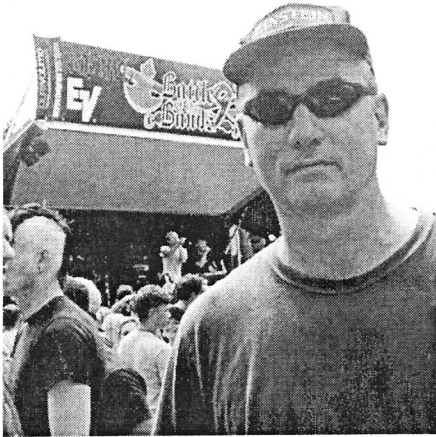


Paul Sage
Friday, August 12, 2005

Paul's Observations and Notes

Vans Warped Tour [Outdoor Music Festival featuring current progressive and punk bands]
Charlotte, NC
Monday, August 8, 2005



On Monday, August 8, I attended the Vans Warped Tour music festival in Charlotte. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. The event began at noon and lasted past 9:30 PM. I was there
from about 1:30 to 5:30 PM. Weather was hot and overcast and then it rained big around 5:15.

*Personal
names and
affiliations
deleted.*

My primary observation:

**The expression of anger and rebellion through musical, verbal and visual art
without any display of angry or rebellious behavior.**

Examples of the expression of anger and rebellion:

- Lots of T-Shirts with profanity and rebellious statements. One of the booths was selling T-Shirts with the image of historic revolutionary Che Guevara.
- On band playing at the festival was Avenged Sevenfold, or "A7X." Their symbol is a skull with bat wings. Their biggest fans were young, tough-looking males dressed in black A7X shirts and black pants with lots of metal and zippers.
- A few cars in parking lot cluttered with statements

Examples of the absence of angry or rebellious behavior:

- At 5PM it was hot and crowded. I was making my way through a crowded area to see A7X. The crowd was so dense people started pushing in opposite directions to get to where they wanted to go. I felt like I was in a Japanese subway terminal. The opposing groups each moved to the right and pushed on through. No fighting, yelling or hostility.

- I saw no fights, no drunkenness. I smelled marijuana twice but saw no one who looked stoned.
- Bands on stage made statements of the “Everybody’s equal” nature
- Girls holding each others’ hands in pairs or larger groups

Observations on audience demographics:

- Core group in attendance was 14-22 year-old Caucasians, with a very small representation of AAs and Asians and no Hispanics. Based on my understanding of Charlotte’s demographics, this is not representative of the local population
- Few people over age 30 in attendance. Most of those were parents accompanying their teen and pre-teen children.
- Was this a representative sample of “typical” youth or only fringe elements? That was a question I asked when I was there. But two days later as I reviewed the photos I shot, I was surprised to see so many average-looking teenagers. It’s easy to get caught up in looking at the oddest and most extreme-looking people. They were certainly present, but the bulk of the people there weren’t deviants from the norm.

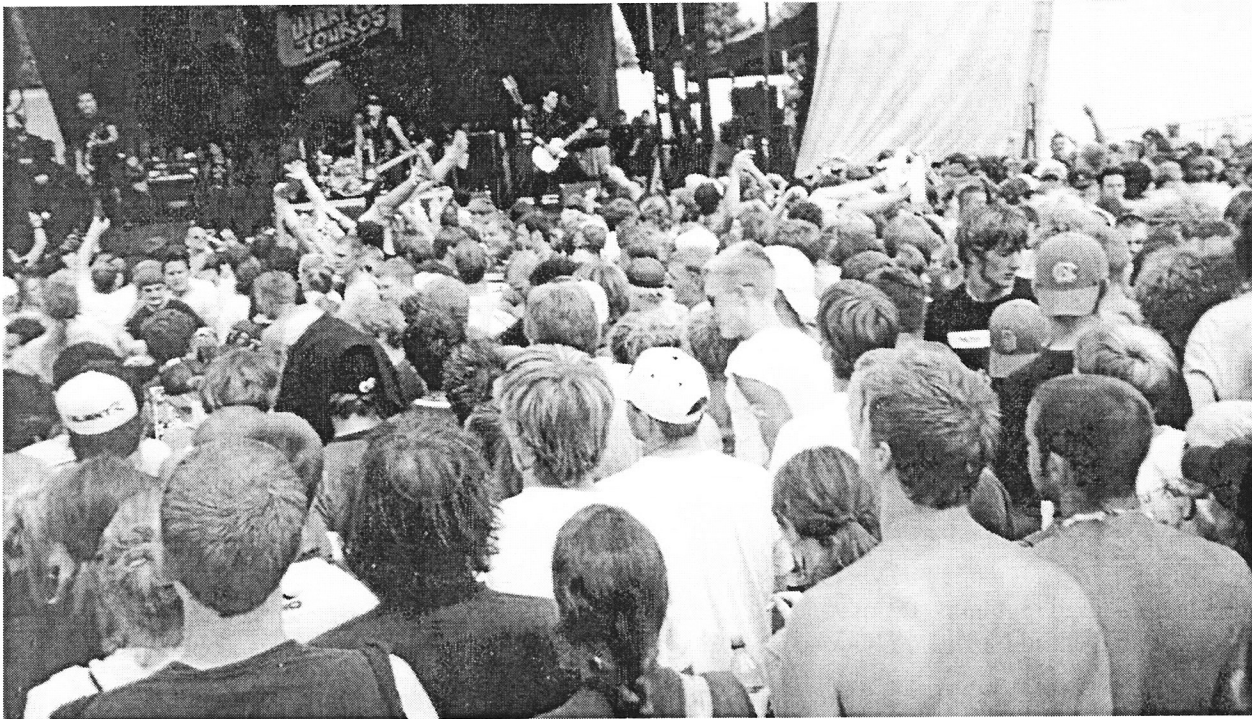


Photo: Note the “moshing” – people being tossed above the crowd. There were security guards positioned to catch people and help them down when they were near the stage.

What was communicated at the event?

- Causes – typically left-leaning
- Equality and Tolerance
- Profanity
- Darkness
- Safe Sex (Trojan distributed condoms throughout the event)
- Anti-War; Anti-George W. Bush

Clothing, hair, jewelry, appearances:

- T-shirts, hats, belt buckles with profanity
- Lots of different retro looks: '80s, beatnik, Goth
- Self-expressions that didn't make sense (e.g., a boy in a T-shirt and shorts wore a nice business-suit jacket that could have been his father's)
- T-shirts with logos and images of bands and musicians from the past
 - Led Zeppelin
 - AC/DC
 - Bob Marley
 - Lynrd Skynrd
 - Miles Davis
 - Black Sabbath
 - The Ramones
 - The Dead Kennedys

**The moment I will never forget:**

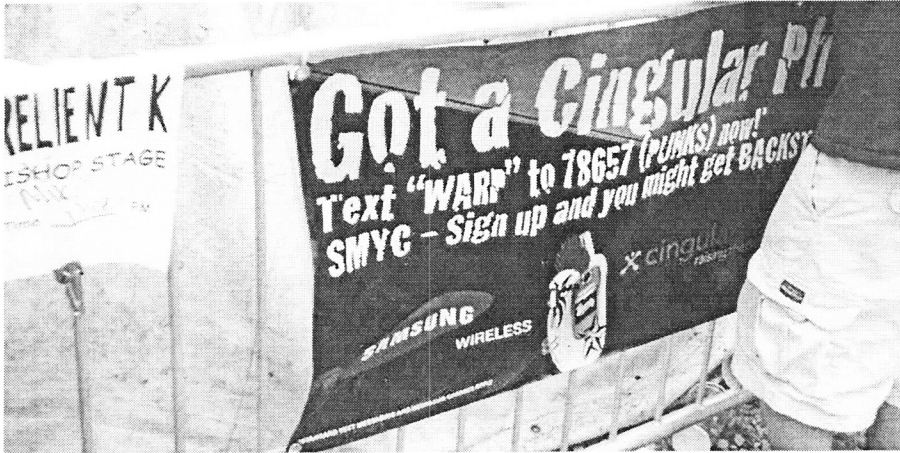
The girl with the multi-colored Mohawk and the gauged earlobes (large holes in her earlobes with steel rings in the holes). Her mother was with her and brought her nachos from the concession stand.

Music:

- Fast-paced 4/4 beat, non-stop
- Lots of lyrics with no instrumental break
- Every song fast, no "slow numbers"
- Every band had a 30-minute set; everything began and ended exactly on time
- Stages were bare and undecorated (except for smoke and skull/wings tapestries for A7X), but sound quality was outstandingly clear. Loud but not deafening.
- Bands still refer to their "new record" even though it's a CD

Some **initial insights** – I will work on more:

1. **Raw beats Slick:** Handmade signs promoting upcoming performances; coarse artwork, simple booths were more popular than the more high-tech, clean booths (e.g., Vans booth had lots of people, Sony Playstation booth had poor attendance)



Raw beats Slick.

2. **Fast & Short beats Slow & Long:** Fast music, fast lyrics, 30-minute sets. This is the generation that absorbs content quickly and on multiple channels.

3. **Subtle & Indirect beats Obvious & Direct:**

- Truth.com is an anti-smoking cause but there was no obvious display of words or pictures saying “stop smoking” on its booth.

I learned only after this event that the band MxPx is a Christian band. I watched their 30-minute set and saw no overt Christian images.

4. **Young people love an opportunity to make a statement**, especially a statement that someone has told them they shouldn’t make. They live in a world of sanitized, Disneyfied brightness and cheer. If allowed to make their dark, profane, anti-establishment statements, they will. I think this helps explain the “**expression of anger and rebellion without the corresponding behavior**” paradox I noted above.



Photo: I had to ask somebody what thetruth.com was about. Subtle & Indirect beats Obvious & Direct

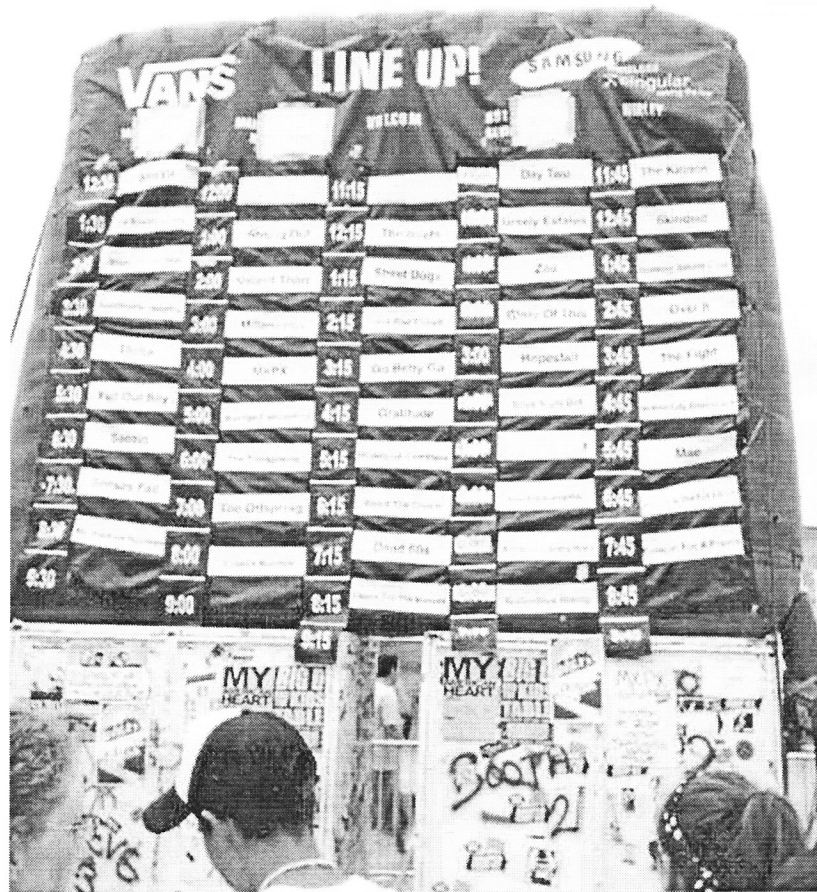


Photo: This is how the crowd knew the schedule of performances. Raw presentation of the information, but the schedule was adhered to with precision.



Photo: Some cars in parking lot were cluttered with statements.