

# **Progenitor**



# **Woodstock**



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By Greg Stolze, © 2012

## Introduction

Starting with Richie Havens and ending with Jimi Hendrix, the Woodstock music festival of 1969 is considered a watershed cultural moment. In the setting of the *Wild Talents* sourcebook *Progenitor*, it is as well. But where the real Woodstock was seen as a triumph of the counter-culture, in *Progenitor* its legacy lies with the PCs.

## Changes

The original plan was for Woodstock to take place in Mills Industrial Park in Wallkill, New York. In our world, the Wallkill zoning board became increasingly uneasy with Woodstock and threw up numerous impediments until

the organizers got sick of it and wound up on Max Yasgur's farm in White Lake. But in *Progenitor's* universe, instead of the folk group Quill, the organizers brought an up-and-coming rock star named Deionne Bright (page 192) to show Wallkill how innocuous they were.

Moreover, in our history, Abbie Hoffman successfully extorted \$10,000 from the festival's organizers before attending the show, interrupting The Who and falling off-stage after Pete Townshend either hit him with his guitar or bumped him accidentally (depending on which source you believe).

In *Progenitor* he interrupts Deionne Bright instead.

## C'mon People, Smile On Your Brother...

One question to deal with is, how do the PCs wind up at the concert? One simple and obvious answer is 'They hear The Who are going to play and decide to go.' That's perfectly fine and is, in fact, the default assumption.

It's also possible that the PCs have some kind of square-agenda axe to grind and decide to confront Woodstock because it's an example of the moral decay that's rotting America. That works with the scenario as written too: They're just more likely to be an expression of Wallkill anger than Hippie anger.

A final possibility is that the PCs get hired (or invited) to be part of the festival, the same way Wavy Gravy and the Hog Farm commune served as coordinators in our history. If they have some kind of official position with the festival, any time they change someone's anger rating, roll a d10. We'll call this the "Official Die."

On Day One, if the roll is a 10 the anger change is increased by a point. That is, if they lower a group's anger by one point normally, the Official Die's 10 result lowers anger by two points. On the other hand, if their action raises anger a point and they get a 10 on the Official Die, anger goes up two points.

On Day Two, the anger change rises by a point any time the Official Die produces an even result.

On Day Three, the anger change rises by a point any time the Official Die produces a result greater than or equal to 4.

A similar use of the Official Die can apply if they're not hired by the festival but are, rather, known agents of the U.S. Government or are famed as "super heroes" (or supervillains).

## Abbie Hoffman's Powers

In addition to the Politician template (page 158), Hoffman's a Tier Four metahuman. Spend 90 points to tailor his powers to the needs of your PCs—make him a challenge, but not perfectly immune or able to overwhelm them. The other 260 points of his powers are invested in **Mind Freeing**. If the PCs are really high Tier, Hoffman may have a group of metahuman friends, allies or followers with him. If they're really low Tier, he might spread power directly to someone in the crowd who immediately lashes out at him.

When Hoffman tells you to think for yourself, it blasts every artificial influence out of your mind. Syntergenes, mind control, brainwashing, drugs... all that gets flushed. Moreover, irrational emotional appeals, instinctive reactions and subconscious attractions or repulsions are laid bare and revealed for what they are. You may think you disliked the grocer because of his brusque manner, but Hoffman can show you it was really because he reminds you of your emotionally distant father.

This is something of a mind-bomb. People who are suddenly wrenched out of comfortable thought-patterns suffer a -10d penalty to their next action as they sit there stunned, sorting through the lies they'd believed. However, once the thoughts are cleansed, Mind Freeing has no effect until the brain's dirty again. That is, it stuns you once, but doesn't work on you again until someone else's cheap political ad, catchy ad jingle, or Hypercharm starts twisting your thoughts out of true again. It affects everyone in a 40-yard radius.

### **Mind Freeing 10HD (260 points)**

*Useful (+2), Daze (+2), Radius (+6), Variable Effect (+4), If/Then: Only works on you if your opinions are distorted or have occluded elements (-1).*



## How Mad Are People?

*Progenitor: Woodstock* orbits three central questions: How mad are the hundreds of thousands of hippies who came for three days of peace, love and music? How mad are the people of Wallkill, New York? How do those anger levels interact? If your PCs' actions don't change these metrics, that's fine, but the central changes to the setting are going to emerge from big, crowd-influencing events.

Wallkill starts at Anger 2. They were told this wouldn't be as big as it obviously is, traffic has become unreal, and for the first time these upright normal citizens are massively outnumbered by freaks and strangers.

Hippies start at Anger 1. They had to hike miles and miles due to the backed-up traffic, food's overpriced, sanitation is drastically insufficient, there's not enough water and the locals are hassling them. On the other hand, the hash is awesome and Ravi Shankar totally blows their minds, man.

The disparity between Anger levels determines who's the aggressor and who's the baffled victim. A faction with low Anger is bewildered by the other side's violence. Each group sees itself, indisputably, as the aggrieved and put-upon party.

# Anger Levels

Here's what Anger levels mean for the townies, the music fans, and the two totaled together.

Level	Wallkill	Hippies	Wallkill+Hippies
0-1	They recognize that Woodstock, while messy and disorganized, is not a menace to America.	Treating the people of Wallkill with exceptional courtesy and kindness, they succeed in decreasing Wallkill's Anger by 1.	The two groups bridge the generation and cultural divide.
2-3	Stoic endurance.	One or two freakouts and bad trips, but nothing unmanageable.	A comity in which they agree to live and let live.
4-5	Resentment and disgust.	Minor disgruntlement expressed as political rhetoric and cruel humor.	No major clashes, and only a few minor ones. No overt violence.
6-7	Loud, public displays of anger. Police harassment of festivalgoers.	Vandalism, taunting and threats.	Icy detente, aside from a few fistfights and some dubious arrests.
8-9	Police excesses become the norm, not the exception.	Riots.	Bad behavior on both sides, culminating in longstanding distrust.
10+	Widespread vigilante violence including rape and murder, ignored or assisted by police.	Massive civil disorder, looting, assaults and arson. National guard called out.	Open conflict at escalating levels.

## What Raises Wallkill Anger

- Widespread property trespass.
- Sexual assaults of any description.
- Widespread theft.
- Any illegal actions taken by groups.
- Deliberate provocation.

## What Raises Hippie Anger

- Racially-motivated abuses.
- Egregious police harassment.
- Loud and unanswered mockery of their ideals.
- A band refusing to play over money issues.
- Drug crackdown.

## Day One: August 15

A fair crowd was in place early, but with the first scheduled day of music, the numbers explode. Richie Havens starts the show with a folk set culminating in a free-form "Freedom" chant, Ravi Shankar out-plays a thunderstorm and Joan Baez follows Arlo Guthrie to end the day.

## Issue: Containment

Our Woodstock never got its fences in place. *Progenitor's* Woodstock has more time, a setting with more buildings, and a less laid-back police presence. That said, there are still a lot of people who want to get in and an enormous perimeter that's impossible to monitor, not to mention radicals on the inside cutting holes in the fences and helping people enter without tickets.

Historical Woodstock threw up its hands and said, “It’s a free concert, man!” *Progenitor*’s Woodstock won’t do that unless the PCs either persuade the organizers, or make getting in free so easy that tickets are beside the point. On the other hand, without PCs specifically deciding to do something about the freeloaders, a large minority of the crowd gets in without paying.

**If the PCs enforce ticket holding**, the Hippie Anger increases a point.

**If the PCs help people get in free**, the Wallkill Anger increases a point.

**If the PCs do nothing**, the concert promoters try to defend the fence lines and eject some people who lack tickets, but it’s ineffectual. Both the Hippie and the Wallkill Anger increase a point.

## Day Two: August 16

The main event is the biggest, most crowded day of the festival. Abbie Hoffman spends much of the early day organizing and managing the medical treatment centers before the actual music begins. It starts with Quill, features a legendary Santana performance, a Grateful Dead set that Jerry Garcia later deemed “just plain atrocious,” continues through Creedence Clearwater Revival and Sly and the Family Stone, and ends with Jefferson Airplane. But before the Airplane, Deionne Bright takes the stage.

## Issue: Fly-Ins

In 1969, there still aren’t that many people who can fly. But there are a few, and three of them come to Woodstock. They just zip up at various points through the days, one landing nonchalantly in the middle of the crowd, two others hovering to enjoy the sounds. None of them have tickets: They’re getting by on metahuman entitlement.

If the concert has been declared free, the fly-ins have no effect, other than to wow people and make a cool scene cooler. But if fence-jumpers are getting busted and people had to wait in long lines for hours to get through crowded gates, there’s some resentment towards the fly-ins.

It’s probably a good idea to have the fly-ins statted up beforehand, at Tiers and with powers that make interesting

stories for your PCs. Note that this doesn’t mean it has to be any kind of “fair fight.” Picture a low-Tier Zipperman who thinks he’s invulnerable to everything picking a fight with a high-Tier PC whose Harm Hard Dice are full of Penetration. Accidentally killing an aggressor can be as bad as losing, if not worse. They’re not ganged together, either. One may be eminently reasonable, while another is nuttier than a squirrel’s daydream.

Or if you don’t have the time to tailor-fit the GMCs, try these three.

*Evan Deeds* is a Tier 6 Inventor (see page 23) who has blown part of his Base Will on a gravity-canceling backpack. It’s got 3d+2HD in Flight (D,U) and is an idiosyncratic prototype that only another inventor could figure out and replicate. He invents only when tripping and resists buying a ticket, but can be pressured into it. He’s a lover, not a fighter. He’s got shed-loads of Willpower to burn, remember, and Hypercharm or Hypercommand tick him off.

*Candy Gershowitz* is a Tier 8 Zipperman (see page 23) with a pretty face, used to getting her own way. Her response to threat is to try and get the crowd on her side and paint the PCs as bullying jerks.

*Duke Prowse* is Tier 10 with 8d in Flight (A,D,U), a couple Hyperskills that don’t apply, and a mean attitude.

All three have the “Student” Career.

**If the PCs get the fliers to leave or buy tickets**, there’s no effect.

**If the PCs have a bigass public fight with the fliers**, Hippie Anger rises a point.



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## Issue: Weather

It rains. Some performers are getting shocks off their instruments. Because it's at Mills Industrial instead of Yasgur's farm, there are buildings you can go in and avoid the rain, but this makes things worse in some ways: The buildings become crowded, smelly and filled with sullen wet flower-children.

What makes things worse is that drinking water is in short supply, and the irony of being wet and thirsty amuses exactly no one.

**If the PCs do nothing,** Hippie Anger rises a point.

**If the PCs can change the weather or alleviate the problems in a low-key way,** no effect.

**If the PCs solve the weather problems in a flashy, impressive way,** Hippie Anger drops a point. Also, the PCs get offered loads of drugs and sexual favors, and Sly Stone gives them a soul-brother handshake.



## Issue: Hoffman vs. Bright

In the middle of Deionne Bright's brain-melting set, Abbie Hoffman jumps onstage while Bright's adjusting his amps. Hoffman goes off about the unjust imprisonment of John Sinclair (founder of the White Panthers and Yippie supporter, recently sentenced to nine years in prison for his third marijuana arrest) and starts Mind Freeing the crowd as fast as he can. Given that they've been entranced by Deionne Bright, some of them are very disturbed, but others get mad at Hoffman for spoiling the effect of Bright's hypercharm. Bright himself starts yelling at Hoffman.

**If the PCs do nothing,** Bright storms offstage, the crowd starts booing, and Hoffman continues to rant. Then Bright's Devil comes out, sneaks up behind Hoffman with his finger to his lips, and rabbit-punches him unconscious. With a tip of his hat, the Devil drags Hoffman backstage. For the rest of the festival, The Devil is around and about, getting people high, saying the wrong things to assorted boyfriends, and talking to the townies about their grievances. Ultimately, this is more serious for the townies than for the hippies. It raises Wallkill Anger by a point.

**If the PCs fight Hoffman,** he can be driven offstage after a few exchanges. No meters change as long as they don't kill or maim him. If they mangle him in front of God, Tim Hardin and everybody, the police are called in, and both Wallkill and Hippie Anger rise. (Congratulations! Altamont wasn't supposed to happen until December!) If he defeats the PCs somehow, then Bright's Devil shows up on schedule.

**If the PCs fight The Devil,** it shows a Satanic and monstrous visage before vanishing, causing rumors that dog Bright for the rest of his career. The Satanism scare raises Wallkill anger a point, while the disruption of the concert raises Hippie Anger a point.

## Issue: Toxic Super-Freakout

When Grace Slick starts singing "Somebody to Love," a seventeen-year-old girl from Pennsylvania starts freakin' out on the brown acid. (It was poorly manufactured.) This would be unfortunate but not uncommon except for her special connection with Deionne Bright. During his solo on the song "Night Workin'" he winked at her, turned on the charm, and made her a metahuman. Specifically, she's a psychic broadcaster.

Individual GMs are going to have to stat her up so she's appropriate to the PCs, but she for sure has a power called "Telepathic Broadcast." (Other than that, she gets 266 points of powers.)

Here's how Telepathic Broadcast works on its maiden voyage: First, she freaks out. Then, a couple seconds later, everyone within arm's length does. The hysteria and psychosis radiate out at about the rate of a jog, until it hits the limits of her radius (40 yards from her person). (This is the interaction of "Touch Only" and "Radius": She can't locate the epicenter anywhere but on herself, but it does flow out, encompassing everyone in the area of effect.) Keep in mind just how many people were there, and how tightly packed the crowd could get...

It does other things, of course. If and when she gets it under command, she can use it to radiate out whatever she's feeling, or any feeling she can dredge up by concentrating on happy memories (or sad, or tranquil ones). The Attack function works only when she's injured. It's a curious illusion of damage: People with defenses (even something like body armor) instinctively know they're 'less hurt' and the damage wears off rapidly... if it doesn't kill outright.

#### **Telepathic Broadcast 6d+3HD (84 points)**

*Attacks (+2), Daze (+1), Radius (+6), Delayed Effect (-2), If/Then (Only when she's hurt) (-1), No Physical Change (-1), Touch Only (-2), Uncontrollable (-2).*

*Defends (+2).*

*Useful (+2), Daze (+1), Radius (+6), Delayed Effect (-2), If/Then (Only broadcasts an emotion she's experiencing or can force herself to recall) (-1), Touch Only (-2).*

**If the PCs do nothing**, it takes a while before anyone figures out what's happening, by which time a couple dozen people are trampled and she's been knocked out. She comes to in the first-aid station and causes some more disorder getting out, disorder that spreads to town when she flees there. This raises Wallkill Anger another point.

**If the PCs seize her immediately and get her away from the crowd**, she calms down and leaves the festival, trying to get her powers under control. But if they let her go, on her way back to Pennsylvania, she has an-

other uncontrolled outburst and causes quite a bit of trouble in Gardnertown. (See "Megatownies Attack," below.)

**If they injure her**, it's mayhem. Hippie Anger rises a point and hundreds are wounded. She's in the throes of a bad trip and doesn't really understand what she's doing, and her feedback is ripping through the whole crowd. But it's not until she's physically harmed that people really lose it. If PCs kill her, hundreds die in sympathy and Hippie Anger goes up two points.

**If the PCs get Abbie Hoffman or Deionne Bright**, either one of them can solve the problem, Hoffman by erasing the drugs from her mind and Bright by saying "Hey, calm down lil' darlin'." In these cases, Hippie Anger drops by a point as she attempts to use her powers to ease the situation.

## **Day Three: August 17**

By Sunday, a lot of the fans are starting to depart, but the crowd is still sizable. Joe Cocker plays, as does Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. Eventually, after a light break of cover tunes by Sha Na Na, Jimi Hendrix takes the stage, reinvents "The Star Spangled Banner" and ends the show.

## **Issue: Weather, Redux**

The weather turns on the festival again—rain, lightning and high winds. The solutions from Saturday weren't really that great, unless the PCs used their powers (or had some brilliant idea) that changed the situation.

**If the PCs intervened on Saturday and intervene again**, the show is good, people are pleased, Hippie Anger drops a point, and people head home.

**If PCs fixed things on Saturday but don't on Sunday**, there's some disgruntlement, but people get over it. There's no Anger change.

**If the PCs fixed nothing on Saturday but manage to do it today**, it's a beautiful resolution of the festival. People leave amazed, optimistic and proud of what their subculture has achieved. Hippie Anger drops two points.

**If the PCs did nothing about the weather and do nothing today**, it's Woodstock. Despite the rain, perhaps even because of it, people are elevated out of their predictable routines and selfish concerns. The concession stands that were gouging for fresh water start giving it away for

# Issue: Megatownies Attack

If the PCs ran the unfortunate Pennsylvania Brown Tripper out on a rail, she rapidly spores to a group of angry locals in Gardnertown. There are at least two of them, Tier Fives, with more if you need them. Unhappy over the festival from the beginning, being psychically attacked by some drug-stained hippie is too much. Empowered, they go to make a stand, raise some hell and show those raggedy kids who's boss. If two Tier Fives aren't going to challenge the PC group, double their numbers or give them powers that are specifically difficult for the PCs to deal with. If two Tier Fives are going walk over your PCs, maybe have the Megatownie be a lone nut.

(This is an option to consider for groups that won't be happy without a huge, climactic fight.)

Some powers that might be appropriate for the Megatownies include...

- Highly selective long-range teleportation that sends people back to where they were exactly one week ago.
- Mass body control.
- Permanent implantation of behavioral controls ("Must... keep... hair... short!")
- Sound cancellation.

GM's are going to have to play the Anger levels by ear if Megatownies show up, especially considering all the ways PCs could interact with them. A metahuman massacre of the concertgoers could decrease Wallkill's anger, especially if they got the guilty feeling that they caused or encouraged a lone meta-lunatic to go on an eyebolt shooting spree. PCs who face up to aggression and lose could sap the flower children's hope and belief (and anger) or it could make them even more bitter and resentful. PCs who disable or (especially) kill a megatownie before his real threat becomes clear are going to look like thugs and monsters to the locals, possibly raising Wallkill anger a couple points. On the other hand, PCs who talk the new metahumans into just enjoying the groove may lower wrath for one or both sides.

free. The crowd—maybe not everyone, but most—gets an inkling that a new, better and radically different future is dawning. Hippie Anger drops three points.

## Conclusion

The canonical *Progenitor* Woodstock resulted in short-term resentment and glowering from the locals, but they kept their mouths shut and their fists unclenched. If the PCs make wise decisions, reduce the pressures when they can and let the festival's peace be their highest good, it can be considerably more. It can be the first moments of a truly better time. On the other hand, they could screw the pooch and turn it into a bloodbath.

Long term, the concert is a chance for PCs to interact with two influential metahumans—Deionne Bright and Abbie Hoffman.

Hoffman's a passionate wild card. Even metahumans who intervene to halt a fight between him and Bright's Devil might get on his bad side if it seems like they were intervening to calm things down, not to help him make his point. Then again, he likes having powerful, well-known metahumans supporting his message, and can be very shrewd about making alliances.

Bright might be very grateful that the PCs beat his Devil and reward them with entourage privileges involving parties, drugs and backstage access... until, in a moment of weakness, he summons the Devil again and gets talked around to seeing the PCs as sponges and freeloaders.

But one way or another, metahumans who don't actively avoid or conceal themselves probably wind up in the documentary. For good or ill.

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# WILD TALENTS PROGENITOR



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