

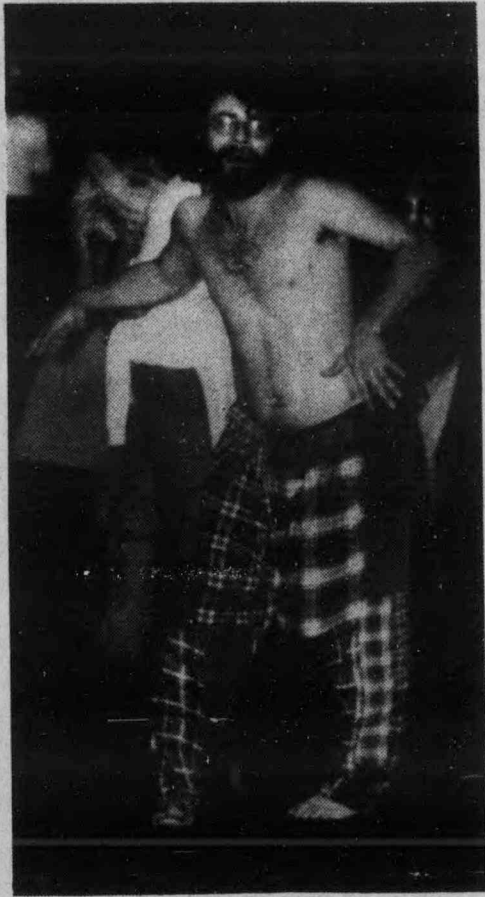
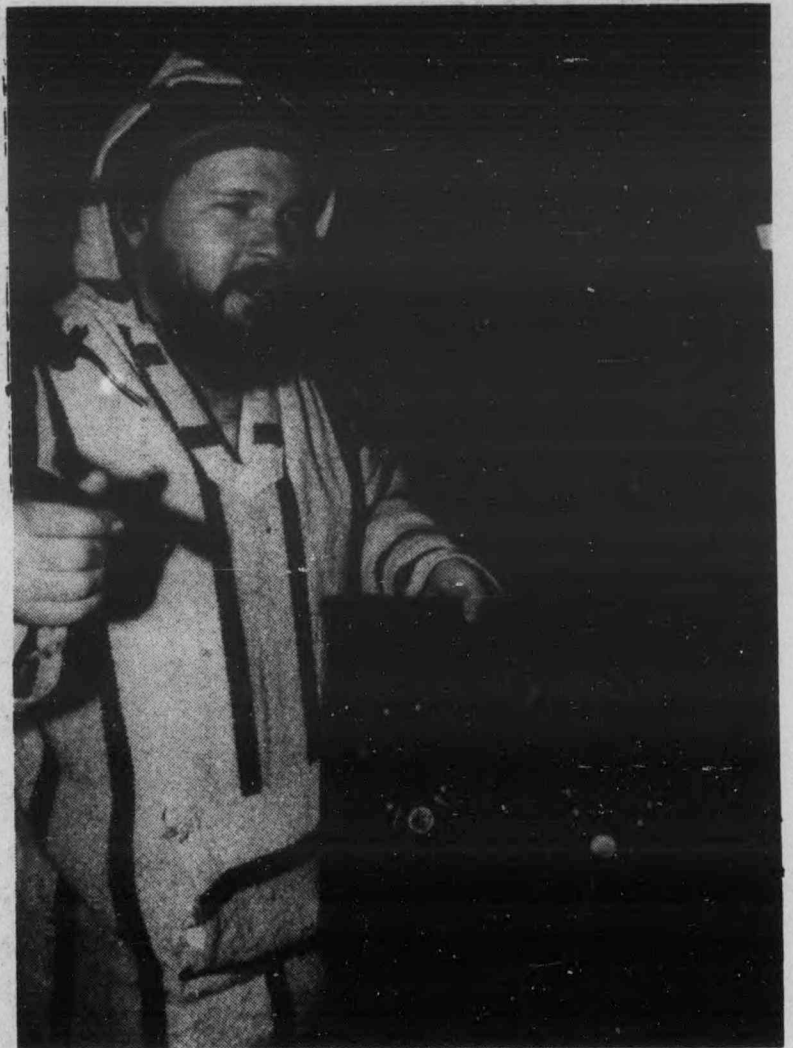
It is a warm, early spring night in Maryland. A man, weaving his way through the knotted snarl of grid-locked cars leans in my window and asks me if I want to buy any mushrooms. I decline, noticing a particularly blissful group of individuals happily laying on the cold asphalt around the back of their rusted pick-up. I wonder what's in those balloons? Beaching the car next to a small clump of beer bottles and happy people with tie-dyed faces, I stand and stretch. With the liberty bell hanging over my head ("remember that," I think to myself), I dig in my pocket for a Lucky Strike (they're unfiltered, like Bogey's). It is so wonderfully spring here. I blow a cloud of bluish smoke out and it is quickly whipped backwards over my shoulders by the light, warm breeze.

A long, slow walk through the parking lot, peppered with people and small barbeques. The crowd gets thicker. A man hands me a sheet of yellow paper and asks me if I would like to buy any acid. I decline, noticing another toxically blissful clutch of smiling people hunched around a man playing conga drums on the soft, new grass of a median strip.

There is a noise beginning. To the left, a man puts his head back and howls. A man next to me turns at the sound, his eyes red and smiling, and puts his head back and howls. Like stingers on a summer evening, one by one thousands join in. Startled, I bring up my camera, but how to take a photograph of sound? My light meter hangs its needle and my flash whines its complaint. No. Not this time.

I meet a man selling bear claw jewelry from Canada. He sounds like he's from Indianapolis. After I take his picture, he asks me if I would like to buy a really smokable bowl. I decline, noticing the futility of it all, and the mounted police with big, white clubs.

People seem impressed with my press pass, turning it over in their hands and eying it with expertise. "This is good!" They say - why does it sound as if they are talking about a good counterfeit banknote?



Against a wall, laying casually on blankets is a family. The father tells me that his three-year-old daughter has been here two hundred times from California to Maine (he regretted missing European dates). She is coyly playing with a red balloon. Some people stop to hunch down and chat with her while her mother spins around and around and around. Everyone is spinning. Some twirl gracefully, some stagger in controlled, spastic motion. Some stare blankly at the floor and turn around and around, their heads tilted to watch where they are going like dogs settling down to sleep. All are smiling in strange, foreign bliss. My camera has been as dumbfounded as me, but now I am reminded of it by the sudden realization of its weight on my shoulder. Click. A girl spins furiously, her skirt billowing out around her. Click. A man staggers by, an inexpressible euphoria washing over his face as he stares at his rapidly moving hands and spins. Click. "You know-" Suddenly I am aware that someone is talking. I look up. "That flash? It's really pissing me off." I try in vain to find derisiveness or anger in the face. "I just wanted to say that." The face spins calmly away.



Inside the arena, everyone stands. Over twenty thousand bodies chant the same words and move in the same, almost rhythmless motion. They're dancing not to any beat, but to Gerry. A balloon - it's pink-bounces lazily up on to the stage. Gerry kicks it. Suddenly the multitudes scream and chant with renewed force, yelling over and over and over. It's beginning to get cold outside, as is wont in early spring. Outside is where the police wait, in cars, on horses, and on motorcycles. Inside it is warm.

**Photos, design and text by  
Chris Hunt (not without help)**