

Woodstock in Review

“Inked, Pierced, and Ready to Rock!”

by Deanna Symoski
features editor

This summer I attended a little music festival called Woodstock '99—maybe you've heard of it. Or maybe you caught the highlights on Playboy. Either way, I thought I would give you my version of things in this Woodstock review.

Here are some facts: Woodstock ran July 23rd through July 25th in Rome, New York. The actual site—Griffiss Park—was a retired air force base that stretched for miles. There were two stages; the East Stage, termed the main stage simply because of its size, showcased the more high-profile acts, and the West Stage was where crowds went to relax and soak in entertainment in the mid-day sun.

Friday was the first day of bands (though most people, including my friend and I, had been there since the night before). The festivities would have started with SUGAR RAY play-

ing at noon, but the show was cancelled hours before it was to start due to Mark McGrath's case of the sniffles. We ducked into the airplane hangar-turned-movie theater to check out the 72-hour marathon. They were showing PUMP UP THE VOLUME.

The fun started at 4 p.m. when we and about 200,000 other people journeyed the mile and a half rumored to separate the two stages to catch LIVE. With an intensely emotional performance, they dedicated "Lightning Crashes" to the memory of JFK, JR., and set the stage for eight and a half hours of continuous entertainment.

Next was SHERYL CROW who, when commanded by a belligerent crowd member to show us various parts of her anatomy, replied it would cost a lot more than \$150 to see that. THE OFFSPRING followed with a special "tribute" to the Backstreet Boys, and became the "First Band of Bottle-Throwing" as we were held under a frenzied canopy of plastic for the first, but certainly not last, time in

three days.

KORN picked up where DMX left off, and if anybody hadn't yet made the pilgrimage to the main stage, they were making it for KORN. And it was definitely worth it. Finally BUSH, fronted by lead singer Gavin Rossdale, turned in a passionate set and played an hour longer than anyone expected, wrapping Friday night well after midnight.

Saturday, July 24th, was the most anticipated day of the weekend, if not the year. MC's and guest announcers such as Rosie Perez, Stephen Baldwin and Verne Troyer of "Mini-Me" fame repeatedly told us that "today is going to make musical history." And it did.

After a Canadian assault by THE TRAGICALLY HIP, KID ROCK emerged in a white fur coat and exploded into "Bawitaba." In what I think was the most kick-ass performance of the whole festival, Rock showcased his talent in everything from turntable precision to strumming

a blue grass medley featuring "Fortunate Son" and "Sweet Home Alabama."

The need to relax after expending so much energy at Rock's show forced us to wander over to the West Stage to catch EVERCLEAR. Their show was lively, but we could do little more than sit and listen in the 90-degree sun, as we knew we had to trek back to catch DAVE MATTEWS.

Dave Matthews—what can I say? The fact that COLLECTIVE SOUL postponed their set at the west stage (they didn't want to play against the Band) is evidence of the power that is The Dave Matthews Band. All—and I mean ALL—of the reported 225,000 people at the Griffiss site piled into the East Stage lot to see the awesome ensemble play for one of the largest crowds ever assembled for a musical venue.

Even though I survived mainly on fruit and cereal (and water) for three days, it was time to take a dinner break, so we headed back to the tent

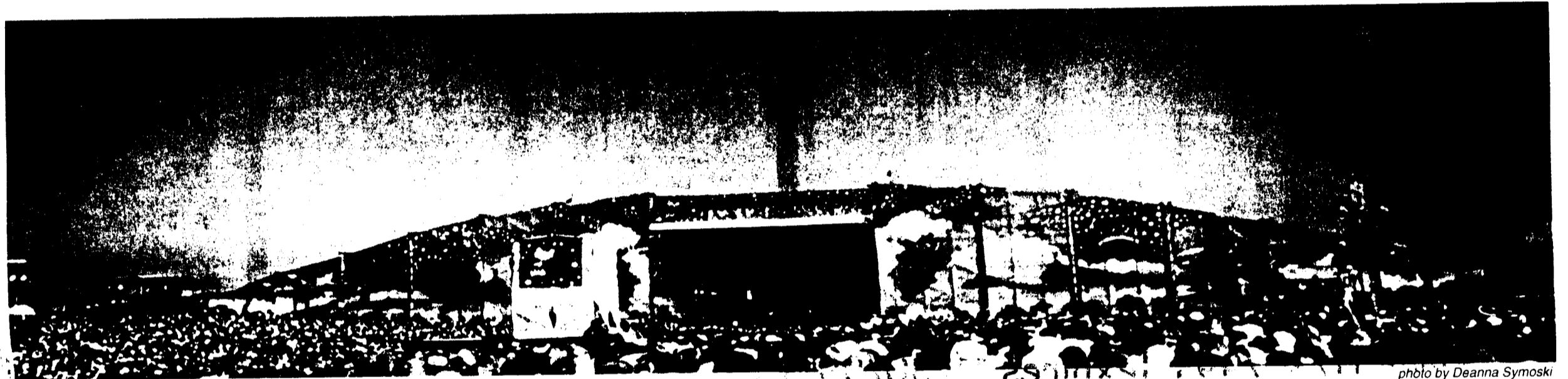
until dusk when LIMP BIZKIT brought down the house...and the plywood fencing...and the relay towers... They were the first of the infamous trio of bands Saturday night that have since stirred up so much controversy. RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE and METALLICA followed, and though we caught enough to say we were there, admittedly we went shopping in the "villages" and listened from a safe distance. Five foot four-hundred and twenty pounds, isn't going to get you very far in the pit.

All-night raves were hosted each night in yet another airplane hangar, and since Saturday night's was DJ'd by FATBOY SLIM, we thought it'd be worth checking out. We ended up dancing until we could no longer stand, and finally, sometime before sunrise, made it back to the tent we hadn't see since twelve hours before.

Early Sunday, we packed up what we could carry and what wasn't so dirty we would never wear again (my sneakers, unfortunately were sacri-

ficed at the site), and made the same two-mile trek back to the car we hadn't seen in three days. Due to work obligations Monday, we were forced to leave Sunday afternoon, but we were sure to catch THE BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA before we left. We danced some more, this time in the sweltering heat, and finally tore ourselves away from what had become home.

Though there was an endless string of entertainment and activity, we could only move as fast as our legs would take us and experience as much as our minds could absorb. For every image and sound we caught, a million more whizzed past us without so much as a glance and I'm sorry that I can't give you ALL of Woodstock '99, but no one could possibly do that. I can only encourage you to head out to the next one, if there is one, and experience the Woodstock Weekend for yourself.



A view of the Main Stage as one of over seventy bands plays in the mid-day sun.

photo by Deanna Symoski

A Woodstock Rebuttal: Why Kurt Loder Sucks

by Deanna Symoski
features editor

Believe it or not, there are four-letter words out there more powerful than those spewed forth from Kid Rock's potty mouth; more compelling than Fred Durst's Saturday-Night battle cry. They are words that would not warrant a parental advisory sticker on any CD, but they have changed the way one particular event this summer will be remembered in the annals of time. What are they? Fire, loot, riot and mosh.

By themselves, they are not especially disturbing, but in the hands of prehistoric reporters and a media as hell-bent on sensationalizing incident as those accused of creating it, these words become toxic.

Enter Woodstock '99. By now we all know what happened that infamous last night. What you may not know, however, is that coverage of the three-day festival turned out to be as reckless as that last night in the pit.

I was there. I spent the four dollars on overpriced water, waited in line for a porta potty that smelled of something the likes of which I hope I never discover. I searched for shade, walked on trash and took pictures of everything else doing the same thing. I was NOT one of these prima donna reporters cozied up in an air-conditioned hotel, hanging out with rock stars and roadies. That being said, I'm going to let you in on the best kept secret of the summer, something I guarantee contradicts everything you've read about the event so far: Woodstock was FUN!

But you didn't see that one coming, but how could you? The media, namely MTV fronted by the "so off target I'm wondering where he really was for three days" Kurt Loder, doesn't want you to know about a successful weekend of interesting people and superior entertainment. "Fun" isn't what keeps your worried parents

glued to TRL after your little sister, who between Backstreet Boys videos, tells them she heard the words fire, loot, riot and mosh.

Now I understand that there was more than one negative report about Woodstock after it so tragically ended the night of Sunday, July 25th, but it seems Mr. Loder has taken on the responsibility of single-handedly trashing the festival (no pun intended).

Let it slide when he told his whiney "escape-through-a-cornfield" story NUMEROUS times to a saddened and terrified Carson Daly; I ignored his off-hand comments about Griffiss Park being ominously located between a mental institution and a prison; I even overlooked when he (wrongly) reported that there was a feeling of menace in the air from the very beginning.

I've tried to be reasonable, Mr. Loder, but Your ROLLING STONE article - "Tales from Satan's Playground" - has pushed me over the limit. Not only is this report especially scathing, it is frighteningly incorrect, and so I think worthy of a response.

Yes, there was heat and trash and all sorts of wild NC-17 activities, but if you had, for even a few moments, stopped your camera crew from looking for the most extreme behavior they could possibly find—if you, yourself, had for just a couple of minutes climbed down from the MTV perch hung like Jabba's Sand Barge near the front of the main stage where undoubtedly the wildest of behavior was taking place—you might have noticed what the rest of us did: kind people, cool merchandise (admittedly overpriced, but it's still fun to look), and rain tents.

You were an outsider looking into an environment that after the first night, the rest of us had come to embrace. We were a community held together by bad water and stinky toilets, united not so much by the product that you made us, but by our relentless search for shade. You CAN'T

write about that weekend because you weren't there—not really.

And don't blame the music for what happened the last night. Don't crucify Bizkit's Durst for inciting a mob when your colleague, in an article four pages before your own, hails Durst for for being so concerned with the safety of those in the pit. Don't futilely argue that Korn ignited the chaos with an energetic set Friday night and don't assume you're young enough to enjoy any of this.

In case you forgot, Mr. Loder, you still work for MTV—Music Television??? Ring any bells? Without music, you do not exist. These guys own you so crawl down from the pedestal on which you have so conveniently been sitting since the Monday morning after the festival, and take responsibility for the phenomenon you have helped create (and be proud—it was a damn cool one!) You are business partners with Kiedis and Davis and de la Roche, so if you blame them, blame yourself, too.

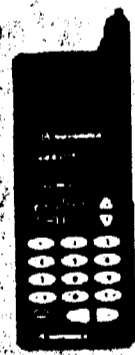
Woodstock '99 was not the cauldron of anarchy you and other reporters would like everyone to believe it was, and if it had not ended so badly you would be celebrating everything you have so hypocritically denounced. The promoters, not the fire department, would be your new heroes. You are part of an exaggerated media, Mr. Loder, your job is to make a big deal out of everything. You were looking for the worst parts (the best parts to make a story with unfortunately) and you found them.

But that was not the whole of Woodstock '99. There was life beyond the main stage. Did you camp out, make friends, get dirty? I did, and I had a much better time than you. No this wasn't your mother's Woodstock, but it wasn't yours, either. It was our Woodstock—Woodstock '99—and we thank you to keep your four-letter words out of it.

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