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THE SPIRIT OF ELIXIR CLASH

Make way for rock, for the first time, at the ancient stadium of Athens, on July 26 and 27: And, on July 13, go to Brittany. Two festivals, two gatherings. Originally, the story of a group of music lovers.

By ALAIN WAIS. • Published on July 11, 1985 at 12:00 am - Updated on July 11, 1985 at 12:00 am

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THIS summer, the Roxane company is organizing, in co-production with Nouvelles Frontières, two festivals with prestigious posters (1): Rock-Scène, in Guehenno (Morbihan), and Rockin'Athens 85, in the ancient stadium of the Greek capital. For the first, July 13, we hope twenty-five thousand people. In Athens, where it is a first, it will take forty-eight thousand people a day, on July 26 and 27, in a stadium which can accommodate seventy thousand, in order to amortize the cost of the operation, nearly of 6 million francs.

Behind these major events, there is the story of a small festival (Elixir) which has grown outside the traditional circuits, the story of amateurs who have embarked on the adventure for the taste of music and who , along the way, learned on the job.

In 1978, a student in Brest, Gérard Pont created a "fanzine" and organized small concerts of French songs. Suddenly, he achieved four successes. For their part, Pierre and Jean-Paul Billant, reunited in association (1901 law) and victims of some failures, proposed to him to set up a festival. Why not ? It is at least worth talking about. Regularly, around a table, they dream: we will have Neil Young, we will bring Genesis ... the Pope. Only, for that, at least, it would be necessary to have their contacts. Finally, Pierre Billant returned from England with contracts which, if not up to their expectations, have the merit of being commensurate with their means: John Martyn, Bert Jansh, Gwendal and a few others of the same family. "Folk"

It remains to find a place. A little older, bearded and good-natured, René Tréguer speaks Breton and knows how to convince farmers. We take them all the same for crazy, and several communes reject them: on a bare field, you have to go up a small village, bring water and electricity, install an enclosure, a stage, sanitary (they will be even forced to separate girls from boys on the campsite).

Elixir, the first of its name, takes place on July 14 and 15, 1979 in Irvillac, near Landerneau, in Brittany. We expected three thousand people, there will be eight thousand, without any promotion or media relay. For two days, it is the state of grace: the organization is approximate, but no group withdraws. "We could have made an oven, recalls Gérard Pont, but it was so daring and spontaneous that even amateurism turned to our advantage." In any case, the green light for a second edition, which takes place the following year at Plonéour-Trez, in Finistère. With Donovan and Murray Head headlining, Elixir expands its horizons and attracts twelve thousand people, always without advertising.

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