

▲ The band Free perform at the Isle of Wight music festival, 1970.

From Joni to Jimi: when rock'n'roll came to the Isle of Wight – in pictures

A new exhibition marks 50 years since the festival known as 'Europe's Woodstock' took off. Curator and sculptor Guy Portelli talks us through photos from its star-studded 1970 event

Melanie – don't mess with my music

'Melanie Safka had performed at Woodstock the year before, arriving as an unknown and leaving as a superstar. She went on to sell millions of records. She got frustrated with her management, provoking her song Look What They've Done to My Song, Ma, which turned out be another hit'



Jimi Hendrix – deep in thought

'Just before Hendrix went on stage, photographer Charles Everest said, "How do you feel?" and then got this shot of Jimi deep in thought'



Joni Mitchell – survives a tough crowd

'The perfect photograph, in what was an ordeal. Joni had been asked to come on stage early as the programme was running late. During her set, she had to stop and ask for a doctor as a person in the audience was taken ill. Then a man tried to take her microphone to make a speech. Joni made an impassioned appeal to the audience to respect the musicians. She eventually won over the crowd.'



Free – no, you have to pay to see them

'Free had performed in 1969 as a relatively unknown blues band. By the time they got to the 1970 festival, they were one of the highest-paid bands in the world thanks to their album Fire and Water. The name Free caused many problems with selling tickets, and Island records had been reluctant to sign the band because of it'



Jim Morrison – dancing in the dark

'The Doors' performance took place after midnight in semi-darkness. To get this photo, Everest had to ask for the lights to be turned up. Within a year, Morrison's drug-fuelled lifestyle had killed him'



Clive Bunker of Jethro Tull – still going

'Clive is still playing and touring 50 years later. This is one of the great shots by Everest, and could only be achieved with the complete trust from the organisers he had built up'



Leonard Cohen - a fire-starting professional

'Cohen was told that there was no money to pay the bands. He said, "I figured that was the case, I am here and I am going on anyway." He asked everyone to light a match during his set, which lit up Afton Down like a Christmas tree'



Nic Turner of Hawkwind – look at that ornate bell

'Nic playing at Canvas City, a side show that allowed poetry, debate and experimental bands. Terry Ollis, Hawkwind's drummer, described how his one-hour drum solo was a ploy to stop panic in the audience while the tent was deflating. He then had to continue drumming when the tent was re-inflated and the band came on'



Keith Moon – keeping the Who's engine turning over

'The larger-than-life drummer of the Who, famous for claiming he drove a car into a swimming pool at a party. As the rhythm section with John Entwistle on bass, they were the engine room that allowed creative freedom to Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey.'



The Doors – at their best and unforgettable

'Brian Hinton, author of books about the Isle of Wight, said the Doors' performance was an experience never to be forgotten, the live recording proving without doubt that the Doors were at their best'



The Doors – this is the end beautiful friend

'This was the band's last ever UK concert'



The Who - Pete Townshend in a boiler suit

'Pete found it difficult to balance his political and religious ideology with the wealth the band were accumulating and, in particular, his extra earnings as the composer. The boiler suit cleverly disguised these concerns from the audience.' *All photographs: Charles Everest/Cameron Life Photo.*

