

TIMEMACHINE

APRIL 1972...THE MAR Y SOL FESTIVAL, PUERTO RICO

APRIL 1 It seemed a good deal at the time. A three-day sojourn in the Caribbean sun, all to the music of Alice Cooper, The Faces, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Black Sabbath, B.B. King, Billy Joel, Dave Brubeck, Elephant's Memory, Roberta Flack, Herbie Mann and a slew of other names. The site was Vega Baja, on Puerto Rico, where the Mar Y Sol festival ultimately kicked off.

Self-confessed hippy Alex Cooley had turned promoter in 1969 and launched the International Pop Festival in his hometown Atlanta. By '72, he was looking further afield for a new project, settling on "Easter in the Caribbean with Music and Friends". Greg Lake is still haunted by memories of ELP's involvement.

"The first thing I remember about the Mar Y Sol festival was stepping down onto the runway to discover the sun was so intense it had begun to melt the tarmac," Lake remembers.

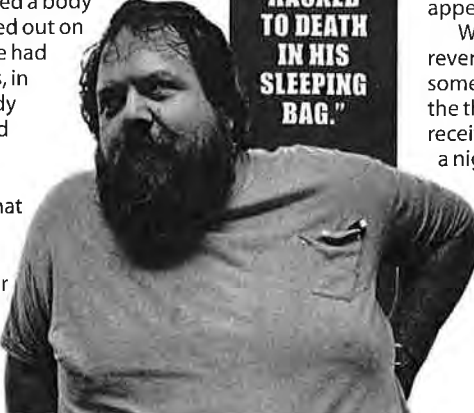
"After quite a long drive we arrived at a luxury tropical hotel. At first it all felt like a holiday atmosphere until we began to learn there were serious problems at the site and the government were trying to get the festival stopped. I remember jumping down out of a helicopter and being greeted by the backstage manager, who told me that they had just killed a rattlesnake under the stage... the whole thing did not feel good. It was not until later that we discovered a body being ferried out on the helicopter we had just arrived in was, in fact, the dead body of someone who'd been murdered, apparently over some drug deal that went wrong."

As the first arrivals made their way to the site,



Too hot: (above) Baton Rouge rockers Pot Liquor on the main stage; (inset left) ELP's Greg Lake; (below) Alex Cooley; (right) an unwitting bill poster.

"ONE CONCERT-GOER WAS HACKED TO DEATH IN HIS SLEEPING BAG."



the Puerto Rican authorities, suddenly aware that thousands of rock fans could be at large on the island, went into legal overdrive, fearing a drug spree. Said Cooley, "The Puerto Rican government got a restraining order to keep us from doing [the festival]. We brought a lawyer in from the States and argued it all the way up to the appeals court - and we won!"

With the injunction reluctantly reversed, the festival went ahead. For some Mar Y Sol was pivotal. A set by the then unknown Billy Joel was wildly received, but for others the event was a nightmare. Several bands, including Fleetwood Mac and Black Sabbath, were scheduled to play but either failed to make it or were prevented from playing. Lake recalls that even those who did make it to the

Cigar ride to the far side: Jerry Lee Lewis, feeling enraged about Chantilly Lace.



JERRY LEE TOPS CHART

APRIL 22 Jerry Lee Lewis's version of Chantilly Lace tops the US country singles chart. Recorded in a single take lasting eight minutes, producer Jerry Kennedy recalled that an incident in the studio so enraged Jerry Lee during the taping, and the lyrics became so questionable, that only the truncated version is ever likely to be heard. On April 25, Lewis performs the song on the Old Grey Whistle Test, telling a lady-friend down the phone, "Do I like what? Uh-huh, I sure do like it baby." The bearded Killer starts softly then swings into wildness and segues into Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On.

ALSO THIS



BEN IN BRUM

3 Ben E King ends a marathon UK tour at Birmingham's Top Rank ballroom.

DEAD IN POOL

7 At Wembley's Empire Pool, Grateful Dead play their first gig on a 22-date Euro-trek.

FRIED ELVIS

8 An attempt to record Elvis Presley's live show at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is abandoned when a power supply fault fries the recording gear.

HAYES WINS

10 Isaac Hayes (above), draped in chains, emerges from beneath the stage in a cloud of smoke to play Theme From Shaft at 44th Academy Awards in Los Angeles. It wins the Oscar for Best Original Song.

ELO IN PUB

16 The Electric Light Orchestra play their first live gig, at the Greyhound, Croydon. Roy Wood has problems trying to play a large range of instruments, and often trips over various wires.

COLONEL TOM TAKES RISE

20 It's announced that Colonel Tom Parker, in his role as consultant to the Hilton hotel chain, will get \$50,000 a year for the next three years.

FAIRPORTS ROCK

21 Island release oldies covers set *Rock On* by The Bunch, featuring past and present Fairport Convention members.

CULT KILLING

27 Phil King, front man in an early version of Blue Oyster Cult, is shot to death in a gambling incident in Farmingdale, New York. The police say the killer, arrested next day, owed King money.

JOHN AND YOKO GAIN SUPPORT

29 John and Yoko receive welcome support from New York mayor John Lindsay in their battle to avoid deportation

stage had problems. "I remember performing and feeling my left arm becoming unbearably hot. I quickly snatched a look between playing and singing and could see that my left arm was actually beginning to give off smoke. Apparently they had set up a huge and powerful search light on the side of the stage and were planning to use it during the filming. After a few desperate and agonising screams from me they finally switched it off."

The music, documented in part on a CBS double-album, was vital enough, but problems constantly beset an audience wilting in the sun, causing a constant queue at the medical tent. Then there were the armed youths roaming the festival area - one concert-goer was hacked to death in his sleeping bag - and there were tales of others being swept out to sea. The local authorities got tough again. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Cooley, who went into hiding before being smuggled off the island beneath luggage in a Volkswagen bus that was driven right up to a plane on the runway.

And when the music rumbled to an end, there were problems for those leaving by air. Three days later, some were still attempting to quit the country. The San Juan Star reported, "Pan American World Airways set up extra flights and took the initiative in extending credit to youths who did not have money or plane tickets."

There were stories, too, that scores of people were owed money for services rendered at the festival, while the Puerto Rican government alleged the organisers owed around \$40,000 in taxes alone. Still, Cooley hailed the festival a success. Richard Kimball of Los Angeles rock radio station KMET-FM had a different opinion: "It was a fucking drag," he declared.

Fred Dellar

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Fire fe the Vatican! David Peel.

PEEL AND THE POPE

APRIL 17 Apple releases *The Pope Smokes Dope*, the second album from David Peel, whose 1968 debut, *Have A Marijuana*, appeared on Elektra. Produced at New York's Record Plant by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, tunes include Birth Control Blues and Everybody Smokes Marijuana. Lennon had decided to relaunch Peel's career after catching his act in Greenwich Village's

TEN US SINGLES APRIL 22

- 1 THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE**
ROBERTA FLACK ATLANTIC
- 2 ROCKIN' ROBIN**
MICHAEL JACKSON MOTOWN
- 3 I GOTCHA**
JOE TEX DIAL
- 4 A HORSE WITH NO NAME**
AMERICA WARNER
- 5 IN THE RAIN**
THE DRAMATICS VOLT
- 6 BETCHA BY GOLLY WOW**
THE STYLISTICS AVCO
- 7 DAY DREAMING**
ARETHA FRANKLIN ATLANTIC

8 HEART OF GOLD
NEIL YOUNG
REPRISE

9 A COWBOY'S WORK IS NEVER DONE
SONNY & CHER
KAPP

10 DOCTOR MY EYES
JACKSON BROWNE