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The Aging of Aquarius: Peace and Polygrip at Woodstock 50
By James FitzGerald

Woodstock, New York, August 15, 2019: The 50th anniversary of the Woodstock Peace Festival passed quietly into history last weekend after nearly one million baby boomers, most in their 70s and 80s, shuffled and teetered onto Max Yasgur's famous farmer's field, reclined in endless, neat rows of expensive lawn chairs, and listened distractedly to the mythic popular music that has defined the largest generation in history. Police reported no cardiac arrests.

Of the dozens of 1960s rock groups performing at the two-day mega-concert, many had re-formed specifically to play for the 50th anniversary reunion. The opening act saw Sly and The Family Stone Deaf sweat and mumble through their classic hit, "Hot Mutual Funds In The Summertime", followed by a gentle acoustic set by retired stockbrokers Crosby, Stills, Nash and Olde. After a moving, nostalgic tribute to the diverse oeuvre of the late Frank Zappa, the Mothers of Convention earned polite applause for their tasteful and dignified on-stage deportment.

Representing the dwindling survivors of the California Sound, The Grand-Mamas and Papas hit all the right sunny, optimistic notes, as did The Lovin' Spoonful of Geritol, The Grateful Dads, The Beached Boys, and The Bald Eagles. Big Grandpa and the Holding Company gamely held their own while the senile, slow-moving Tom Waits (For No Man) earned no new fans by taking nearly an hour to set up.

For the British Invasion portion of the festival, successive, over-long sets by Jethro Dull, Grey Floyd, Simpler Minds, Blind (Deaf and Dumb) Faith, The Bonzo Guide-Dog Band, Cheap Geria-Trick, The Back Kinks, Catatonic Stevens, Supergramp, Emerson, Lake and Embalmer, and Public Enema drove armies of incontinent fans to the washrooms. Happily, Gerry and The Pacemakers, feeling no need to amend their name for the festival, inspired a more sustained burst of appreciation, although nothing to compare to the Bee Gee's surprisingly spry rendition of "Stay'n Alive."

Heavy metal artists Iron Lung Butterfly and Velveeta Underground did not disappoint the hard-of-hearing while the sole Canadian bands, Blue Rinse Rodeo and The Plastically Hip, proved a surprise smash with countless sweet little old ladies. Simon and Garfunkel's rendition of "Bridge-Playing Over

Troubled Water", while initially touching, soon gave way to an embarrassing public display of vicious, verbal backbiting by the two long-feuding partners.

Although the massive, elderly crowd must have been tiring by early Saturday evening, most die-hard fans showed few signs of needing a nap. Indeed, the sprawling tribe of senior citizens typically kept it together, in body and spirit, by surreptitiously circulating bracing cocktails composed of equal parts prozac, viagra, mescaline and metamucil.

As the festival was winding down by late Sunday afternoon, rumours began to percolate that the last living members of The Beatless -- Sir Paul, King George, and Lord of the Ringos -- would come together in an unscheduled final appearance to render anthemic versions of "Back In The RRSP" and "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart Attack Band." Would they be joined on stage by The Autist Formerly Known As Prince? (I'm Not Answering) The Doors? Would Sour Cream spin something off their revolutionary "Wheel Chairs of Fire" album? How about Senator Bob Dylan, sporting his signature shades, crooning insightful lyrics from his visionary "Blinde On Blinde" period? Skeleton John doing "Saturday Night's All Right For Cribbage"? Sick Jagger and The Mossy Stones whining "Still Can't Get No Satisfaction"? Dead Zeppelin straining to perform "Stairmaster to Heaven"?

But after it was clear as mud that not every single major rock god adorning the '60s pantheon would magically materialize on demand, the final two acts of an unforgettable, cosmic weekend unfolded as they should.

When Urethra Franklin's unrelentingly morose, 48 minute interpretation of "Dr. Feelbad" brought down the house, alas, it really did bring down the house, triggering sporadic outbreaks of self-inflicted euthanasia. Fortunately, as a redemptive antidote to this unwelcome infusion of bad vibes, ageless sex machine James Brown, 83, bounded dramatically into the deep purple spotlight, shed his trademark cape and kicked old-fashioned ass like he did at the turn of the last century. In the shimmering wake of his wild, buck-naked, cane-waving, denture-rattling, show-stopping, heart-stopping finale, "Papa's Got A Brand New Colostomy Bag", the undulating waves of wrinkled baby boomers -- bald and fat like the babies they once were -- were left, appropriately enough, in stitches.

Give "rest-in-peace" a chance, brothers and sisters!

Performers who also appeared at Woodstock 50:

The Fifth Dementia
The Dis-Association
The Chamber Pot Brothers
The Pointless Sisters
Jefferson Airbag
100 Years After
Marvin Ben-Gaye
Blood, Sweat, Tears and Sputum
Moby Grapejuice
The Electric Blanket Orchestra
Creedence Clearwater Unrevivable
Grand Fugue Railroad
Robert Implant & Jimmy Pager
Gary Pucker and The Union Generation Gap
Suntana
Van Moribund
10,000 Geriatrics
The Old Spice Girls
Caned Heat
The Electric Prunes
Sid Viscous
Chuck Beri-Beri
Stevie Wander
X-Ray Charles
The New Riders of the Purple Prostate
No (formerly known as Yes)
Senior Walker and the Fall-Stars
Mitch Ryder and the Detroit (Meals On) Wheels
The Rolling Head-Stones