
sea mountain medical park Woodstock at 40: Everywhere a song and a celebration

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Woodstock at 40: Everywhere a song and a celebration http://www.usatoday.com/life/music/news/2009-08-15-woodstock_N.htm 8/15/2009 By John W. Barry, The Poughkeepsie (N.Y.) Journal BETHEL, N.Y. - Playing an electric guitar that seemed as charged and as amped as the sold-out crowd of 15,000, 15-year-old Conrad Oberg of Florida opened the 40th anniversary Woodstock concert at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts Saturday by playing the instrumental version of The Star-Spangled Banner that Jimi Hendrix made famous in August 1969. The crowd of mostly Baby Boomers stood for the national anthem, raised their arms and flashed peace signs with their fingers - a symbol of hope and defiance that has remained timeless for more than four decades. 40 YEARS LATER: Havens performs iconic Woodstock song Bethel Woods sits on the original Woodstock Music & Art Fair site in Sullivan County and launched a weekend of anniversary events Friday with two performances by festival veteran Richie Havens. Big Brother and the Holding Company, members of which backed Janis Joplin at Woodstock, delivered a set that included riveting renditions of Down on Me, Piece of My Heart, Summertime and a singalong with the crowd on Me and Bobby McGee. FIND MORE STORIES IN: Barack Obama | McDonald's | Jimi Hendrix | Janis Joplin | Woodstock Festival | Woody Guthrie | The Band | Sullivan County | Arlo Guthrie | Levon Helm | Canned Heat | Max Yasgur | The Star-Spangled Banner | Richie Havens | This Land Is Your Land | Ten Years After | Piece of My Heart | Bethel Woods | Country Joe McDonald | Michael Lang | I Feel Like I'm Fixin to Die | Me and Bobby McGee | Big Brother and the Holding Company Another Woodstock veteran, Country Joe McDonald, served as master of ceremonies for the concert and introduced Big Brother, then returned later to read the names of local soldiers who died in the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars. McDonald, a U.S. service veteran himself, then delivered his Woodstock anthem, the I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag. And just as he did at Woodstock - famously captured in the Woodstock documentary - McDonald opened the song by asking the crowd to spell out an expletive: Give me an F. And just like in the movie, members of the crowd stood up, clapped their hands and sang along, putting particular emphasis on the lyrics, Whoopee/We're all gonna die. It reminded me of the days when we were really protesting this sort of thing, said Paul Salzberg, 57, of Lake Huntington, N.Y. Country Joe, in between Canned Heat and Ten Years After, played the 1960s protest anthem For What It's Worth, Woody Guthrie's This Land is Your Land and Coming Into Los Angeles, which Arlo Guthrie performed at Woodstock. One of the big showstoppers of the day, a song that spanned the 40-year chasm separating Aug. 15, 1969 from Aug. 15, 2009, was Canned Heat's performance of Goin' Up the Country, which played during the opening of the Woodstock documentary. It was fabulous, said Jean Hannigan, 46, of Beacon, N.Y., who hopped to the beat. She wore flowers in her hair, peace-sign earrings, a shirt with a peace sign and sunglasses with heart-shaped lenses. Awesome. Beautiful. Asked why she turned out for the event, she said, I was 6 when this happened, and I'm 46 and I'm here. This is the greatest ever. At the beginning of the show, Sam Yasgur, son of Max Yasgur, who owned the farm land on which Woodstock was held, spoke to the crowd: He would have been overjoyed that four decades later, you and hundreds of thousands of others continue to have fun and music, and nothing but fun and music, on this beautiful site. A mellow tailgate scene was underway in the parking lots hours in advance of the opening performance, and streams of people walked the roads on the perimeter of Bethel Woods. Several dozen gathered at the iconic Woodstock monument at the corner of West Shore and Hurd roads, near where the stage sat during Woodstock. Concertgoers spread out on blankets and relaxed in lawn chairs that Bethel Woods rented for \$5 each. Some in the crowd seemed oblivious to the music, playing with children on a large field over a ridge from the concert pavilion, or simply taking in what seemed like an endless view of rolling fields. Michael Lang, one of the promoters who staged the 1969 event, introduced his 8-year-old twin sons the site and took them to The Museum at Bethel Woods. I spent a lot of my heart and soul here, he said. Interest in the anniversary has been unbelievable, Lang said. You know why I think this one is so big - because of what's going on in the world and the country. Because of Obama being in the White House, the similarities in the times and the wars, it's resonating pretty strongly for people. Hours before he was scheduled to close the concert, Levon Helm, who played Woodstock with The Band, recalled, The first time we came, it was just another gig. This many years later, it's an event - it's a historic event. I'm happy to get to play.

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