

# Destruction in the drizzle on Isle of Wight: Hell's Angels and French anarchists wreck rock festival

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From The New York Times  
and Reuters News Agency

ISLE OF WIGHT — In the chilly dawn drizzle, the Isle of Wight festival ended sombrely yesterday with Richie Havens singing Hare Krishna and mobs of motorcyclists and angry youths ripping down corrugated iron fences and smashing lights.

"To think I spent nine months defending these people, saying how peaceful they were, fighting for them," said the exhausted festival promoter, Ron Foulk, 25, shortly after several wooden food stalls were ripped apart by gangs with iron bars. "Now look what they've done. They're vandals. Nothing else. I would certainly never organize another festival."

The brief outbreak of dawn violence

on the 200-acre festival site, covered with rotting food and empty softdrink cans, marred the tense, but peaceful, weekend pop festival that lured 250,000 young British, U.S., French, German, Swedish and Danish visitors.

Through Sunday night and early yesterday, with thousands leaving the site to wait in mile-long lines for buses to the island's ports and ferries, the stars of the festival began appearing on-stage. The weary audience, huddling in the damp cold, heard such performers as Joan Baez and Jimi Hendrix, who played for 2¼ hours, and, finally, Havens.

By the early morning, gangs of motorcyclists began ripping into empty mobile stalls that sold frankfurters and popcorn. Mobs of youths, who had watched the festival free from a slope facing the stage called "Devastation

Hill," surged toward the corrugated iron fences within the festival site.

Two smoke bombs were hurled at the stage, setting fire to amplification equipment and sending a wave of panic through the crowd. The fire was soon extinguished by festival officials.

Although Fiery Creations, the organizing firm, claimed the damage would total at least \$75,000, police said this was an exaggeration. To prove their point, the organizers took a party of journalists around the site in a security truck shortly after midnight. One food store was still being looted as the truck passed and two others had been removed, together with their contents.

Arc lighting around the arena had been ripped down and telephone lines pulled from the ground.

The rioting fans, led by Hell's Angels and French anarchists, had de-

manded free music since the five-day festival began on Wednesday. The organizers surrendered to the militants' demands and announced that the first two days would be free.

On Sunday night, fearing riots, the organizers again decided to make no charge for admission to the festival arena. Weekend tickets to the day-and-night festival had cost \$7.50.

Nearly 60 policemen with German shepherds and hundreds of the 5,000-man festival security force moved in quickly to quell the violence. The police, however, maintained that the site was relatively calm. "It was only the 5 per cent lunatic fringe," said Douglas Osmond, Hampshire's head constable. "The vast majority here were decent young people. There was far less violence here than at a normal league football match. Our chaps have been

getting on famously with almost everyone."

Chief Osmond said that the incidence of drugs, promiscuous sex and violence at the festival had been relatively small. "I've found the majority of the youngsters charming."

An uneasy, even sour, mood gripped the final hours of the festival. At one point, a local vicar, Rev. Robert Mowyer, appeared on stage to appeal for help for dozens of penniless teen-agers who had either lost or spent their money during the weekend. He was shouted down by a group of noisy youths in the audience.

Quickly, the festival's announcer stepped on stage and said in a breaking voice: "I think you're disgusting. You people haven't the manners to listen to that good man. I hope you never visit the island again."

Welfare groups set up soup kitchens for the penniless and suggested that the Royal Navy provide landing craft.

There was considerable doubt that the island would welcome another pop festival—the first one was held last year—or that promoters would package such a show. The large festival is thought to be a fading phenomenon because of high costs—the Isle of Wight festival organizers say they spent \$1.25-million.

The organizers say their losses may reach \$150,000. The over-all losses may be reduced, however, with recording rights and a film of the festival.

Payment for hour-long performances by such stars as Leonard Cohen, Tiny Tim, Miles Davis, **Joni Mitchell** and Donovan proved the largest expense.