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## Why Woodstock? *Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival*

Woodstock, NY—April 13, 2009—The town of Woodstock is poised to launch a series of fortieth anniversary celebrations of the 1969 Woodstock mega-concert. Prime among these is the July 15, 2009, launch of a new book from publisher WoodstockArts, *Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival: The Backstory to “Woodstock.”* It explains definitively and for the first time **why the festival was named Woodstock, and why it continues to be so closely associated with the town**, even though the concert actually took place in Bethel, NY.

The forthcoming book began last summer as a panel discussion among townspeople knowledgeable about the music scene in the late sixties. It was held on August 9, 2008, at the Colony Café in Woodstock (and followed by a contemporary “Sound-Out”). Panelists included Michael Lang, a Woodstock resident and legendary 1969 Woodstock Festival promoter; Jean Young, co-author with Lang of *Woodstock Festival Remembered*; Bill West, active in local government since the 1960s; Jeremy Wilber, former Town Supervisor and bartender during the sixties at the Sled Hill Café; and Paul McMahan, a local music icon and bona fide hippie. During the course of the wide-ranging conversation the audience learned how Lang and his partners developed the concept for the world-renowned Woodstock Music and Art Fair, and how their thinking was shaped by Woodstock’s legacy of art and music festivals.

A richly illustrated panel discussion transcript comprises the first part of the book. It is followed by a “roots of Woodstock” photo essay that chronicles the Arts and Crafts origins of the town, from its glass-making era in the 1800s to the founding of the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony in 1902. It details the town’s hallowed tradition of weekend-long music concerts—beginning in the early 1900s with Woodstock’s Maverick festivals, and stretching up through the countercultural Sound-Outs of the 1960s. Weston Blelock, one of the book’s co-editors, interviewed more than thirty musicians and artists prominent in the sixties; their comments and anecdotes provide a wonderful counterpoint to the photographic record.

The sixties’ Sound-Outs were launched by John “Jocko” Moffitt and produced on a Woodstock-area farm belonging to Pansy “Pan” Copeland. These festivals—largely unknown beyond the immediate Woodstock region—drew passionate audiences, and featured such performers as Tim Hardin, the Blues Magoos, The Mothers of Invention, Paul Butterfield, Van Morrison and Cat Mother & the All Night Newsboys. **Michael Lang** noted in the panel discussion that **“the Sound-Outs were kind of the spark for the Woodstock Festival. I’d done a series of concerts in Florida . . . The Sound-Outs . . . had a great feel, and [they were] in the country and . . . provided all the guidelines that I needed . . . .”**

The book also highlights such Woodstock artists, writers and performers as Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Allen Ginsberg, Pete Seeger, and Richie Havens. **Bob Fass**, Woodstock Sound-Out emcee and host of WBAI’s *Radio Unnameable* for more than forty years, has contributed a brilliant and evocative foreword to the book. Also included are a compendium of important Woodstock players, a map of historic 1960s locations in the Woodstock area, and 115 images—many of them rare, vintage photos of the Woodstock music and art scenes.

### **About the Editors**

Weston and Julia Blelock have had a presence in the Woodstock area since 1956. A close friend of their family wrote the first history of the town in 1959. (WoodstockArts recently published an "art book edition" of that early title.)

During the sixties Weston was at school in the UK, but summered in Woodstock. He attended several Sound-Outs and the '69 Festival in Bethel. During the 1990s he was a radio journalist in Canada. More recently he co-founded WoodstockArts, a publishing and production company. He is currently Vice President of the Historical Society of Woodstock.

Julia Blelock also grew up in Woodstock. She left town to pursue a marketing career in information technology, based in New York City and Los Angeles. She recently returned to Woodstock and has become an ardent promoter of area artists through her work for the Woodstock Chamber of Commerce & Arts and the Woodstock Arts Consortium. She is a co-founder of WoodstockArts.

### **About WoodstockArts ([www.woodstockarts.com](http://www.woodstockarts.com))**

WoodstockArts is a publishing and production company based in Woodstock, NY. As a publisher it specializes in quality regional art books. A recent title, *Woodstock History and Hearsay*, is an award-winning art history of the town. As producers the company's principals have worked on a number of local projects. One such was staging a guitar sculpture auction in conjunction with Sotheby's/eBay in 2002 for the town's Byrdcliffe Art Colony centennial celebration. Last August WoodstockArts produced the Roots of '69 Woodstock Festival panel discussion and Contemporary Sound-Out. The firm is currently at work on a fortieth anniversary concert scheduled to take place in Woodstock on August 15, 2009.

*Part of the proceeds from Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival will be donated to the [Historical Society of Woodstock](#) and the [Woodstock Chamber of Commerce & Arts](#).*