

Classic Posters - John Sinclair Freedom Rally

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Interview of Peter Andrews

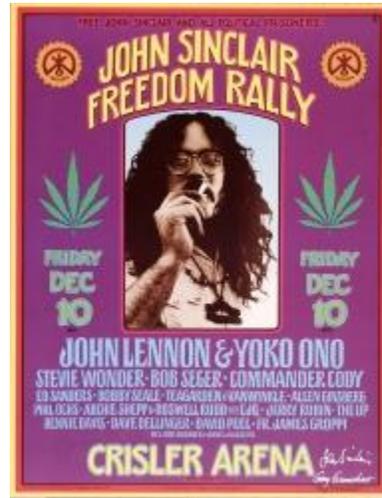
by Michael Erlewine

As for John Sinclair: He was fading away. That was the government's hope.

Part of an interview of Peter Andrews by Michael Erlewine:

Peter Andrews: John Sinclair... in the previous year, 1971, I produced the John Sinclair Freedom Rally, while I was the events director at the university, at Crisler Arena. The Rainbow People or the White Panthers had a student organization, so by all legal rights, they could sponsor a concert on campus.

I'm not gonna' go into that whole show at this time, because that's a whole long story itself. John Lennon and Yoko Lennon agreed to appear on the show and they agreed to appear on it and I agreed to promote it. I wasn't going to promote it if it was gonna' be a bomb. And I didn't want to be associated with it and I didn't think it would be good for John Sinclair, this big event. What it was gonna' show, was how little people really did care for him being in jail. He was fading away. This was the government's hope.



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Before John Lennon agreed to appear, I thought it was going to be a disaster. I produced the show. We had Stevie Wonder, all these radical speakers of the day. It was filmed; it was broadcast live. On and on and on. John Lennon appeared and I had a chance to meet with him about three different times. John Sinclair got out of jail, right after that event.

They granted him bail and the marijuana laws were overturned, the CIA bombing thing was all in that too. They beat the government, which really stopped the government from having permission to wiretap without permission. A very landmark case. Not many people know about that. Not to mention overturning the marijuana laws.

Start of the Festival

Andrews: That almost brings us up to the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. The university administration asked me to look into reviving the Ann Arbor Blues Festival, because everybody saw that it was a great artistic success, which it was.

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I looked into the event and realized, you know, they just made some basic business mistakes. They didn't have enough backing, to speak of, at all. Even though the shows were wonderful, they didn't have enough of the type of acts that would draw a significant crowd.

I don't know how I came upon it. I had been producing a lot of blues and jazz shows at the university. I don't really remember where the thought came to me, blues and jazz ...let's put them together. At that time it would appear to be a pretty drastic, radical thought to a lot of people.

I thought, "Oh what the heck." I had seen enough great jazz and blues to know that blues people are going to dig the jazz and vice versa.

So let's make a blues and jazz festival. And I got pretty excited about this. Suzanne helped me put the report together and the University turned it down, saying this is just too much. The budget was a whole lot higher as with the previous blues festivals. The talent budget was not \$7000, but higher than that. It's in the records. That would be \$60,000 a year. That's what I was talking about for the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival, and you could buy quite a bit of talent at that time for sixty grand.

I was so charged up, that I didn't want to let it go. I'm like that sometimes with promotional ideas. I know if you have this thematic product created, I really thought this would work.

I couldn't let this blues and jazz festival idea go and John Sinclair had been the manager of the MC5 and was an extremely knowledgeable guy in music, in general. Much more so than myself, in terms of the basics of music. And he

and I had met when I was managing the Scot Richard Case, which was sort of like the yuppies of the youth scene... and the MC5 were the hard-core radical kids. So we weren't supposed to get along, our fans and all this.

One day I called John up and went over there and we talked about 5 or 6 hours straight and realized that we enjoyed each other's company, saw eye to eye on a number of things.

So later, I went to him with this idea for the blues and jazz festival and he got all charged up, as John can get excited about things. Well, we had no backing and John solved that with a friend of his, a guy who had approached him, had inherited a little bit of money, \$20,000. The Ann Arbor News reported it as \$2000 in one of their usually very-inaccurate articles on the history of the festival.

And with the \$20,000, we basically ran that into the \$150,000 to \$200,000 budget, which sounds fairly insane, but we did.

When you are a promoter or a booking agent or doing anything like that, you can do a lot for a local scene, create a bunch of things, and you don't always get credit for it. You get a lot of harping from the bands that think you should be doing more for them; the local acts that think you should be booking them more. There are always people who are unhappy.

They might be attending every one of your events and having a wonderful time and you might be creating the cultural core of their lives, so to speak, but they still might have an angle with you.

I like to get my way. I was usually pretty right, in the direction that we were going

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in. And that was only bolstered...the SRC... Mothers was successful for a couple of years, the SRC had national recognition (3 albums), the university of Michigan program, UAC/Daystar ..

During the time I was with the university or right afterward, Billboard Magazine voted the University of Michigan the top college series of musical shows in the country. That was sort of the level that we really put it on.

I just thought it had to be done and it was. So while the shows were happening in town, I was also putting on shows at midnight at the Michigan Theater, after the movies were over, at 11 PM. We would clear the house out, put in Jimmy Cliff, I think the second time he came to town... with a big hit, the "Harder They Come, " whatever the tune was.

And we put in bands like that. I did a few there. I was pretty much producing all of the live music for quite some time.

Erlewine: When did you stop producing stuff?

Andrews: I actually pretty much stopped in the early '70s. Well, it was after the blues and jazz festival, which we will get back to.

After the blues and jazz festival, I created a staging company, which turned into Aztec Staging, after one incarnation as another company. You see, during that time, all of the production for the shows was getting bigger and bigger and bigger.. the stages the performers stood on, the sound system, the lighting system.

It allowed a company to come along and pick up that slack, my brother and his sound company. They were one of the top PA companies in the country, doing

Bob Seger, Charlie Daniels, and a whole bunch of other bands at the time.

And lights. A lot of light companies were poppin' up, So I decided to invent a different type of stage platform. And through three developmental processes, I invented this fantastically portable and adaptable stage, which toured around the country with the Rolling Stones. And we did a lot of custom work too. Pink Floyd, had a whole custom stage for them. Kiss, deployed a whole custom stage for them. Fleetwood Mac was a big client. Bob Seger, Bruce Springsteen, all the big touring acts of the day that needed staging that was bigger than the auditoriums and the arenas that they were going into. Or they wanted hydraulic lifts or effects. And I did that, pretty much through the 1970s, until 1980.

I was also operating as an agent, booking a number of clubs. I would handle exclusive club accounts and book various acts. But I wasn't really producing many shows, after the early '70s. I did produce with Marilyn Richardson, the Cotton Club Benefit Series for WEMU, the last featuring the great Cab Calloway.

Anyway, back to the blues and jazz festival. Up to this time, until I stopped producing shows, I was pretty much the only person in town, who was doing anything on any level.

When I left the University of Michigan, it was in 1974, something like that, at the last minute,

I had always gone head to head with what was created at the university, which was now a program making about \$20,000 a year profit for the student organizations involved, so we didn't get any funding from the university. Anytime

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I asked for any, they would simply laugh at me and say "You are already making money. We don't need to give you any."

So that relationship wore down and Tom Easthope, at the last minute, changed the board, the nature of the board, that was gonna' consider re-upping my contract. And I had decided not to apply for the job again. The heck with it. I will go on with life. And at the last minute, I did apply, and he changed the composition to have one more administrator than student. And I got all the student votes and lost all the administrator votes. Basically, I was a little too hot to handle for the university.

Not that we were doing anything too drastic, other than almost burning Hill Auditorium down with pounds and pounds of marijuana being smoked during Grateful Dead shows. I did have to go on stage during a Grateful Dead concert and announce we were not going to be smoking anymore in this building. We don't want to be the ones to burn it down. I saw lighted sparks coming down through the ventilation system, you know, still glowing, when they reached the basement. And I decided we are going to have to stop this. You know, things like that.

At that time, if you had Luther Allison playing at the Power Center. I can remember him playing and the manager coming up to me and saying "You can't have people standing up in here. This is the Power Center. They were dancin' in their seats, sort of thing.

Hill Auditorium and the Power Center being used for these ugly events, as adults would think, was not that popular. Students were loving it, like crazy. They thought it was just great. The Allman Brothers at Crisler Arena, with Dr. John

the Night Tripper and the Rockets. You know. Great shows. Terrific shows.

I would have to say in retrospect, certainly the greatest, along with the John Sinclair Freedom Rally and John Lennon, because of the nature of the production at Crisler Arena. Yeah, I was the producer. David Sinclair was listed as the co-producer. I used my staff from the university and we basically put the event on for the Friends of the White Panthers or whatever it was, at the time.

I thought, "Well if I am going to do it, we're going to do it right." I know I wasn't able to charge anymore than three bucks. I wanted to charge ten or fifteen bucks. God, we had the first appearance of John Lennon in American, outside of the Beatles. Let's pay some legal bills, for the people. We had to have a three dollar price. We just broke even at \$45,000 gross.

I did that, along with the two Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festivals, were probably the best events I ever produced, lest I'm forgetting a few.

Blues and Jazz Festival: Recordings

Andrews: For the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival, we envisioned a large audience. We didn't have the benefit of sponsors. There were no sponsors. Nobody was going to sponsor us, that was for sure. All these longhairs and marijuana, and god knows what they are doin' to your daughter out there. So we just winged it on ticket sales.

The first year, I think we averaged about 11,000-12,000 per show. We'd have a Friday night show, a Saturday afternoon show, a Saturday evening show, a Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening show. Of course, you could come in and get all day tickets on Saturday and

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Sunday, but there were five distinct shows per event.

It was broadcast, the first year live, on WABX Detroit and WNRZ out of Ann Arbor. We did a live radio broadcast.

The first year, all weekend long, we broadcast live over the radio, both stations. We had a lot of technical people, who were very well qualified in Ann Arbor, working for us, a guy named Norm Johnson, I think was his name, was heading up the video services. He had a five camera video shoot.

Future educational things we were thinking of. We still have all that. It's in storage, from '72 and '73. It's in B&W, in storage.

Ed Lamb, under John's control. Ed is John's tight buddy. I mean I couldn't walk in there myself and get them. I'd call John up and get permission, no problem. We've never come across a commercial use for it yet.

It is all the original tape. It should all be re-mastered. If somebody would come up with the money for that, it would be great. I'm sure there is some commercial application for all of it, considering the artists that appeared.

We also recorded. It was our nature, John's and mine, that it would be natural for us to record everything, to videotape everything.

So we recorded it and Atlantic ended up doing a double LP. Michael Cuscuna, working for Atlantic. He helped mix the tapes. So a double LP came out from the event. It's out of issue of course. There are no CDs of it. I wish somebody would put it out in CD format.

The idea of putting on the biggest event we could put on. Well, we succeeded,

not beyond our wildest dreams, but pretty much what we hoped to achieve. Unfortunately, subsidiary services, like the service of food, I let the Rainbow... I still can't remember when it was Rainbow and when it was.. anyway. We had gone to the softer version, now. We had come out of the White Panther Party and we had gone to the softer version, that's the Rainbow People's Party.

So these events, the organization for it was under a company called Rainbow Multimedia, which was a non-profit organization, that was not controlled by the Rainbow People's Party, whatsoever. I was the president of it, John Sinclair was one of the officers, the staff was separate and run by myself, basically, with john.

And that was what the festival was put on through, although I was using most of my same staff from the university, the same stage managers, competent people from around town, and Vulcan Sound, my brother's' sound company, Kurt Andrews, provided the sound for the events. At hand, locally, in terms of really good qualified people.

John Sinclair: Creative Director

Erlewine: What did John Sinclair do?

PE: John was the creative director. What it meant was that John and I would sit down and talk about talent and decide who we thought would be appropriate. And he would come up with some brilliant musical ideas, that were so brilliant, I could turn them into something commercial.

Ornette Coleman hadn't appeared in a number of years, because he was afraid everyone was going to rip him off and record him. So, I would find myself on a

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plane to New York, going to talk to Ornette Coleman. I wouldn't know if I was standing right in front of him. You know, John knew everything about the guy, Ornette Coleman. Or John and I would be off to meet Charles Mingus, you know, and a lot of it, you couldn't just call them up and book them. You would have to go and sort of make arrangements for them, personally.

Bruce Iglauer, with Alligator Records, we had a relationship, we were booking for Alligator Record's artists, Hound Dog Taylor and the Houserockers, and I knew about this Koko Taylor, this young blues singer, who didn't have a band at the time. I said, "Well Bruce, if you put the band together, I'm bookin' bands." So he said: "Don't worry, she'll have a band." To my knowledge, this is the first job that Koko appeared with a full band and of course continued on throughout the rest of her career, in that way.

In 1972, also, meeting with John and I, I would sometimes say things...we don't have enough female performers on here. How about this Bonnie Raitt? He was not a huge fan of Bonnie Raitts at the time. He was aware of her and appreciative of her. And he would know more, not really caring about her, than I would, caring about her. He would just absorb everything in music.

So we'd work the bills out and I'd get on the phone and make them reality with the booking agents. And we commercialized it, if you want to use that word. We would have.. I would stretch it, trying to get a broader audience than the early blues festivals and put in Dr. John the Night Tripper, put on Jr. Walker and the All-stars, or Ray Charles, which wouldn't have appeared at the earlier blues festivals,

even if they could have afforded him. They were being true and traditional and true to the art. I was trying draw a bunch of people and have this music heard and have a viable annual event.

On the other hand, John Sinclair was pitching Sun Ra at me and I'm goin' "Who the hell is Sun Ra?" He's playing me these tapes and I'm going "Holy Shit. Wheeew!" Pharoah Sanders, replaced the great Charles Mingus, who was sick and couldn't appear. He was replaced with Pharoah Sanders.

Some tremendous combinations of artists, Detroit Blues, with the CJQ, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, all of which is well documented and I don't really have to comment on.

Erlewine: No shows?

Andrews: Charles Mingus, I remember. Miles Davis showed up and instead of playing at 10:15 at night, he had to go on early. Miles was a little crazy. I know the only two words that I spoke to Miles, was while I was escorting him up the back stairs to the stage and he looked at me, real hoarse voice and said "Where's the blow, man?" I said "You're on your own there, buddy, up there is the stage." So he went up and earned, I think, \$10,000, which was a lot of money then.

During the second year, in '73, we had made arrangements with national public radio to broadcast live in 90 stations, in 35 states. It's on the poster. I guess I could count them all. At the time, it was the largest live radio broadcast of its kind of an event, over a whole weekend, that had ever taken place. Which is why the festival gained such notoriety throughout the country.

So we were doing this live radio broadcast, we were recording it again,

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although we didn't have Atlantic backing it. We were going to record it and then go sell it. And we had two-track backup tapes going to everything, to our 16-track recorders. We had backers putting the money up for the main recordings. We also had a video projection screen on the field. We envisioned for Ray Charles, we might have 15,000-20,000 people, so we had a projection screen halfway back in the field, so the people in the back could see it, which was quite... I'd done it at a few of my concerts, but it wasn't really being done in those days. That was pretty revolutionary and really helped.

I remember, Ray Charles was the big headliner, in 1973. And we were about to be broadcast live. He called me to his dressing room and said 'Hey, I don't know about this live radio broadcast. I think I need some more money. And there wasn't really anything I could do to argue about it. He wanted \$1500 bucks. This was about 10 minutes before show time. So I'm running to the office to get his blackmail money, which what it was, and passed the recording booth. We had no rights to record or videotape him obviously. So I told the guys in the recording booth. Hey, tape the lights dark and I'm gonna' lock you in the booth and record the sucker, He's rippin' me off for \$1500. Record him.

". So I said, "OK, we are gonna turn off the recorder. " Well, we turned the recorder on."

And we had two machines in the video booth. I said "Don't run this one. Run the one in the back room. We're gonna video tape him. Because we were shooting with our cameras to project on the large screen on one feed, so there was a logical reason to have all the

cameras around. So I said, "OK, we are gonna turn off the recorder. " Well, we turned the recorder on.

I went back and paid him his money and he went on and did his show. He did a great show, with the Raelettes.

I can remember little things, like Hound Dog Taylor and the Houserockers. Hound Dog couldn't find his wig, so Bruce Iglauer and I are runnin' all around, lookin' under the stage, finally found his wig, so he could go on.

Dr. John the Night Tripper performing his own set, with all this wild New Orleans's regalia. Coming out, straightened his act up, put on normal clothes, came out and played rhythm guitar behind Bobby Blue Bland. There were tons of stories like that, that I remember from time to time.

Security Issues

We had the security for the event, we had internal security and external security, Genie Plamonden, wife of famous bad guy Pun Plamonden was running internal security and another guy was running external security.

I didn't know it. I don't see any reason you can't document this. Years after the event, I would run into certain people in the street that I could tell were not liking seeing me. There was a group... which I was sort of used to. I had had my little enemies, in town.

But there was a look about some of these people, and finally one person stopped me. Oh, the woman with the hair shop, who runs the Ann Arbor Film Festival. She came up to me and explained to me one day. And then I went and researched and found out that what had happened. It was my attitude. I didn't really like the volunteer idea, not

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for bands or for any of the security people. So all the security were being paid, inside and out at \$5 an hour, which was pretty good pay in those days.

And this one security person got a \$10,000 advance from me on external security, for some expenses, which he put into a ill-phased cocaine deal, drug deal. He lost the ten grand; I didn't know about this. I guess he thought he would make it up with the second ten grand, which I paid him, and he proceeded to blow that as well. So he informed rangers that I had not come up with the money and they were not getting paid.

So that's the kind of hits you take, when you are a promoter. Whatever goes wrong, you are blamed for it. You might not even know it. That's a good example, anyway.

Outside Organizers

Internally, in 1973, there was group of yuppies from New York, whatever the group, you know, everything should be free. I think that was one of their bits. Everything free. So they blew into Ann Arbor, trying to get us to make the event free. We've got a \$200,000 budget and we're supposed to make the event free and somehow cover the 200 grand.

Well, I didn't even have to get involved. John Sinclair laughed them out of the room, John Sinclair. Said "This isn't what its about, guys." So they showed up at the event, organizing those who didn't have the money to get in, they were organizing them out front. And Genie Plamonden came to me and said we can't control these people. Its going to be some kind of riot, they are gonna bust in through the gates.

We need you to handle this. I said, OK, give me one of those hand-held

microphones. Line up all the security behind the front gate and I'm gonna' go out and talk to these people.

Line everybody up. Open the doors when I tell you to. So I went out and I said "Hey, we've got some people organizing out here. They have been here all week. We know exactly who they are. There are about 20 of them."

All of you.. what we're gonna do is, we're gonna open the gates here, and anybody that thinks they should go in free, you can go in free and I tell you. What we are gonna' do with the twenty. The twenty of you who have been organizing, we gonna' just beat the shit out of you and leave you bloody. So, if you're ready, we're ready. So would you open the gates up. All these people looking at me. Violence? Violence, Oh my God!

Firm Security

So I thought, you know I had always believed in firm security, preventive. I never had anybody hitting anybody, never needed to, because I had the biggest guys, even at Mothers teenage nightclub. I chose the guys who didn't make the football team and put them in white shirts and ties.

I remember at Mothers, I said the first fight that happens, because we had greasers and frats at Mothers. Greasers and frats, and it was where they mixed and got along. Cause they couldn't fight. We wouldn't let em. The first fight that happens, pick them up and hit em right in the nose, right in front of everybody.

So, that came along, that happened. Picked em up and boomp!, and everybody realized, "Well, no fighting in here. They'll beat the crap out of us." So

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that was the end of our security problem, there.

So I was always a firm believer in not harsh, but effective security. We opened up all the gates at the festival and here is this whole line of all our security people. Course, nobody wants to charge on his or her end. So, as they could, we are ready to fulfill our part of it.

And Genie Plamonden went inside and took the stage. We asked the crowd, did we want to let these people in, being very democratic. We ended up letting the people in, but it stopped the process in its tracks and those 20 people didn't come in. We did indeed know who they were and it didn't work.

So we never had any security problems and there must have been 5 or 6 marijuana possession arrests outside the facility, but our relationship with the Ann Arbor...the city administration, the mayor's office, which was really, really positive the two years they were there, democratic Harris was the mayor, a true jazz fan, a music fan on his own, which I didn't know at the time. So the democrats were sympathetic.

And we had a guy named Captain Kahn, that was our liaison. And I know that when we had this problem developing with these radicals from New York, who wanted to make the event free, I asked his advice, what to do. And the police captain's advice was, "Well if I were you, I'd get a rent-a-truck, beat them up, take their clothes off, throw them into the back of the van, drive them out into the country, and dump them on the side of the road."

I'm thinkin' assault, kidnapping, you know. This was his suggestion. We didn't follow it, of course. The police pretty much... We got the police a keg of

beer, put them up a little fence around where the business offices were, and they just sat up there, had a few beers, and during the event had basically nothing to do, even though we had to pay them ten or 15 thousand dollars a year. But that's the price of doin' business. And that was OK with me. I got along with the Ann Arbor police fairly well.

So, Captain Kahn was very sympathetic, other than his drastic suggestions.

1974 Festival

Erlewine: How about the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival of 1974?

Andrews: We were banned from the city. The city counsel had become republican. They had decided that this was a bad image for the city of Ann Arbor. I doubt that the mayor even knew who Duke Ellington was. I think it was Jim Steverson. I don't know. And of course, the radical press was attacking him like crazy and the Rainbow People Party All sorts of gross signs, you know. I won't go into that.

So he didn't really like the event much and basically pulled our permission to put the event on. I'd say one of the worst ideas I ever had in my life was that we're gonna still put it on - we can't let this thing die -- , but we are gonna put it on in Windsor. A school called me up, I don't know, the University of Windsor or whatever and said: "Hey, we got this little bowl, where you can do the event over here." I went over and looked at it. It was a lovely setting and everything. I went to CKLW and got \$50,000 to \$70,000 worth of advertising from them. They were just going to blow it out, which they did.

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But all the advertising in the world couldn't get people to cross the border, because they would be leaving their marijuana behind or they would be risking taking it over. The FBI showed up. They had all these caravans of cars coming in, that we had organized around the state. And we got all these people driving in and the FBI was turning them all around at the border, sent everybody back. Wouldn't let them in.

After all, John Sinclair was involved... 'radicals'. They didn't need any grounds in those days. We had the Windsor ACLU saying we need to sue these guys and da ta dada, but that wasn't our problem. Our problem was putting on an event with that as a reality. John Sinclair was not allowed to cross the border. No. He retreated to our headquarters at the Shelby Hotel. He did. We had an entertainment room there called the Rainbow Room at the time.

We lost about \$100,000. I even had the control of the event taken out of my control after the first... after Saturday or something. Our lawyer was there from New York. I made sure that the security got paid and some key things. Musicians just made fifty cents on the dollar.

Eclipse Jazz

When I left the university of Michigan and went on with the staging company, my successor, Suzanne Young, really wasn't that up on jazz, really wasn't that qualified to book it. So she allowed an organization to be formed called Eclipse Jazz, in 1974, I think. So she would let them do the jazz programming and then she would do other concerts. She still had a good series. It lost a little of its edge in terms of....a lot of the magic

doing shows isn't just promoting the shows, it is the right act at the right time.

One of the things that made me more successful than with other people is that I could sort of envision what was happening, what was going to happen. I could also create a market that was bigger for a certain act than a certain act would normally justify in terms of draw. You could build up Muddy Waters, you know. Put on Howlin' Wolf with B.B. King and I knew we would have a sellout anyway. People were knocked out by Howlin' Wolf, so you could bring him back and you know, have larger draws.

So that's where Eclipse Jazz came from and Lee Berry got his experience as a University of Michigan student running Eclipse Jazz, and that was his beginning.

Erlewine: Kind of like you did, in a way.

Andrews: In a way. I had produced concerts before the university. I produced an all day pop festival at Olympia Stadium, with 20 bands and it went on ten hours or something like that, with two stages and two sound systems, 3000 tickets in advance and 15,000 in the audience. We had every band in Michigan, that was any rock and roll band with any notoriety, Ted Nugent, Bob Seger.... Probably 1969, 1968. I did that as the manager of SRC. We all went out and bought Triumph motorcycles, Bonneville's, Tiger 800s, afterward.

That's how we got going. This is really only a one promoter town, always has been. I mean you can have Dave Siglin doing the Ark... to some degree the Ark is separate, not completely. It is a different offshoot. They do a wonderful job.

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It's really only a one promoter town. So Lee Berry pretty much became the promoter guy around town, booking clubs and this and that.

The festival. Bonnie Raitt, that is another good example. I went to John Sinclair and said: "We ought to have a few more women on the show. How is this Bonnie Raitt?" And he says, "Well, I don't know." He wasn't too excited with that. He says, "Well I'll tell you, her great influence was Sippie Wallace," whom I didn't even know. And of course, a lot of talking with John was education. He told me who was this and who was that, and who Sippie Wallace was and so he said "Now look, you call up her agent, Dick Waterman, out there in Cambridge and ask. You can get him to get Bonnie to get Sippie on stage with her, bring her out of retirement, because she lives in Detroit, then I'll agree to Bonnie Raitt." OK.

So I would go back to Dick Waterman and this is how John and I sort of worked things out. So that's how Sippie Wallace came to be on the 1972 event, performing with Bonnie Raitt.

One year Big Mama Thornton showed up. She was selling beer out of her back seat, backstage. I believed in an elaborate back stage show for the bands, for the band members - free food, free booze, for them and their friends. I believed in having a wonderful time backstage. And that's some of the greatest, if you read like the Rolling Stones article, some of the greatest things, if you are sitting there seeing Hound Dog Taylor and Howlin' Wolf talking to each other, talking together. All these great jazz artists talking with these great blues artists, who they probably never, ever run into, their

entire lives, but were aware of each other.

Erlewine: That really started with those first two blues festivals. In fact, I was in charge of the performer hospitality and we really made that happen for them. In fact, I also helped on at least the first blues & jazz festival. I know I was the main interviewer there.

Andrews: Anything they wanted, in terms of enjoyment, other than cocaine for Miles Davis, but anybody that was there had an absolutely wonderful time.

The Johnny Otis Show was wonderful, with Three Tons of Joy, these big fat Black girls... You know it was a White rhythm & blues act. Basically, there were some Black performers, but I didn't know who that was. John talked me into booking that show. I had never seen them before and they knocked me out. They were like a touring road show or something you would see in a vaudeville theater, you'd think.

Leon Thomas was always a favorite of mine. I had booked him before and booked him after the jazz festival. When Count Basie showed up, he was traveling from one date to another in a bus with his band and barely knew where the next date was going to be. He rolled in and he was taking a nap in the back and he had all these, like 20 journalists, White journalists waiting to interview him. Besides being an advisor on the music, John Sinclair created all the promotional materials, press packages, which are second to none compared with any event that probably existed, details on every artist, discographies, everything about the event.

Erlewine: Actually that was done in the first two blues festivals, biographies,

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discographies, the works by that crew. That was where you got that idea, because we put it together.

Andrews: And we would end up getting a lot of press, front page in the New York Times. Here is Washboard Willie and his Supersuds of Rhythm, you know. Big front-page deal there and Rolling Stone, everybody covered it, and they were all there to cover it. So here were all these writers, writing interviews of Count Basie. He comes up to the front of the bus, is just waking up, and I introduced myself to him. And he is looking around and he says, "Wait a minute. Wait a minute." He took me aside and we went up on stage and he looked out and there is like 10,000 people, young people, mostly White. And he just said: "What the hell are all these people doing here to hear me?" I explained what was goin' on and dad ta da, and he gathered himself together and we went back and did a whole bunch of interviews. Just like, "Holy Shit, what is goin' on here?" You know, he was wonderin'. Did a wonderful show, though.

I remember John Lee Hooker, our second year, 1973 year. We didn't have a top for the stage. I had agreed to do this revolutionary roof covering. We would cover the whole stage in high tension plastic, covering some telephone poles out front and back. We were going to stretch this whole thing to cover 3,000 people in the audience, plus the whole stage area. Well, it ripped, so we ended up with nothing. It was threatening to rain, very, very heavily and I remember driving John Lee Hooker, and we were looking and saying, "Man, it looks like this is gonna be bad." Yet, the moment he got on stage, it was just amazing, this entire

rainbow appeared in the sky right over the stage - and we were Rainbow Multimedia, Rainbow Peoples, and here was God saying, "You are gonna be OK, for the day. " Everything cleared up and we had no rain.

In fact, it never rained on any events until the current events. We used to... I would talk to sponsors in the beginning.. and they would say: "What if it rains?" And we would say: "Well, we guarantee it. Its not gonna' rain. It has never rained. It doesn't rain on the festival."

Erlewine: Now were you involved in the revival of the blues and jazz festival?

Andrews: After the 1974 event, John and I sort of split up business-wise. I was doing other things anyway. I wasn't involved with him or anything. I was running the staging thing, but I couldn't get this out of my mind. It was just a part of me that drove me crazy. I couldn't deal with the idea that the event itself couldn't take place anymore, so I pursued this for 17 years. Going to the city all the time, almost every year. And I would always be sent to the advisory committee of the parks department, for a recommendation. And I would hear things like, "well, we don't want to do this." I had one like 75-year-old guy on the committee and another republican woman , Jane L? (now one of our council women), who said "Well, we're afraid they are gonna smuggle guns and knives onto the site." In other words, what the parks department thought was that all of the worst blacks in Detroit, from the worst ghettos, would have to be the fans of this music they know nothing about. A lot of them are Black musicians. It's going to be everything we are afraid of, brought right here to Ann Arbor.

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So they would ask me about smuggling guns and knives. They were being very racist. They just didn't have any idea that they were being racist, which can be the worst kind.

I wish I could remember that. She has apologized to me since, one of our republican council members. She didn't have a clue.

So Lee Berry had mentioned to me, oh a year or so before that. It is getting close to 1990. He said "Hey, if you need any help with this, let me know." And I had always had great respect for Lee. He's honest. He's got great taste. He produces some of the, probably the best shows of any company in the Midwest.

So I said "OK." I could use a little help. What can we do here. So we decided to go directly to the city council. At that time, the mayor pro-temp was a Black fellow, I'm forgetting his name again. Probably the last black person on the city council, some time ago. And he was mayor pro-tem or something. So he agreed to bring it up at the last minute at a Monday meeting. And he asked for it to be put on the calendar, on the agenda.

And to do that, you had to get an eleven-to-nothing vote from all the council members to put it on. Which they didn't want to offend him, being a Black member, dealing with Black music, they put it on the agenda. They ended up voting eleven to nothing, voting "yes" for a resolution, telling the parks department to make a deal with us. After all those years. Eleven to nothing.

So the parks department doesn't have anything to say, except OK, great. Let's work together. After that, I just got to dealing with Ron Olson. And then

everything was fine. We have not had a problem in the parks department. We are now the darling of the parks department. They put our posters up around. This was 1992. And the idea was to get back to where we were, in terms of it being a significant national music event.

Erlewine: My main question is: were you principally involved in that?

Andrews: I was the only one involved for 17 years and then Lee Berry became involved.

Erlewine: So, you were instrumental in getting the thing restarted, right?

Andrews: Yeah, I was the most instrumental. Me first, Lee and I jointly, with Eric Cole, who was his employee. Eric Cole was Lee's assistant in Prism Productions. So Eric was in on all the meetings with us too. So it was sort of like, two to one, but it wasn't really against anybody. Lee and I hardly ever have any disagreements when we sit down and talk about the business of music.

Erlewine: How did that first one in the early '90s come together?

Andrews: About 60 or 70 meetings, between Lee and Eric and I. We didn't have a big board of directors. At that time, I wanted to just keep it small, so that we could control it. Too bad I lost sight of that vision.

Erlewine: When did that happen? When did you get out of it?

After the Festivals

Andrews: In 1996, I believe, because I was pretty much trying to save my marriage and my wife wanted to move to Virginia, where all her relatives were. I said, "I'm not doing anything too much

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fun around here anyway." So I resigned as president and left two weeks later. I think that was early March.

When I left, I had created the next sponsorship package. I was handling sponsorships, which was bringing in about a hundred grand a year, 95, 100 thousand a year, between cash and in-kind trade outs. When the festival reformed, I looked at it and said, "Well, OK, we are going to definitely need sponsorships. That's probably going to be the toughest thing. I'll take on the sponsorships." Because, to make it happen, I just looked around and said "Ok, I've got Lee Berry's help here on booking and on the production and promotion, so I'll shift gears and I go into the sponsorship." So I headed up sponsorships for three or four years. And we raised about a hundred grand a year, which is pretty damn good, considering they only had 1500 people outdoors, each day. And less indoors. So they were definitely getting a little bit more than they deserved, based on attendance. That was my job, what I wanted to do, because the festival needed it done.

When the board had just a small, three or four people on the board of directors, then we got to five or six or so. And then Joe Tiboni led this whole effort by the board of advisors, that they are going to quit, make a big public mess, if you "don't let us become board of director members." And this was the big political thing going on in the festival there, for two thirds of a year or so. So I switched gears and said: "Fuck it, I support it. OK."

And I was the one on the board of directors, as president, that supported expanding the board of directors, finally.

Bringing all these people in, so we wouldn't have this big mess.

I should have said, "OK," but with a director, or something. Well, they couldn't afford a director at the time. OK, we will have a large board of directors, with a director. But I shouldn't have agreed to it, without the director part. I thought that would follow. But it didn't, so they are just sitting in the same spot , although it is a beautiful, well-run festival.

I make more money selling sun roofs than I could ever make as a promoter. You know, I can remember us standing outside, down in Virginia, visiting my boys... I was sitting there going, "OK, I'll have a conversation with Jesus. I said , So, is this it? Is this my destiny? For a lifetime? Is this what I was supposed to do?" I said, "Well, if it is, boy, it sure is a little short sighted on your part. It seems like I could do a little bit better than this, selling sun roofs to make a few bucks, although its very important for the children and everything else, but not too creative." I give a hell of a presentation, but its not too creative. It pretty much pays the bills, but its not a burning...within me like a blues and jazz festival was. That's why it is disappointing to me that I guess this is all we are gonna' get, on this level.

With the job I have, its like I have one appointment today, fortunately in Ann Arbor. So, about 6:30 PM, I'll be done with work. I have extra time, so I thought, well, OK, maybe we can get this blues and jazz festival up and running, the way it should be. Obviously, I can't, so I've forgotten that. I have one other small project that I am gonna' work on.

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Gallup Park and the Summer Concerts

There was the Alley. I also started the summer parks concerts. Every summer I arranged with the city, under the auspices... out in Gallup Park....

There was Otis Spann Memorial Field, where the two early blues and jazz festivals were held. It was called the former University of Michigan chemical dump... still is. I don't know if anybody talks about it much anymore. They told us not to drill our fence posts too deep, cause they didn't know what would come up. We broke off eight or nine bits putting the fence up for the early Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival.

Most of them would be across the street from where the current blues and jazz festivals were held.

The first two Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz festivals were held next to the high school. They would not let us have Gallup Park, That was too pretty, too nice. They were held right next to Huron High School, which they don't use for any athletic events, because they know it is a chemical dump. It just sits there, as it will forever, probably.

Erlewine: The first blues and jazz festivals were not held where the first two blues festivals were, correct?

Andrews: No, the first two blues festivals were held in Mitchell Field.

We had these summer park concerts and there would be 12, 13, or 14 of them every summer. And the idea was to keep a lid on things, with the city. Something for the wild youth, supposedly, you know. We would keep everybody entertained.

We had three bands every Sunday. That was with a lot of qualified people from the local community, my brother's (Kurt Andrews) company helped with the sound. Plus Craig Blazier was on the crew, etc.

Kurt Andrews was a roadie for the SRC, then started a sound company, a take off from what the SRC was doing. He had big sound systems that we would rent out. So we had all the equipment and we had a portable stage, and we put these concerts out there, across from all the rich folks on the hill, where I grew up, all my former neighbors... all closed their doors on Sunday, when the foul language drifted across.... to Gallup Park.

Erlewine: We used to put on little concerts in West Park. Were you part of that at all?

Andrews: No. You brought the Grateful Dead in. Sheriff Harvey escorted them to the county line after they chose to play on top of an American Flag.

Erlewine: Remember Terry Tate?

Andrews: I was talking with Gene Stademeyer, our local narcotics agent, who was on contract with the federal government as a local narcotic agent, with the Ann Arbor Police Department. I guess I was involved in some of those, because I was explaining to him how we cleaned this all up and everything was going to be responsible and he didn't have to worry about anything anymore. While I was giving him that speech, he said to me. Well, maybe you should look behind you.

So I turned around and there was Terry Tate, high on rocket reducer, having ripped his American Flag outfit off,

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revealing himself, totally naked. Terry was a very wild boy.

The parks concerts were pretty successful. We would have two or three thousand people per day. I'll tell you a couple of stories.

Well, our motto was "Don't say Fuckit, put it in the bucket"

We would do bucket drives to get money to support this, because I always insisted on the bands getting paid, which some appreciated, some just thought "Well, you should anyway."

So we would do bucket drives with the psychedelic rangers, who were the security people at that time. We didn't really have internal police security. We'd say "Don't say Fuckit, put it in the bucket," which caused all the people across the street to close their doors every Sunday and lock themselves into their house, away from these dangerous youths.

If we didn't get enough money in the first bucket, shit, we'd just do another one, until we did get enough money, and then the show would go on.

I remember once though, I took Skip Taub into a meeting with the assistant city administrator, whose job it was to relate to us. And I told Skip, before hand, that if I have any problem here, I am going to kick you under the table, kick your foot, and I want you to go into one of those "Power to the People" routines, which you're so good at.

I was sympathetic to the Rainbow People's Party and the White Panthers, and all that, but I wasn't living there, was not tightly connected in any way... a guest for dinner a few times, but that was about it.

So we got in there and it wasn't quite goin' the way I wanted. And the administrator said " I don't know really how much interest there is in this." And I kicked Skip and he just lurched up, threw his chair over on the ground and just went raving into one of these routines, scaring the hell out this White city administrator. I stood up and calmed him down, of course. Skip calmed down. I think we can work this out, me representing the voice of reason, supposedly. We usually got our way, with that.

Other than one time, they were threatening to cancel our funding because they didn't think there was that much interest, so we let the Detroit radio stations, the FM stations announce it. We usually wouldn't let the information out, because we were afraid of too many people. So since the city thought that the interest was waning, I thought "Alright, let the Detroit stations broadcast it."

We ended up with 15,000 people, cars backed all the way up Geddes road to the highway, cars blocking the highway, and we pretty much got everything we asked for, as long as we agreed not to let those Detroit radio stations know another time. And we booked Bob Seger, Ted Nugent, and the SRC, all in one bill. That really freaked them out.

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