

# Cincinnati

## Women's News Co-op

1970

A lot of people who went to the Cincinnati Rock Festival on Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, got a lot more than they thought they would for their \$6.50.

At least four people got broken arms, three got broken legs; at least ten got head or body wounds requiring stitches. One girl was in the hospital with a brain concussion; another guy has a broken back. All at the hands of the Queen City police.

Seventy-nine people were arrested for charges ranging from disorderly conduct to sale of drugs which carries a 30-year sentence in Ohio.

The festival was geared pretty much to the local area with a lot of local talent, although quite a few people from Michigan went. Russ Gibb, known around Detroit for his Grande and Eastown enterprises, was a financial backer and Mike Quatro, remembered for his Black Arts fiasco last fall, was the promoter. The festival was held in the old stadium of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team.

The advance publicity stated that people would be allowed to sit on the infield grass, but when people actually tried to do that they were told to get off and the show was stopped until they did. Quatro explained that this was because the stadium owners had thought the new stadium would be completed by then; but as it turned out there were six more games to be played there and the owners didn't want the grass torn up.

One guy who went with a vanload of people from Detroit didn't even try to get in because when they got there there were so many cops around that the place was really a downer. Quatro admitted that he paid the City of Cincinnati \$18,000 for the cops to be on duty. The cops were especially uptight about drugs and busted many people on possession and sales.] (Quatro said that people shouldn't bring drugs to a concert.)

The situation started getting tense when there was a hassle over sitting on the grass. At one point the announcer asked the audience to help encourage the people to get off. The stadium, holding 29,000, was a sellout and there were a lot more people who had come from Michigan and Indiana who wanted in. A fence was pushed over and there was also a large crowd at the main gate attempting to crash in.

The Cincinnati cops freaked at the sight of the masses of young people and went into action swinging clubs and spraying Mace. People on the inside then got uptight too. A few attempted to stop the pigs from cracking people's heads or arresting them and themselves got cracked or busted for resisting an officer. Some tried to leave the stadium and got trapped in the exit tunnels where they got sprayed with Mace and clubbed.

The cops also went into the parking lots and assaulted people who were just sitting in their cars. A van full of people attempting to leave was stopped, shot through with Mace and the occupants dragged out.

For the people arrested, exorbitantly high bails were set since the judges had declared that a riot condition existed. As of the following Wednesday 40 people were still in jail and on Friday there were still four left.

One kid we interviewed said that when he gave up all his property at the jailhouse he turned in \$104 but was given a property slip for only \$15. When he was finally released in the evening he tried to collect back at least the \$15 but was told it could only be done between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. the next day. Also people's cars were impounded and many didn't have the money to get them out.

The repercussions from the Cincinnati horror show will last a long time. Besides the people who still have to face trials or who will have permanent injuries there are many who are angry and who don't want to see rock festivals turn into disasters like that. They are putting Gibb and Quatro up against the wall about using city cops, about their responsibilities for legal and medical fees, and about their responsibility for planning a good concert.

Many also feel that some of the profits should be turned back to the community. A share of the blame, as Quatro points out, must be taken by the rock bands which charged a total of \$68,000 for their ability to turn on a lot of kids who willingly allow themselves to be exploited.

The alternatives for people who want to dig on music and grass and such things seem to be either to demand free concerts or at least ones that are planned by people responsible to the community, or to include a helmet with the other things one usually takes to those kinds of sets.

Any witnesses to arrests or beatings in Cincinnati should contact the Fifth Estate, 831-6800.

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See "STP News: People vs. Promoters," FE #108, June 25-July 8, 1970.

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