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Pink Floyd, Santana, Jefferson Airplane, Dr. John, the Byrds – The Dutch Woodstock (2013)

by **Nick DeRiso**

As a 17-band menu of bands gathered for the three-day Holland Pop Festival in June 1970 outside of Rotterdam, Bob Hite of Canned Heat summed things up perfectly: “I feel less uptight here than I ever have anywhere.”

It was that kind of show, as an overstuffed crowd of some 100,000 in Kralingse Forest took in something that came to be known as the Dutch Woodstock — mirroring as it did the pot-smoking, free-loving laissez faire, the wildly varied musical delights and even the torrential downpours of that memorable 1969 music festival.

The Holland Pop Festival (featured in a new Gonzo Multimedia DVD/2CD package appropriately dubbed *The Dutch Woodstock*) even boasted a few sturdy veterans from its nick-namesake — including Santana, who opens the film with a volcanic eruption called “Gumbo,” then returns for a romp through Gabor Szabo’s “Gypsy Queen” before concluding with this convulsion of rhythms on “Jingo.”

Fellow Woodstock alums like Country Joe and Jefferson Airplane — the latter of whom’s line “acid, incense and balloons” from “Saturday Afternoon” couldn’t have been more appropriate — make signature appearances. In fact, Grace Slick’s bad-trip howls on “White Rabbit,” captured at the peak of her vocal powers despite being very pregnant, are simply shiver-inducing. Later, Al Stewart, years before he became a shooting star courtesy of “Year of the Cat,” offers a delicately constructed solo tune called “Zero She Flies” before an indistinguishable tangle of humanity.

Into this lysergic fever dream steps the Night Tripper, as Dr. John brilliantly feints and grooves through “Mardi Gras Day.” Half-dressed hippies take long bong drags, amid the growing mountain of concertgoers’ refuse, while T-Rex offers “By the Light of the Magical Moon.” Roger McGuinn’s ringing Rickenbacker then cuts through this haze like a hot knife, as the Byrds wander into a country-rocker about an old hound called “Old Blue.”

Certainly, the event’s highlight remains the performance by Pink Floyd — whose “Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun” trades in its iconic space-journey atmospheric for a brawny psychedelia. They also add an appropriately apocalyptic take on “A Saucerful of Secrets.” Still, for all of that high-flying drug-fueled weirdness — even up to and including Dr. John’s darkly intriguing hoodoo — none of it can touch the altitude quickly achieved by Elton Dean’s free-form sax-freakout on Soft Machine’s “Esther’s Nose Job.”

Pity the film crew didn’t swing around more often to catch the crowd’s reaction. No doubt it would have been the very definition of “like — wow, man.”