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Architect Pelli helped
change Cleveland. D3

In a decade of change, it was a summer like no other, a time of momentous happenings, good and bad: the moon landing, the river burning, Vietnam raging, Chappaquiddick, Stonewall, Woodstock, “Easy Rider” and, in early August, the Manson killings in Los Angeles.



John Sebastian performs at Woodstock in 1969, PRNewsFoto/Signatures Network, Henry Diltz

POP CULTURE

The era of change

A look back at the extraordinary summer of 1969

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The 1960s are about to end, again.

After a decade of nostalgic lookbacks to the transformative and tumultuous era, we’ve reached the 50th anniversary of the summer of 1969.

In a decade of change, it was a summer like no other, a time of momentous happenings, good and bad: the moon landing, the river burning, Vietnam raging, Chappaquiddick, Stonewall, Woodstock, “Easy Rider” and, in early August, the Manson killings in Los Angeles.

A few months after Manson’s rampage, this blood-soaked flip-side of the peace-and-love era would be spoken of together with the Altamont concert as the end of the ‘60s and beginning of the “Me Decade” 1970s.

Quentin Tarantino’s new movie “Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood” delves into the Manson killings and the changing times of 1969, through the perspective of an aging ‘50s Western actor and his stuntman, who aren’t sold on flower power.

The optimism of the moon landing and Woodstock was soon replaced by a far darker mood across the country. Where had all the peace and love and freedom gone?

Manson and Altamont were a bleak end to an era that had its share of dark moments, most notably the war in Vietnam; the assassinations of John F. Kennedy (1963), Malcolm X (1965), the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1968) and Robert Kennedy (1968); and riots in Cleveland and Chicago and other cities.

But the ‘60s were also an era of great hope, a decade that animated the largest generation to that date, the baby boomers, through the unifying power of music and popular culture.

It was the decade when the young felt they had the power to change the world, throwing off the constraints of their parents and the postwar years and fighting back against war and racism. It was the era of the Beatles arriving in America, the Summer of Love, the birth of the civil rights movement, a man on the moon.

Both the inspirational and deadly aspects of the ‘60s were greatly amplified in the decade’s final year.

“Things were changing, not just the music, but the world itself,” says Joe Eszterhas, the famed author and screenwriter who worked as a reporter for The Plain Dealer in the ‘60s.

“Because of the era, everything was polar-

ized, though I’m not sure it was as polarized as it is today.”

Eszterhas spent most of the ‘60s in Cleveland, where he had arrived as a Hungarian refugee in 1950 and lived until leaving for San Francisco and Rolling Stone magazine in 1971. As a reporter, he saw firsthand many of the biggest events in the city, including the 1968 Glenville shootout, the two-day gun battle that led to four days of rioting that tore across the area.

“I knew Fred ‘Ahmed’ Evans and I knew Elmer Joseph (one of the wounded police officers). I had just gotten back from my honeymoon and got a call that there was a problem in Glenville. I headed out and somehow ended up very close to the firing zone. There was a guy bleeding on the street.”

The shootout cast a pall over the city.

“There was an edge to Cleveland because of Glenville, and of course (the) Hough (riots), which preceded it,” says Eszterhas. “The violence gave an edge to Cleveland.”

John Grabowski, a professor of history at Case Western Reserve University and senior vice president for research and publications at the Western Reserve Historical Society, was at the center of Cleveland’s youth movement in 1969 as an undergrad at CWRU, home of many protests and sit-ins. He recalls the year as tumultuous in the city, which had a population of about 700,000, and on campus.

“Cleveland in 1969 had some big things going on: Euclid Beach closes; the Palace Theatre, the last theater at Playhouse Square, closes; and you’re looking at the fire on the river.

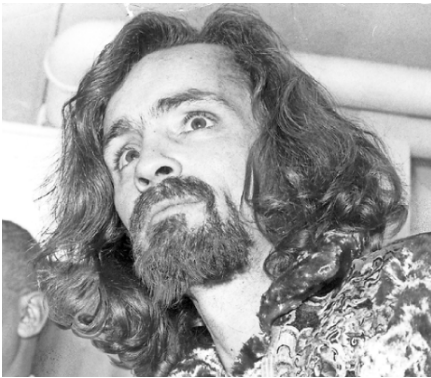
“But the one major thing that sometimes gets lost but is so important is that this is Carl Stokes’ second election, and it’s following the Glenville shootout. The shootout opened a rift between Stokes and the police. The situation is very tense in the city. Carl’s honeymoon is over, and it’s pretty bitter. He runs for re-election and only beats Ralph Perk by slightly less than 4,000 votes.”

Stokes would be replaced by Perk in 1971.

“In many ways, the rise of this blue-collar Republican following a black Democratic mayor in Cleveland echoes Richard Nixon’s rise nationally,” says Grabowski.

Yet, amid the racial tensions that were

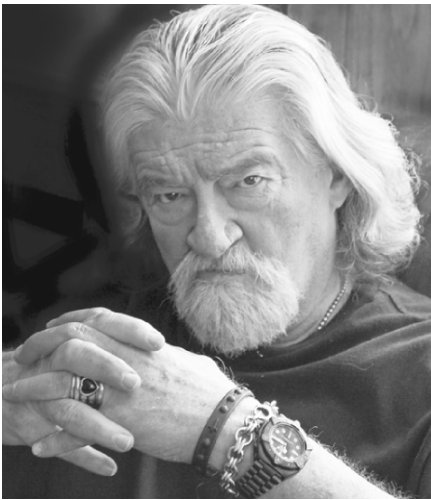
SEE ERA OF CHANGE, D5



On Aug. 8 and 9, 1969, Charles Manson instructed his band of followers to slaughter the residents of two homes, including actress Sharon Tate. Los Angeles Times



Mick Jagger stops performing at the Altamont Rock Festival, Dec. 6, 1969, while Hells Angels cross the stage during a melee to help fellow motorcyclists. AP Photo



“Things were changing, not just the music, but the world itself,” author and screenwriter Joe Eszterhas says of the final year of the 1960s. Lynn Ischay, The Plain Dealer



A spreading alliance of disgruntled GIs and anti-war civilian groups was moving toward a nationwide campaign to end the U.S. role in Vietnam. file