you by Mom and Dad and Corporate America. Where we can all come together as one big Family of Humanity at a virtual-reality exhibit. Get past the whole Gen X, Lost Generation, We're Nobody stigma, and suddenly define ourselves at a prefabricated "generational experi-

ence."

What Ms. Zevon seems oblivious to, is the fact that it's pretty difficult to launch a national youth movement from a couple of contrived Youth Committee meetings, which counting her daughter, included no more than a dozen listless, apathetic hippie-wannabes. Hardly a representative spectrum of America's young.

This is a festival, keep in mind, where you can't bring even a picnic lunch, in case you happen to eat organic. (The food people, Fine Host Inc., claim this is not so they can make bails of cash, but rather because if people bring in food, it's likely to spoil, and the vendors will get blamed [read, "sued"] when food poisoning breaks out. They also hung up twice on *As We Are* when we asked about how people with religious or dietary exemptions would be able to bring in their special food.)

A counter-culture festival where just about all the performers are millionaire white men, granted, some of whom have political opinions. And a place where you can learn about the dangerous effects of pesticides at the Ecological Village, while walking around barefoot on grass that may be contaminated with one or another chemical extremely hazardous to wildlife.

"Well," I said, tired of my calls not being returned from their seemingly mythological environmental coordinator, "if David Weiss has time to talk to the Sprockets, then he should have time to talk to me."

(Sometimes the old Woodstock Ventures media machine needs a little grease, and usually, the Sprockets are it. But we'll get back to the Sprockets in a bit.)

Crystal took a message and had to answer the other phone. We said goodbye.

Mysteriously, Weiss called me back in an hour, and fortunately, he had something to say. Although it's use was not certain, he had made a lot of progress finding a non-toxic mosquito repellent that might satisfy county health officials.

Despite his efforts to resist the use of Roundup, he said that there was no ready substitute for killing poison ivy, and there was way too much to pick by

hand. So the herbicide Monsanto, which is contaminated with the carcinogen 1,4-dioxane, would probably be used. Apart from this, he said, festival planners were doing their best to use things like recyclable temporary road surfaces to keep down the waste. And Eco Village sounded like it might be pretty interesting, with a number of solid environmental groups taking part in this aspect of the event.

Herbicides at Woodstock. What a concept. . .

Meet The Sprockets

Krumville, New York was almost, though not very almost, the site of the Woodstock festival in 1969. Good thing, too, because there would not have been room to accommodate about 450,000 of the people who showed up. But Krumville, which is about half an hour down from Woodstock, is where the Sprockets live and work and have fun inventing ways to play with the mass media.

The Sprockets are the "official spokespeople" for the Woodstock Underground, a loosely organized bunch of local artists upon whom, in a very real sense, the credibility of the whole idea of "Woodstock" is based. As the Woodstock Underground's spokespeople, they advocate for the creative and economic rights of artists, of which Ulster County has a great many.

Symbolizing the fact that they represent the "creative anybody," the Sprockets wear paper bags over their heads, and dress in white Tyvec suits, white gloves and, lately, their own tee shirt designs. Attached to their bags are cards that say, "PRESS — for in-

formation." Their "presscards," or their finesse, got them on the festival's Official Press List, and when they show up for Official Press Conferences at the Official Woodstock Ventures office and elsewhere, they draw the media like a vortex.

"Our message is very rational, intelligent, and well-researched, but it's packaged in a ridiculous form," said one of the Sprockets, who, being creative anybodies, try to maintain their anonymity when they're quoted in the media. "We challenge those corporations whose packaging looks very legitimate, but whose message is often ridiculous. The ridiculousness of our performance and the ridiculousness of their message level themselves out, so we have a common meeting ground."

It seems to be working. Of the hundreds of artists who have come to Woodstock looking for a way into the festival, they are among the very few who have gotten the attention of Woodstock Ventures and the local press. The *Freeman*, in its constant quest for news, will even be running a daily cartoon strip by the Sprockets (featuring, naturally, the Sprockets).

As they told Michael Lang in a recent meeting: "The Sprockets are the vocal chords for the Woodstock Underground, which is a creative underground movement whose prime objective is to prevent the corporate takeover of the most emotionally charged small town in the world, Woodstock. We regard Woodstock as not simply delineated by town lines, but rather Woodstock is what we like to think of as an attitude. It's a Woodstock, Hudson Valley, New York state of mind."

The Sprockets' mockery of Woodstock 94 was inspired by direct experience. In their day job, they design and make funky clocks that are sold in museum gift shops around the country. They got involved with the Woodstock event when they came up with a Woodstock festival logo that they wanted to silk screen onto canvas bags and tee-shirts, as well as make into clocks and watches. Like a lot of local business people, they saw an opportunity to ride the creative *Tsunami* of the Woodstock festival and also make a few bucks — a great wave which was going to rage across the Hudson Valley whether you had a surfboard or not.

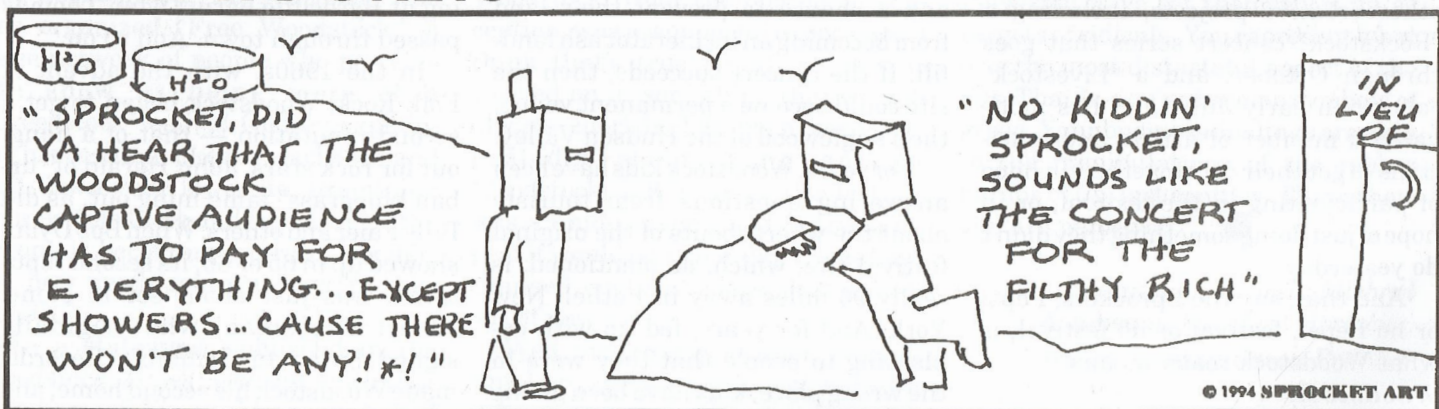
Much of their criticism of Woodstock '94 comes from their feeling that the festival is steamrolling through the area without really giving anything back to its citizens. It's not easy to make ends meet in Ulster County, particularly for artists; so when a bunch of slick corporate hustlers make plans to make a killing off of other people's lifestyles — it rings particularly hollow for most creative denizens of the region.

And it was the Sprockets' attempt to make a little money to squirrel away for the future, money in a sense derived from their own lives and their own community, that slammed them into the iron fist of Woodstock '94.

A prototype of their logo design, printed onto a canvas bag, was being kept at the Screen Tech print shop in nearby Hurley, NY, when a private investigator for Woodstock Ventures, posing as a computer salesman, convinced the guy behind the counter into selling him one of everything that was lying around. And by being at the wrong

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place at the wrong time, the Sprockets' innocent prototype got busted.

Next thing they knew, everybody was in federal court answering an injunction filed by Woodstock Ventures Inc. (The canvas bag, which was not yet in production and therefore not in violation of anybody's trademark, is still being held without bail.)

Federal court, they say, was an interesting thing, but the Sprockets figured out fast that getting tied up in lawsuits was no way to make a living. They hired a couple of Manhattan lawyers to research the trademark issue, made some tactical decisions, and started coming up with ideas that didn't step on the tender feet of any corporate giants.

Their first design was the "Woodstock Vultures" tee-shirt (pictured on our cover). A big "TM" claims the territory, in case Pepsi gets any bright ideas.

And a long disclaimer written around the design disavows any association whatsoever with Woodstock Ventures, the Woodstock 1994 festival, or any of that stuff.

"We got into this whole thing because of the outrageous atmosphere that prevailed, which was created by the corporate mandates and heavy-handed legal tactics," explained one of the Sprockets.

Now, they are advising the artistic community to steer clear of the dove and guitar trademark, which their research indicates is clearly the property of Woodstock Ventures. They feel that this will only help local artists and would-be artists become more creative. There's nothing particularly creative about ripping off somebody else's logo.

In the spirit of the Sprockets, the Woodstock event has spawned a lot of other creative projects, including a "Rockstock" concert series that goes through October, and a "Livestock" concert in early July, and has motivated a number of artists and musicians to get their acts together, in hope of participating in the festival, or in hope of just doing something they didn't do yesterday.

And that, say the Sprockets, Pepsi or no Pepsi, festival or no festival, is what Woodstock really means.

Woodstock

30

There is, by the way, an actual place called Woodstock, New York. It is located eight or so miles down County Route 212 from Saugerties, New York, a locality known mainly for the Veteran Pork Store and for Exit 20 on the New York State Thruway, which features the friendliest toll collectors anywhere in the Empire State. Saugerties is also the home of Winston Farm, where the festival is scheduled to happen this August. The Winston Farm was the first choice location for Woodstock 1969, but the owners would have no part of it. This time, they accepted an offer of nearly \$1 million,

Sprockets to Woodstock Ventures and Polygram:

*"...You represent what was
the most distasteful aspect of
the 80s. That is, you've become
symbols of greed. Your business
dealings are akin to the
manipulations of the robber
barons of the last century.
That is how you are
perceived."*

and a chance to prevent their land from becoming an incinerator ashlandfill. If the concert succeeds, then the site could become a permanent venue, the Tanglewood of the Hudson Valley.

For years, Woodstock kids have been answering questions from tourists about the whereabouts of the original festival site, which, as mentioned, is really 90 miles away in Bethel, New York. And for years, fed up with explaining to people that they were in the wrong place, kids have been giving

unsuspecting tourists seemingly complex directions which largely consisted of telling them to make four right turns.

Woodstock itself has been an artist's haven since the turn of the century, when Peter Whitehead started Byrdcliffe Colony, an experimental arts and crafts settlement which was based on an English movement that was afoot at the time. Whitehead and company were astonished by the beauty of Overlook Mountain and the surrounding valleys, which were conveniently located just over two hours north of New York City.

A few years later, a man named Hervey White had philosophical differences with Whitehead and, with a bunch of followers, started another establishment called Maverick, which was instantly successful. To this day, Maverick is still functioning, and its Maverick Concert Series is in its 79th season. Through the 1920s and 30s, Maverick was the scene of wild festivals attended by Bohemians from New York City and elsewhere.

A little later on, the Art Students League created a studio in Woodstock, which is still functional today as the Woodstock School of Art. Fine artists who worked in Woodstock have included: George Bellows, Milton Avery, Phillip Gustin, Konrad Cramer, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, and others. To this day, a lot of the great post-modernists still hang out up here, but you may not see them out that often.

Over the years, Woodstock has been enormously attractive to artists because of the natural setting, and because of the liberalizing influence of the other artists who lived up here. It's been a literary Mecca as well. Joseph Campbell wrote his first book here. Sci-Fi writer Theodore Sturgeon spent time here. Wallace Stevens did a reading at Byrdcliffe barn. Dylan Thomas passed through town. And so on.

In the 1960s, with the advent of Folk Rock, Woodstock began to get a second reputation — that of a hangout for rock stars. John Herald of "urban bluegrass" fame hung out, as did Billy Faier and others. When Bob Dylan showed up in 65 or 66, its second reputation was just about set in stone. Albert Grossman, who originally signed Dylan to Columbia Records, made Woodstock his second home, and

started what is now the Bearsville Theater Complex and recording studio just outside of town. John Sebastian, Van Morrison, Tim Hardin and The Band are all names associated with Woodstock, as are the Spin Doctors, the B-52s and lots of other musical types.

Today, the most significant artistic fact about Woodstock are the dozen or so recording studios up here, including Bearsville, Dreamland, NRS Studio, Neveesa, Applehead, and others.

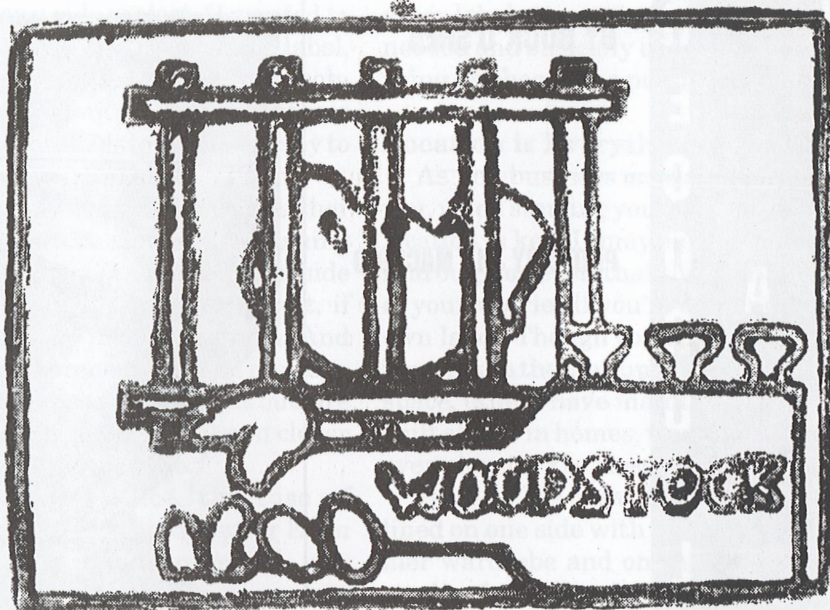
As a place to live and hang out, it's what you'd call a real place with pretty real people. It has a real newspaper with real articles, and a radio station (WDST, 100.1 FM) that's a haven for progressive rock. Woodstock is a rare place where controversy is not considered offensive and where people are not made into heretics for doing their thing. Local residents are the people most aware of Woodstock's heritage, which is an immense reserve of creative energy that is the basis of calling the Woodstock festival "Woodstock."

There have been a wide variety of reactions to the festival within the Woodstock community, ranging from being excited about all the people who are coming to town to spend money, to utter disgust that the name of the town and the name of a very important historical event are being co-opted into a kind of corporate pseudo-hippie Disneyland. A lot of other people are just amused, and a few have no opinion whatsoever.

John Godsey is a Woodstock resident who, disgusted by the incredible fanfare and legal hassles surrounding the festival, took up the cause of trying to set Woodstock free from what he has termed a "capitalist fascist invasion."

"Woodstock was about sharing. This was about greed," says Godsey, who has organized "Free Woodstock," a loose network of people who perceive the show as being more of a "Greedstock" festival. Godsey, explaining his position, likes to reach over and pull down your lower lip, examining your bottom teeth and explaining, "Everyone is becoming a pirate, wondering how much gold you have in your mouth."

In a statement published in the *Woodstock Times*, Godsey and other members of his coalition explained



anonymous woodcut

their view that, "Woodstock is a state of mind that cannot be appropriated and packaged as a sort of corporate commodity. It is a concept, a revolution, a *revelation*. It cannot be owned and it cannot be sold back to us without its meaning and content." The name and the concept of Woodstock, they felt, was being co-opted by giant corporations who were just trying to get richer on the legacy of the 1969 festival.

Lang, the partner in Woodstock Ventures Inc. who lives in Woodstock, countered their accusations by pointing out that, "It's hard to co-opt something you were part of creating. I don't feel we've compromised ourselves in any way that balances the positive effects of having the event."

For years, Lang has said that Woodstock was something he would never attempt again. In a 1979 book about Woodstock, he wrote, "For me, Woodstock, from completion to conception, was a wonderful experience. I think that's true for all of us who worked on it, something that we will always cherish. I've been asked repeatedly about doing another Woodstock, but I think the festival was a unique event, and to try to repeat it would be a mistake. Times have changed, and new ideas should grow out of new times."

Well, times certainly have changed. And Lang seems to have put aside his distaste for attempting a rerun, in his

never-ending quest for the almighty buck.

But for many in the Woodstock community, and indeed, the world over, Woodstock Ventures Inc., Polygram, Pepsi, and Corporate America will never be able to recreate the Ghost of Woodstock. They do not seem to realize that slaves to the profit motive cannot simultaneously pretend to be liberators of the oppressed, or even, liberators of the spirit. They do not seem to realize that the first Woodstock was an accident of epic proportions, and that their role in it was merely setting it in motion. They do not realize that the very people that they seek to imitate, mock them unmercifully.

As one Sprocket put it to Mr. Lang: "Woodstock Ventures and Polygram have their agenda and we have ours. The problem is that you have put yourself in a very uncomfortable position. That is, Woodstock Ventures and Polygram have set themselves up as targets of ridicule. You represent what was the most distasteful aspect of the 80s. That is, you've become symbols of greed. Your business dealings are akin to the manipulations of the robber barons of the last century. That is how you are perceived." ●

Additional research: Michael Ackerman, Mickhail Horowitz, Hilary Lanner, Jason Pramas.