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## Lollapalooza Love Story

By NEAL KARLEN

Amy Stewart spent a full June week fretfully rehearsing how to tell her parents that she'd changed her plans for the summer. No, the 18-year-old repeated into the mirror, she wouldn't be taking college art classes and working at McDonald's. Instead, she went on, she'd shortly be going on the road with Lollapalooza, rock-and-roll's summer circus.

Amy was worried. How would she ever convince her folks that Lollapalooza wasn't a traveling bacchanal but simply the way-hip annual convention of her generation?

She was counting on the fact that her parents knew and approved of Chad Johnston, 22, her boyfriend of six months, who would accompany her on the trip. Chad had endeared himself to Mr. Stewart in particular by helping him work on his cars. Amy's past boyfriends didn't do that.

"Just tell them," Chad said. "They'll trust us."

"Lollapalooza?" said Evelyn Stewart, Amy's mother, when her daughter finally told her of the revised summer plans. It was the night before the tour started.

"It's like Woodstock, only the music's better," Amy said. "We'll be working." Chad and Amy planned to run one of the vendor booths that travel with the two-month outdoor festival.

Mrs. Stewart was not reassured, and she called in her husband, Stan, a machine operator in the oilfields of central California. Where would the kids sleep? What would they eat? Would Amy be back to start her sophomore year at California State College at Bakersfield?

"Of course," Amy said. "But there are things you can't learn in books. I want to go on the road and see America." She'd read Jack Kerouac the previous semester.

Debate ensued, and finally, grudging approval. Amy could travel with

Lollapalooza. While Mrs. Stewart prepared packages of canned fruit and sandwiches, Mr. Stewart addressed Chad. "Keep an eye on Amy," he said, "and keep an eye on yourself. Call from the road. Eat. If your van breaks down, don't buy car parts from a gas station."

That night, after her parents went to bed, Amy quietly put on a tape of "Pork Soda" by Primus, the young couple's favorite band, and danced with joy around her bedroom. George, Wash.

It took Chad and Amy 24 horrific hours of nonstop driving to get from Bakersfield to the first of Lollapalooza's 34 United States stops (after a warm-up show in Vancouver, British Columbia, the day before). "Mostly," Amy said, "we sat by the side of the road waiting for jump starts. We finally had to get a new battery. My dad would be burned if he knew we bought it at a Chevron." There was a little petty bickering that first night, but the couple were buoyed late that morning when they pulled into the Gorge, a capacious rural field 150 miles east of Seattle. Soon the Gorge would begin to fill, eventually drawing 25,000 screaming fans of alternative music to the 11-hour concert.

The late Max Yasgur -- the farmer who spent a weekend in 1969 watching his upstate New York acreage turned into the quagmire created by Woodstock -- would have been impressed by Lollapalooza's organization. Here, there would be plenty of toilets, security guards and licensed vendors. Order would also reign onstage, where bands would hustle on and off with a punctuality not seen since the tightly choreographed 1960's Motown cross-country revues.

Though Lollapalooza, in its third year, is run with 90's-style efficiency, the atmosphere among the gathered was often redolent of another generation. "It feels like our 60's, the one day when it's cool for kids to do whatever they want," Amy said as she scurried around Chad in their booth, accompanied by the sonic blasts being played several hundred yards away onstage by Fishbone. "It's when even if people don't dig what you're doing, they'll still say hi."

Despite 90-degree heat and a wind that turned the Gorge into a choking dust bowl, business was booming. Chad and Amy sold handmade bracelets and earrings for \$2 to \$5. But their real money would come from doing hair wraps, those vaguely Rastafarian braids woven with technicolor threads. A wrap could take half an hour to do, for which they'd charge from \$10 to \$20, depending on the hair's length.

Like many of their customers, Amy and Chad were coiffed, dressed and

pierced in the anarchic fashion of Generation X. But despite his shaved head and the ring coming out of his eyebrow, and her braids in psychedelic colors and the four holes in her left ear, the two definitely weren't slackers. They'd be putting in 18-hour days in the booth.

On this first morning, they'd already done 10 wraps and had reservations for the entire afternoon. "We're making money!" Chad whispered. "It's working!"

The couple finally took a short break as Arrested Development came onstage. Chad opened one of Mrs. Stewart's CARE packages, while Amy set out on the midway.

Chad said he had never had a crush like this before on a woman who shared his dreams, his vision and his belief that Primus was the greatest band on the planet. Even though Primus was on the Lollapalooza tour, if Amy had decided to stay home, Chad would have spent the summer in Bakersfield, delivering cars for Autoland.

Amy was feeling more tentative. "It strains a relationship to be together this intensely," she said as she passed a vendor on the midway peddling eyeglasses that are supposed to simulate the sights of an LSD trip. "We agreed that from now on, he'll tell me when I'm being crabby and I'll tell him when he's being a jerk."

Amy then came upon a packed carnival tent called the Forum, Lollapalooza's platform for social debate. On the stage was Dr. Timothy Leary, the 72-year-old former high priest of hallucinogens, who is traveling on the West Coast leg of the tour. Amy was entranced with his lecture, "How to Operate Your Brain."

"I've never heard of him before," Amy said, "but I want to get into advertising, so I liked when he talked about how whoever controls your eyeballs controls your mind. Chad and I always look for deeper meanings; we can analyze Beastie Boys lyrics for hours."

Now, though, it would be all work until 2 A.M. Faced with another all-night drive, the couple briefly considered that they had never before spent almost every second of two days together.

"Amazing," Chad said.

"Remind me to call my parents tomorrow," Amy said.

"Tell them we're making money, but don't tell them about the van. No need to worry them."

"Chad," Amy said, "you're a real gentleman." Portland, Ore.

At 4 in the morning, somewhere on the road to Portland, Amy decided she

wanted to go home. She and Chad were so exhausted that they had to share the driving an hour at a time. And if she didn't wash her hair soon, she would scream.

So why did he have to bark at her when she simply suggested he should not drive the badly overloaded van at 75 miles per hour? "We can't be late," Chad had said. "We're running a business. And I don't like to be told how to drive." He wanted to go home

But neither spoke about fleeing back to Bakersfield, they said later, for each was sure the idea would break the other's heart. Dawn finally came, and as Amy drove the van into the horse race track where the Portland show would soon begin, Chad took out his notebook and began a tour journal.

"Trip has been hell," he wrote. "Squirrely van, major tire blowout, two sleepless nights."

But Chad and Amy perked up as Rage Against the Machine began the day's first set. They were hearing their favorite bands. They even got their picture snapped with Dr. Leary. "He's just a real cool old dude," Chad said.

The lines at their booth were long; Amy and Chad clearly understood promotion. While Amy worked away wearing only a bikini top, unbuttoned short shorts and a Beastie Boys cap, Chad labored shirtless in wraparound sunglasses and with his boxer shorts high above his waistband, Marky Mark style. "We laugh about how most of his customers are girls and most of mine are guys," Amy said, poking Chad in the stomach.

No jealousy? "I was stoked when I saw five guys talking to her," Chad said. "We both flirt, but we look at it as advertising. We don't abuse the fact that sex sells, we just use it a little bit."

At times, though, both Chad and Amy could seem profoundly shy. Indeed, it hadn't been until six months after Chad and his roommates moved in across the street from the Stewarts' house that he finally found the courage to say hello. Finally, in the Stewarts' driveway, Chad asked Amy to a movie. "I don't remember what we saw," Chad said, "but we've been together ever since."

As the bands played on, Amy went to get a madly grinning green mosquito inked onto her shoulder at the temporary-tattoo booth. "It's one of Primus's symbols," she said. "Chad will like it." (He did.)

Then she paused. "Chad and I are still bickering, but our day off tomorrow will help. We're going to check into a Motel 6, get showers, order a pizza, watch some TV and go to sleep. That's what this relationship needs."

Then came magic. Through connections forged on the midway, Amy and Chad soon found themselves standing amid Primus. "Are you nervous headlining?" Amy asked. No, said Les Claypool, bass player and vocalist for the San Francisco-based funk/thrash band. "We're really not headlining. Alice in Chains and Arrested Development didn't want to go on last."

"Cool," Chad said, impressed by the star's humility. San Francisco

Around their booth swirled the madness of the midway. Eve, proprietor of the fair's seven-person piercing booth (and who would not give her last name), was particularly harried. After the second show here and five days on the road, Amy and Chad counted out \$1,000 they'd accumulated since Seattle and sent it in a money order to Amy's parents for safekeeping.

"That's what I make in a month at Autoland," Chad said.

"Cool!" Amy said. "Mom and Dad are going to be stoked!" St. Paul

Business continued to percolate nicely as Lollapalooza wound its way from San Francisco to Ogden, Utah; Denver; Des Moines, and then to St. Paul. "Utah was way cool," Chad said. "I liked how kick-back and mellow the Mormons are."

But working and driving side by side for 10 days and sleeping most nights in the van forced Chad and Amy's relationship to evolve at warp speed. Their biggest fight occurred in the middle of the night in Wyoming. "I told him his speeding made me nervous," Amy said. "Then he got mean."

Chad said: "I took it personally. I thought she didn't think I was a good driver."

Amy refused to say a word to Chad for the next 24 hours.

Now, in St. Paul, the two were having their worst show. In the morning, a customer with a new fancy hair wrap ran off without paying. Then came a raging thunderstorm that drenched the entire midway.

Somehow, though, Amy and Chad got stoked. After tonight's show, they would send their second \$1,000 home. Last night, they'd even begun to talk about using their new riches to open an alternative fashion store back in Bakersfield.

Their reconciliation, they said, came during a conversation they'd had while sneaking into a truck-stop shower somewhere in Iowa. "We're like an old couple, always nit-picking at each other," she had said to him. "Is that why we went on Lollapalooza, to become our parents?"

No, Chad had said. In the middle of the night, in that truck-stop parking lot, Chad spoke to Amy "as if for the first time," he said later.

"I'm learning to talk," he continued. "And to listen, to really hear what she's

trying to tell me instead of just nodding my head and saying, 'Uh-huh.' What I finally heard her say was 'Tell me what's really going on in your brain.' O.K., I'll try."

Now, as the couple hid from the Minnesota rain under a tree, they announced they'd finally bonded. "I've learned you have to try if you're in love," Chad said. He paused. "I can honestly say I'm not getting sick of Amy."

"You better not, sucker," Amy said, kissing Chad on the nose. "Because I'll get you."

Then she went in search of a pay phone to call her parents. She and Chad shut their stand down early that evening to catch the night's last band. They'd be back on the late-night road shortly, headed for Lollapalooza's next stop -- Chicago -- and the 25 dates beyond.

But for now, the wet, tired and rich young lovers held each other close and swayed slowly to the grinding dissonance of Primus floating over the darkened midway. AN 'ED SULLIVAN SHOW' FOR GENERATION X

The first Lollapalooza tour was in 1991, the brainchild of Perry Farrell, former leader of the defunct band Jane's Addiction. That summer's eight-band lineup drew 430,000 fans to 28 shows and grossed \$10 million. Last year's 36 shows grossed \$19 million and drew 800,000.

Lollapalooza's 1993 incarnation remains a hot \$29 ticket. In March, the Chicago concert sold out in two hours, before the acts were announced. By the end of the tour, which began June 18 and ends Aug. 7, 850,000 fans are expected to have attended. The bounty will go to Mr. Farrell and his partners, Ted Gardner and the William Morris Agency; bands get a flat fee.

For the eight bands chosen for the 34-date tour, Lollapalooza can provide a critical career boost. Among past performers who've benefited are Pearl Jam, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Ice Cube. "It's like getting a two-month booking on the alternative version of 'The Ed Sullivan Show,'" said Janet Billig, manager of Dinosaur Jr., one of this year's acts.

Trailing the Generation X spectacle are gaggles of mostly 30- and 40-ish music reporters. MTV gives it the sort of coverage that CNN devotes to political conventions. The attention can be disorienting to the still-nascent bands on the bill.

"Six months ago, we were shlepping around the country in a little dented van, and now this," said Maureen Herman, Babes in Toyland's bass player.

Mr. Gardner, the tour's garrulous producer, also provides constant commentary on Lollapalooza '93. "Flannel is dead, finished, unhip!" he said repeatedly. "Kilts for men, T-shirts and Doc Marten boots are still happening."

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