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## OFFSTAGE WITH MUSIC LEGEND JORMA KAUKONEN

*With a music career spanning more than five decades, Jorma Kaukonen has certainly earned his spot as a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. In 1969, as lead guitarist for the legendary band Jefferson Airplane, Kaukonen performed at Woodstock. That same year, he formed the acoustic blues band Hot Tuna. Over the decades, what began as a sideline has evolved to its present-day state as a collaboration with lifelong friend Jack Casady.*

*Kaukonen's recent memoir, **Been So Long: My Life and Music**, delves into his storied career.*

PHOTO BY SCOTTY HALL

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**AAA World:** *What are your memories of Woodstock?*

**Jorma Kaukonen:** It's hard to recall details, partly because we didn't hang out at Woodstock; we just drove in for the show and left pretty quickly when we were done. Carlos Santana's transcendent performance is one of my landmark memories. As someone who makes my living performing in front of people, I can tell you there's absolutely a dynamic relationship between an audience and a performer. The positive energy and appreciative vibe that emanated out of that huge mass of humanity is something I don't expect I'll ever encounter again. I also remember the miles and miles of parked cars along very narrow roads as I was driving us out of there. My apologies to anyone who found themselves missing some trim as a result!

**AAAW:** *Why do you think Woodstock, 50 years later, is still seen as iconic?*

**Kaukonen:** Woodstock was a happening of cosmic proportions. I remember thinking when I got back to San Francisco [that] it was all like a dream. The so-called Woodstock Nation, not just those that were there but the entire counterculture of the time, was a very big deal. The issues they were confronting—like civil rights, the Vietnam War—everyone was all fired up about something, and yet a whole generation came together for 'Three Days of Peace, Love and Music,' as the concert was described. The struggle for positive possibilities as manifested by the Woodstock spirit is still with us.

**AAAW:** *Jefferson Airplane grew out of a vibrant music scene in San Francisco in the 1960s. What was it like?*

**Kaukonen:** It wasn't just music; there was a huge artistic community of all kinds, sort of like Paris in the 1920s. With a big coffeehouse scene, bars that would hire utterly unknown musicians, even bowling alleys and pizza joints where musicians would play, it was easy to make music in that town. Many musicians lived in [the neighborhood] Haight-Ashbury, and everyone seemed to know everyone else. Before tens of thousands of people came during the Summer of Love in 1967, there was very much a sense of community, a feeling that we were all supportive of one another. We'd go to concerts to hear the music but also to hang out with all our buddies.

**AAAW:** *In your book you say you were 'seduced' by rock 'n' roll, and it took you away from your first love of traditional music. How so?*

**Kaukonen:** In the '60s, we were all immersed in rock 'n' roll; there was no escape from it. Everyone listened to it; our parents hated it; we danced to it; it was woven into the soundtrack of our lives in a hundred different ways. Nowadays, it's become almost traditional American music, but at the time, it was revolutionary and even subversive—and it was pretty damn hard not to be seduced by it.

—Rich Warren