

HARVEY'S LAKE HISTORY

Hanson's Dances

Part 2: The Bud Light Amphitheatre

Following the closure of Hanson's Amusement Park at the end of the 1984 season, summer dances were held at the park later in the decade and continuing through Labor Day weekend 2002.

Particularly successful were nostalgia dances held by Lake dance-veteran Eddie Day (now State Representative Eddie Day Pashinski) with appearances, too, by Joe Nardone and the R.P.M. "Old Stars."

The successful return of dances to Hanson's led to an announcement in March 1992 by area concert promoter Thom Greco that a Wilkes-Barre and Pittsburgh partnership, Harveys Lake Amphitheatre, Inc., would lease and remodel a section of the park for major concerts. A 4,500 seat outdoor amphitheatre would compliment a restaurant, outdoor patio bar and sand volleyball courts. Named the Bud Light Amphitheatre due to underwriting by the Budweiser/Anheuser Busch brewing company, the site encompassed nearly 5 acres of the 27 acre park with 20 acres available for parking.

The initial season opened on Sunday, May 24, 1992, with The Machine, a Pink Floyd tribute band, with local bands completing a day-long concert. The first actual concert was held the following day Monday, Memorial Day, May 25, when 3,500 people crowded into the park for rocker Kenny Loggins. The California-based performer was best known as a member of the singing/song writing team Loggins and Messina. He was also well-known for his movie hits I'm Alright from Caddie Shack and the title



Photo: Warren Ruda/Citizen's Voice (Used by Permission)

Rocker Alice Cooper headlined at the Bud Light Ampitheatre with the Scorpions on August 7, 1996. This photo was taken at the Ampitheatre.

track from Footloose, both of which Loggins held back for his Lake encores. The inaugural concert successfully managed parking, security and traffic control under the supervision of Eddie Day who would serve as the Amphitheatre's Operations Manager for several seasons.

The 1992 season brought other major concert stars to the Lake after a laser light show of Pink Floyd/Led Zeppelin music on June 6; Crosby, Stills and Nash on June 16; Dolly Parton on June 21; and Willie Nelson on July 20. The Amphitheatre concerts drew wide pre and post-show publicity in area media outlets. There was extended critical attention by Al Choman, Citizens' Voice Art Critic, and background articles by Voice Entertainment Editor Jerry Kishbaugh. Their excellent articles in particular covered the extraordinary talent presented at the Amphitheatre between 1992-1998. A variety of staff writers for the Times-Leader also covered the concerts.

The CSN concert started one-hour late due to traffic issues. At times the party atmosphere of 5,000 people drowned out the concert. The concert was a retrospective of hits from the 1970s, and Choman noted the musical messages of that time were less striking to a 90s audience, but the sounds were no less exciting. He also noted that the beer advertising at the site was muted due to David Crosby's alcohol recovery progress. The overcrowding prompted the addition of 500 seats for future shows. The Dolly Parton concert was also sold out. The Tennessee pop and country rock singer in a blue-sequined dress danced and told down-home stories which captivated the audience. Al Choman stated that the "lyrical poetress delivered her songs with the smoothness and wallop of her home state's finest whiskey."

An estimated 4,500 fans saw Willie Nelson on July 20 deliver both old and new material to a rapt audience. (During his visit he played golf at an area course and he visited a local nursing home). At the end of the month the duo Russell Hitchcock and Graham Russell, known as Air Supply, appeared at the Lake. Their initial prominence came in 1977 as the opening act for Rod Stewart's 65 city concert tour. In August the Rocky Mountain boy, John Denver (who later died in a 1997 California plane accident), delivered one of his well-received shows of earnest pop-country hits. Other acts later in the season included Reggae Sunsplash '92, the Badlees, and an alternative music festival "Mindfest" and Rockfest '92 at the Coors Light Beach Club on Labor Day.

The last official concert in 1992 was also over-crowded for the Southern Rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd and Abilene, a regional legend in country rock. Out of Florida Lynyrd Skynyrd had early success in the 1970s but its lead vocalist Ronnie Van Zant died in an October 1977 plane crash in Mississippi. In 1987 crash survivors and new members reformed the band with Van Zant's younger brother Donnie Van Zant. A local critic saw a parallel between Skynyrd's fans and the artist/fan bonding experience of the Grateful Dead. (Lynyrd Skynyrd would be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2006.) Unfortunately a final performance scheduled for mid-September by Kris Kross, the rap-duo of Chris Smith and Chris Kelly, drew a sparse unenthusiastic audience.

In May 1993 the Amphitheatre announced it planned to expand to 6,000 seats for concerts and a California-based promoter had become a partner in the concert center. Seating arrangements were improved with a 700 seat Gold Circle with a separate entrance and a 500 seat bleacher section. The roof was extended to protect performers from the Lake's weather with a secondary roof for light and sound equipment. The season opened on May 30 with 9 bands at the Amphitheatre and at the Beach Club, including Tribes, the City and Boxing Oscars, Strawberry Jam, Tongue-N-Cheek, Vainglory, Strange Brew and Necessary Noise. In the meantime, a proposed amusement tax, originally pressed by the Lake-Lehman School District, was scrapped. On June 19-20 a music festival was held with Los Angeles hard-core rock band Vision and other nationally-known bands on Saturday. On Sunday at the Beach Club alternative band Live appeared with Pul and local band Tribe. On June 22, Stephen Stills (formerly of Crosby, Stills and Nash) opened a concert for Chicago, the nationally known rock group which had 21 hit albums over a 25 year period.

On June 27, 1993, rock legend and Steppenwolf founder John Kay and rocker Edgar Win-

ter whipped up a musical frenzy for 4,800 fans. The multi-talented Winter, who has albinism (as does his musical brother Johnny), had 13 albums before his Lake appearance and 7 since. 16 of his songs have appeared in movie soundtracks. The Lake concert was joined by local favorite Strawberry Jam and afterwards Winter remarked the Lake reception was among the best they experienced on tour. In early July Little Feat and the Band, another legendary band which had earlier toured with Bob Dylan, appeared at the Lake.

On July 18, 1993, Hank Williams, Jr., and the Kentucky Headhunters drew nearly 6,000 people for the Amphitheatre's largest crowd in its history. Voice critic Al Choman found the concert the "most artistically fulfilling" to date. Williams, whose father was a country-song pioneer and legend, followed an opening set by Kentucky Headhunters, itself a high challenge to follow. Randall Hanks Williams, Jr., was born in Louisiana in 1949. His famous father died in 1953. The younger Williams learned piano and guitar from Jerry Lee Lewis and began his own performing at age 8. In 1965 he recorded the soundtrack for "Your Cheatin' Heart," a film biography of his father. The son mastered several instruments and with a unique blend of country, southern rock and blues, Williams earned prestigious country music awards in the late 1980s. Voice critic Al Choman thought Williams' Lake performance "electrifying and magical."

In the meantime a few residents near the Amphitheatre were campaigning against concert noise and traffic congestion. Then in early August 1993 a drug-enforcement task force arrested 22 people on drug related charges before a Def Leppard concert at the Lake. Def Leppard is an English hard rock band whose debut album *On Through the Night* was released in 1980 followed by MTV exposure in the US in 1982. Their album *Hysteria* (1988) sold 18 million copies. They were on a world tour in 1992-93. But the police recorded no noise complaints after the Def Leppard concert – still the borough council was considering its ordinance role.

By the close of summer the Liquor Control Board was also investigating the noise issue – which actually occurred with bar bands at the site after the concert concluded. The LCB subsequently dismissed its noise citation. The 1993 season closed with the country sounds of Restless Heart – which recorded as a trio but had two additional musicians for tours. Local country bands Southbound and Hickory Rose joined in this performance. Restless Heart held several No. 1 country hits in 1986-87 from its album *Wheels* with additional chart hits from its 1988 album *Big Dreams in a Small Town*. Their 1993 Lake appearance coincided with the album release *Big Iron Horses*.

In 1994 new political leadership at the Lake was more sympathetic with residents' issues and new sewer fees would add to concert costs. Too, concert promoters were attracted to the competing Montage Mountain Performing Arts Center at Moosic which opened with Chubby Checker on July 3, 1992. (Checker, whose birth name was Ernest Evans, was from Philadelphia. His 1960 No. 1 hit was *The Twist*, which created a new dance craze. Checker had performed with Eddie Day and the Starfires at Hanson's Park on July 15, 1966.) A Memorial Day concert on May 30, 1994, was held at the Beach Club Complex with Steve Walsh and Kansas, a progressive rock group – with additional music by Guy Archer, Hybrid Ice and Fall Free. Kansas issued its debut album in 1974 with platinum album releases in 1976 and 1977. In 1994 after numerous personnel changes a boxed set of Kansas hits was released. It was a well-established group during its 1994 Lake appearance. But after Kansas the Amphitheatre was silent for the season.

In mid-May 1995 plans were announced for another full season at the Lake with improved traffic and safety control and early closing of the bar area. Greco's Factory Concerts presented country singer Lorrie Morgan as the opener on June 4 to a crowd at 3,000. Nashville-born Morgan was the daughter of country music star George Morgan. She broke into the top 40 country charts in 1989 with her single "Trainwreck of Emotion." Her Lake act would be followed later in the month by the release of a Greatest Hits album. A heavy rain delayed the heavy metal band performances of Motocore and Black Sabbath for 3 hours on June 30. An expected crowd of 2,800 fell to 1,200 but both

bands rocked the crowd. The 1995 season out-distanced earlier seasons with even greater musical stars: Steppenwolf and Molly Hatchet on July 16; Kenny Rodgers on July 17; the Charlie Daniels Band on August 3; Toby Keith on August 16; and Johnny Cash on August 14.

But the season surprise was on July 14, 1995, when Beatles drummer Ringo Starr and the All-Starr band, on World Tour, appeared at the Lake drawing more than 3,000 fans. The All-Starr band consisted of Randy Bachman (Guess Who); Felix Cavilere (Rascals); John Entwistle (The Who); Mark Farmer (Grand Funk); and Billy Preston – all of whom were major talents in the rock era. Ringo Starr not only could carry a concert with good humor but great presentation while generously showcasing the immense other talents on stage.

Kenny Rodgers appeared with a 21-piece band complimented by light and laser displays – and a flashback of his earlier group First Edition on three screens hung from the stage roof. He drew 5,000 fans. Yet only half this crowd saw Johnny Cash's two-hour performance. Johnny Cash (1932-2003) was born in Arkansas and would become one of America's most influential and recognizable musicians. His outlaw image and "Man in Black" persona yet brilliantly portrayed songs were strangely All-American in popular appeal. Prior to the concert Cash gave an interview with the Times-Leader. Cash arrived at the Lake in a black bus, a trademark color for the 40-year veteran of country music. Many of the fans, and Cash's band, also wore black – but the wildly appreciative audience at the Lake could not compel Cash to sing "A Boy Named Sue." The artist who had sold over 50 million record albums gave a strong engaging performance which included wife June Carter Cash.

Other concerts in 1995 included Firehouse, Kolander, Bush and the Toadies. Kolander stayed an extra hour to sign autographs. Unfortunately, the Bush event drew additional complaints. Ambulances were called to attend five people who suffered heat exhaustion and neighbors again complained of post-concert noise from the Tijuana Liquor Stand and the Beach Club. But on balance the complaints were less than earlier years and the concert organizers were recognized for much-improved controls. The Bush concert was also marred by a phony riot report. The season ordinarily would have closed with the Jambalaya Fest on August 26-27. However, the Oak Ridge Boys, a country group with roots to the Grand Ole Opry in 1945, was a late addition and appeared on September 3. This group achieved National popularity in the late 1960s and especially into the 1970s. Multiple artists have comprised the usual four-star group over the years. The name Oak Ridge stems from their original home base, near Knoxville, Tennessee, as Oak Ridge was the site of development of the atomic bomb.

Country, rock and pop concerts were announced in early May for the 1996 seasons. The Double Trouble Tour with Travis Tritt and Marty Stuart opened on June 22 followed by Eddie Money on June 29. The Double Trouble tour began its national tour in Pittsburgh and its second venue was at the Lake before heading to Boston. The Mavericks with Jr. Brown, winner of a Country Music Best Group award, was on July 18. A music legend, Paul Anka, cancelled a July 26 concert due to voice problems. Mind Stock, a 40 plus music and arts festival was on July 27-28, and Natalie Merchant, formerly with the Maniacs, were also in late July.

The Scorpions and Alice Cooper followed on August 7. The Scorpions, created in 1968, were from Germany. The Scorpions with sales of 20 million albums were Europe's most popular rock band. With the end of the Cold War in 1989 their freedom anthem Wind of Change brought world recognition. Cooper, of course, is best known for his theatrical stage presence. Alice Cooper (birth-name Vincent Furnier) has musical roots dating to 1965 and his high school rock band The Spiders. Cooper created a unique stage presence sometimes called "shock rock" – the Stephen King of rock? Multi-talented Alice Cooper (his legal name since 1974) is also an actor and host of a National rock radio program. He continues to perform with various artists and issued his 24th studio album Dirty Diamonds in 2005 followed by an American tour. Despite his stage act Cooper has strong Christian forebears; he overcame alcoholism and is personally a born-again Christian – and he supports many

charitable events. In mid-August 1996 Jackson Browne and Shawn Colvin appeared at the Lake with a Cajun Festival at month's end to close the season.

The 1997 season opened with Canadian country singer Terri Clark on June 12 and the rock bands John Kay and Steppenwolf and Edgar Winter on June 17. Another country singer, Mark Chesnutt with Midnight Rodeo, was scheduled for July 11 with Crosby, Stills and Nash on July 15 and Sammy Hager and Lynyrd Stevens later in July. At the Hager concert there were complaints of rough treatment by security after disputes over reserved seating among the concert patrons. The Texan Mark Chestnutt first made the American country music charts in 1990 with "Too Cold at Home." His first three albums hit platinum. He had a more traditional country style. At the Lake he not only played from his well known song-list but also new material released in 1997: "Thank God for Believers" and "Quit Loving You." The concert was described as "excellent" with support from a "superb" 7-piece country band. The local group Midnight Rodeo with Mary McKenna as vocalist was also highly praised.

Crosby, Stills and Nash gave a surprisingly engaging performance in mid-July to 3,800 fans. Best known for message music from an earlier time they were able to click with the audience not only with familiar songs but also new material well-received with both group and solo performances.

A crowded audience of 4,000 saw the Red Rocker, Sammy Hager, give an intense performance which had the audience reportedly on their feet for the three-hour show. Born in California Hager was briefly a boxer, like his father, in his youth. He received prominence in 1973 with the band Montrose and in 1985 Hager joined the band Van Halen which he left in 1996. Voice critic Al Choman described the Lake performance in 1997 "an intense performance of raucous rock and roll" and Hager "an artist of great intensity."

An August concert with Clay Walker was cancelled; Daryl Hall and John Oates appeared on August 25. The Hall and Oates drew 2,500 people. The duo had numerous hits in the 1980's, had broken up for a time, and were reunited for new tours. The pair which met at Temple University delivered a "well produced, soulful" Lake concert which suggested renewal of the pair as musical artists. The Third Annual Jambalaya Fest was also late in the 1997 and the season closed with Joe Walsh, formerly of the Eagles, on August 31 with his Anthology Tour '97.

After the end of the 1997 season a lease dispute arose between the property owner and the concert promoter but it did not halt performances. The 1998 season drew talent with new Amphitheatre partners New Park Entertainment of Philadelphia and One More Production, a Lake-based company whose principal was formerly based in Colorado. The "Whose On First Tour" featuring the headliner "moe" opened on June 14. Ani Di Franco, a folk/alternative singer, followed on June 26. Di Franco, from Buffalo, NY, is a feminist song-writer who started her own record company at age 18 and was a rising folk star when she appeared at the Lake – and is an activist in Presidential Democratic politics. An eclectic concert with Widespread Panic with G Love and Special Sauce and Guster occurred in mid-July.

Later in the month George Thorogood's "basic blue-collar rock and roll" entertained 3,000 at the Lake. Opening with "Born to be Bad" Thorogood encouraged his audience to sing and dance and have a "Pennsylvania Party" for his two-hour concert – which they did. Steve Miller and Little Feat with the Space Cowboy Tour 1998, on an international tour, brought 5,000 fans to the Lake on August 8 for blues and rock, and reportedly the largest audience since Hank Williams, Jr., appeared in 1993.

Just three days later the British band Deep Purple, with its legendary 30-year rock music history, appeared with Emerson, Lake and Palmer and Dream Theater. Deep Purple's hard rock song "Smoke on the Water" was a signature piece of heavy metal music, but it was not played at the Lake concert. Emerson, Lake and Palmer were another British trio, each of whom displayed exceptional individual solo talent. Dream Theatre was a critically acclaimed US Heavy Metal band.

The last major concert at the Lake was country-music star Clint Black on August 12, 1998. Raised in Texas Clint Black is a multi-talented country music, singer, songwriter, producer and occasional actor with a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. He has had 13 Number One singles on the Billboard Country charts including 1998's "The Shoes You're Wearing." At the Lake he delivered a "well-produced, smartly packaged" evening of hits from his 10 years as a hit record maker – supported by a 7-piece band and video clips on the Amphitheatre's screen. Jodie Messina opened the Black concert which was hosted by Froggy 101. The 90 minute Black concert was the "premier Country music offering" of the season, complete with video and sound effects fully utilizing the Amphitheatre's screen and light technical highlights. The Amphitheatre's fourth annual Jambalaya Fest was held on August 22-23, with an August 30 concert by the regional group Flaxy Morgan and Phantasm. A season-closing "carload" show ended the season with The Badlees with Oz, Flaxy Morgan, Riverside and Rockaholix on September 6, 1998.

The Amphitheatre was not revived after 1998. The lease arrangement with the park owner was concluded to permit exploration of residential development at the site.

Bud Light Ampitheatre Line-Up 1992 - 1998

1992

Kenny Loggins, May 25
Pink Floyd/Led Zeppelin Tribute, June 6
Crosby, Stills and Nash, June 16
Dolly Parton, June 21
Ricky Van Shelton, July 8
Reggae Sunsplash, July 15
Willie Nelson, July 20
Air Supply, July 31
Mr. Big, Electric Boys, Hardline, August 1
John Denver, August 11
Lynyrd Skynyrd/Abilene, August 21
Mindfest/Rockfest 92, September 5
Kris Kross, September 14.

1993

Nine Band Bash, May 30
Summer Music Festival, June 19
Chicago, Steven Stills, June 22
Steppenwolf, Edgar Winter, Strawberry Jam, June 27
Cheap Trick, Tongue-N-Cheek, July 3
Little Feat with The Band, July 11
Hank Williams, Jr., The Kentucky Headhunters, July 18
Def Leppard, Ugly Kid Joe, August 1
The Mindfest Festival, August 21
Bad Company, .38 Special, August 23
Restless Heart, August 30

1994

Kansas, May 30
Season Cancelled

1995

Lorrie Morgan, June 4
Motorhead, Black Sabbath, June 30
Ringo Starr, All Starr Band, July 14
Steppenwolf and Molly Hatchet, July 16
Kenny Rogers, July 17
Kolander, July 28
Charlie Daniels Band, August 3
Johnny Cash, August 13
Toby Keith, August 6
Fire House, August 19
Bush, Toadies, August 20
Foreigner, August 23
Jambalaya Jam, August 26
Oak Ridge Boys, September 3

1996

Travis Tritt, Marty Stuart, June 22
Eddie Money, June 29
The Mavericks, Jr. Brown, July 18
Natalie Merchant, July 19
Paul Anka, July 26 (Cancelled)
HL Jazz, Blues, Rib Fest, August 3-4
Scorpions, Alice Cooper, August 7
Jackson Browne, Shawn Colvin, August 15
Cajun Festival, Jambalaya Fest, August 24-25

1997

Terri Clark, June 12
John Kay, Steppenwolf, Edgar Winter, June 17
Mark Chesnutt, Midnight Rodeo July 11
Crosby, Stills and Nash, July 15
Sammy Hager, July 25
Lynyrd Stevens, July 26
Hall and Oates, August 25
Jambalaya Festival, August 23-24
Joe Walsh, August 31

1998

"moe," Leftover Salmon, String Cheese Incident,
Strange Folk, June 14
Ani DiFranco, June 25
Widespread Panic, Glove and Special Sauce,
Guster, July 15
George Thorogood, July 24
Steve Miller, Little Feat, August 8
Deep Purple, August 11
Clint Black, August 12
Jambalaya Festival, August 22-23
Flaxy Morgan and Phantasm, August 30