



Santana plays at Woodstock on August 16, 1969

Rock On

[The Bethel Woods Center for the Arts recaptures the magic of Woodstock, 50 years later](#) *By Gina DeCaprio Vercesi*

When dairy farmer Max Yasgur rented his upstate New York alfalfa field to four young men in the summer of 1969, he didn't know it would become the site of rock 'n' roll's apex. Fifty years later, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair remains enshrined in the memories of those who attended and the imaginations of those who wish they had. This month, the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, which stands on the historic festival grounds, is taking visitors—as Joni Mitchell sang in “Woodstock”—back to the garden.

“Woodstock was presented to an entire generation as a way to get away from the realities of life—the Vietnam War, the

riots, issues with parents,” says Museum at Bethel Woods director and senior curator Wade Lawrence, “to leave all that and go out into the country for a bucolic experience of peace and music.”

For those looking to set their souls free once more, the center is marking the 50th anniversary weekend (August 15–18) with a series of events, starting with a showing of *Woodstock: The Director's Cut*, projected on a 50-foot screen in the middle of Yasgur's alfalfa field, and continuing with performances by festival alumni such as Arlo Guthrie, Carlos Santana, and John Fogerty, as well as rock legends such as Ringo Starr and the Doobie Brothers.

Additionally, the Museum at Bethel Woods is presenting a special exhibit, *We Are Golden: Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of the Woodstock Festival and Aspirations for a Peaceful Future* (through December), which showcases artifacts from 1969—plywood from the stage, handpainted signs protesting the hippie influx, T-shirts worn by staff—and draws parallels between societal issues then and now. “There's an opportunity for young people today and those who were young in the '60s to connect over shared experiences,” says assistant curator Julia Fell. “We may have different names for the movements, but we're still fighting the same fights.”