

The Day the Music Died

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In the summer of '69, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walked on the moon. I walked to work at a factory making screens. The shop's AM radio pumped out Top 40 hits like "Bad Moon Rising," punctuated by promos inviting us to "three days of peace and music" in upstate New York.

My friends and I accepted. We piled into a 1959 sedan with a stick shift and bad tires and hit the road. "By the time we got to Woodstock," Joni Mitchell wrote, "we were half a million strong, and everywhere there was song and a celebration."

Amazingly, after three days of music, mud and chemicals, there were no incidents of violence. Nobody pulled a gun, nobody got shot.

Music festivals could go the way of tie-dye shirts, bell-bottoms and psychedelic rock. Not because music has gone out of fashion, but because radical Republicans sacrificed your safety to the demands of the gun lobby.

Atlanta's Music Midtown festival began in 1994. Once a year it brought popular musicians to 189-acre Piedmont Park near Midtown Atlanta. It drew over 300,000 some years and, for public safety, prohibited guns.

Enter Georgia's radical Republican legislature and governor. In April, they legalized concealed carry of handguns without a license on public lands including Piedmont Park. In May, gun activists threatened to sue Music Midtown unless it dropped its gun prohibition. Rather than make thousands of concertgoers sitting ducks for wannabe serial killers, organizers canceled the event.

Welcome to 2022! Women lost control over their bodies because Republicans rigged the Supreme Court and abolished our constitutional right to privacy. Now, we've effectively lost our First Amendment right to peaceably assemble because Republicans think gun rights trump all others.

Radical Republicans are systematically revoking our rights. What's next? Marriage equality? Contraception?

This isn't freedom. Unless, as Janis Joplin sang, "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose."

Vince Amoroso
Sunset Beach