

## Concert Note

# The Rolling Stones at West View Park, 1964

By Brian A. Butko and Paul Roberts, *Pittsburgh History*

IT'S been about a year since the Rolling Stones last played in the area. Just as interest was starting to wane, who steps forward but Paula Cline of Dormont, Pa., — with her photos of the Stones in their first Pittsburgh gig, on their first U.S. tour, in 1964.

On the evening of June 17, a Wednesday, the Stones capped a six-act show at West View Park's Danceland. About 400 people showed up at the old dance hall — Danceland burned in 1973 and the rest of the amusement park north of Pittsburgh closed in 1977 — to see Bobby Comstock and the Counts, the Fenways, Patty and the Emblems, the Pixies Three, Bobby Goldsboro, and the Rolling Stones. KQV radio, neck-and-neck with KDKA as the city's pop music voice of the day, sponsored the show. The only advertising was on KQV and on its play list, and a concert re-cap doesn't seem to have even made the papers. Tickets cost \$1.50.

Cline, who works downtown at Wheelabrator Air Pollution Control, was 16 at the time. She doesn't remember much about the concert, and really hadn't thought of it as anything historic.

One person who remembers plenty is Dave Goodrich. Everyone is fortunate that he was not only at the concert but is also sort of Pittsburgh's rock historian. The British Invasion during 1964 was born in Beatlemania, though the Beatles were the last to visit Pittsburgh. The first Brits to come, the Dave Clark Five, headlined a five-group Civic Arena show on July 5 sponsored by KDKA. The show was stopped midway through because the 5,000 fans refused to sit. Typically, they finally rushed the stage.

The only other British group to hit town before the Beatles was the Stones.<sup>1</sup> Relatively unknown in America, they had one minor hit, "Not Fade Away," from their first album. They were primarily a rhythm-and-blues group, but the success of other groups that year led to their billing as "England's Newest Hitmakers." They made their U.S. television debut on the Hollywood Palace Show, where host Dean Martin repeatedly derided them.<sup>2</sup> Then they toured America, stopping in Pittsburgh.

The Fenways were the act most people came to see at the Stones show. "They were really the first

Pittsburgh group spawned by Beatlemania," said Goodrich. In fact, the Stones got a lukewarm reception in a town proud of its home-grown R-and-B. Goodrich remembers that the Stones had to push their way through the audience from the dressing room — no police clearing a path in those days. The crowd, raised on Porky Chedwick and Pittsburgh's own "underground" music, stood with their arms crossed and watched the eight-song, half-hour set — no screaming, no stage rushing.<sup>3</sup>

Often called dirty and long-haired, the Stones were mostly well dressed, in jackets and ties.<sup>4</sup> Mick Jagger played maracas and sang. Drummer Charlie Watts was interviewed by Chuck Brinkman on KQV later that night.

The Rolling Stones returned four times: the Civic Arena in 1965, 1966, and 1972, and Three Rivers Stadium in 1989. These shows, after the Stones's rise to nasty stardom, were a far cry from their Danceland debut, when they were just another struggling band. ■

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<sup>1</sup> The Beatles played the Civic Arena on Sept. 14, at the height of their early popularity. They only stayed long enough for the show, according to Dave Goodrich, because no hotel would have them after "problems" with the Dave Clark Five.

<sup>2</sup> Among Dean Martin's comments: "Their hair isn't that long, ...[i]t's just smaller foreheads and higher eyebrows..." Later, when introducing a trampolinist, he joked, "That's the father of the Rolling Stones. He's been trying to kill himself ever since." Philip Norman, *Symphony For the Devil: The Rolling Stones Story* (New York: 1984), 123.

<sup>3</sup> This reaction was much warmer than in San Antonio, where "they were required to play standing on the edge of a water tank full of trained seals...." The *London Daily Mirror* reported that the Stones had been booed — although a tumbling act and a performing monkey on the same bill were both called back for encores." Norman, 124.

<sup>4</sup> The Rolling Stones were much rougher in appearance than the Beatles, who still outraged many with their hair length and music. The Stones manager played on this image to win teenage fans, calling his band the ugliest group in Britain, and having magazines ask, "WOULD YOU LET YOUR DAUGHTER GO WITH A ROLLING STONE?" Then they were presented to fans "as rebels who were nice boys when you got to know them." Norman, 113.



Mick Jagger, voice. Guitars: Bill Wyman,  
Brian Jones, in the light coat, and Keith Richards,  
barely visible between Mick and Jones.  
Drums: Charlie Watts.