

Airplane shot down

Fifth Estate Collective

1968

NEW YORK—The Jefferson Airplane's filming of a scene from Jean-Luc Godard's "One American Movie," on location here, resulted in a minor riot, a skin show, a visit from New York's finest, and an impromptu performance for midtown Manhattan office workers.

Out of the welter of confusion come these facts, according to eye witnesses. The group along with the cast and crew of the film were filming on the rooftop of the Schuyler Hotel, directly across from the filming headquarters. The filming started with lead singer Marty Balin delivering an impromptu and richly amplified "Wake Up New York, Wake Up. Free Music. Free Love."

Then the Jefferson Airplane started to play, with residents of neighboring office and apartment buildings hanging out their windows, cheering and demanding encores. The Airplane then invited the audience to join the fun on the roof. Some did, while others jammed the sidewalks below, overflowing on the streets and stopping traffic.

By the time the group was midway through its second number, a delegate from the 18th Precinct (NYPD) appeared and demanded that the music stop.

After a brief lull, the Airplane continued its serenade, augmented by police sirens and five reinforcements from the 18th Precinct. As no one was able to produce a permit for a public performance, the filming and concert ceased.

Then the other show began. Paula Matter, an actress in the cast, appeared on the rooftop clad only in a bedsheet—knee high. She sat down at the drums and accompanied herself to a wavering, high-pitched rendition of "Hey Jude." The police were unconvinced by her art-for-art's sake explanation of her performance.

So by some perverse logic, they arrested actor Rip Torn and David McMullin, chairman of Leacock-Pennebaker, the film associated with Godard in the film. The two had allegedly uttered some angry words and had engaged in pushing and shoving.

Torn and McMullin were taken to the station house, with the former charged with harassment and McMullin charged with failing to get permits for sound devices and movie production and creating unnecessary noise. They were released and issued summonses.



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