

to Lincoln Park, but did they hear the message?

Story by Kiki Yablon

A call for individual action.

It would have been relatively easy to get swept into an environmentally conscious euphoria on Sunday. A little 70-degree weather, a little live music and some overpriced Quakeriana imports will turn any anti-political gathering into the scene for a documentary on Woodstock.

But Earth Day 1990, the 20th anniversary celebration and the supposed renewal of the concern that spurred the original nationwide gathering on April 22, 1970, just couldn't match its own hype.

Yes, an estimated 100,000 people showed up in Lincoln Park. Yes, a great deal of information, in the form of pamphlets, brochures and lectures was disseminated. Yes, Earth Day 1990 was the largest political demonstration of its kind in history. And yes, the skate-punk-folk singer Michelle Shocked's brief but effective set sent chills up my spine.

But the trash cans far away from the designated recycling areas overflowed with aluminum cans. The woman from Harvard who came to speak about hydroponics and clean water was drowned out by fans impatient to hear the rock band the Boddeans, who were delayed in traffic. The field in Chicago this weekend) at noon was the day's entertainment highlight, gave the crowd some wise advice from her father.

"Human beings," she told the crowd, "are the only beings on Earth who shit in their own nest." Well, I guess Michelle never owned a hamster, but metaphorically she has a point. What is the sense in becoming aware if we don't actually change our actions accordingly?

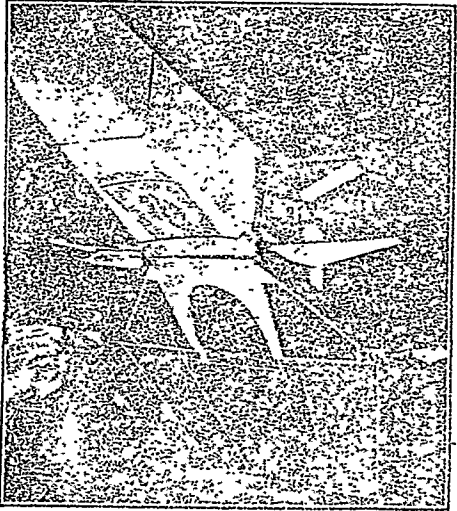
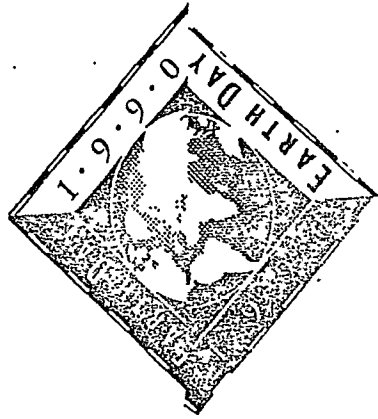
Out of all the performers and most of the lecturers, Shocked had the most intelligent, least blatant commentary on the problem the day was designed to address. Like everyone else, she advocated individual action.

Her last song, a sing-along that moved the crowd to its feet, went something like this: "We'll be making jam (making jam) (strawberry jam) (strawberry jam) (if you want the best jam) (the best jam) (You got to make your own)." I don't mean to imply that Earth Day was an unworthy gathering. Somebody worked very hard to bring environmentalists from all over the place into Lincoln Park for

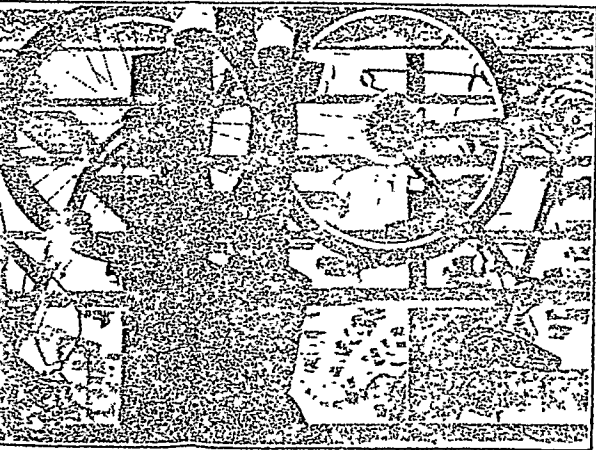
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Among the peddlars of natural food and Ben and Jerry's Peace Pops, there was planted a booth by Kevin Furner, an advocate that furs were recyclable and biodegradable, while synthetics were not "in harmony with Mother Nature." No advocates for wool or cotton were in sight.

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Many people burned calories instead of gasoline by riding their bikes to the Day bonanza.



Although traffic delayed the Boddeans arrival, they still received a warm welcome from our crowd.

