

TROPICAL LIFE



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POP MUSIC

Bed-in images on exhibit at Woodstock site

BY MICHAEL HILL
Associated Press

BETHEL, New York — John and Yoko hung out in their pajamas for eight days during their "bed-in" at a Montreal hotel in 1969. Reclining on a king-size bed, the famous Beatle and his new wife read Lao Tzu, snuggled and recorded the anthem *Give Peace a Chance*.

But mostly they talked about peace and lorded over the chaos in a room crammed tight with star-struck kids, reporters, disc jockeys, Hare Krishnas, Timothy Leary, Tommy Smothers and hangers-on.

Photographer Gerry Deiter, on assignment for *Life* magazine, was there for all of it. His pictures weren't published; the magazine spiked the piece.

Forty years later, Deiter's images are now being exposed to a wide audience in the exhibit, *Give Peace a Chance: John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Bed-In For Peace at The Museum at Bethel Woods*, which sits at the upstate New York site of the original Woodstock concert field that August.

Deiter's shots in room 1742 of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel show Lennon in white pajamas strumming his acoustic guitar, a shirtless, smiling Leary and the couple being filmed during breakfast.

Lennon and Ono held two bed-ins in 1969, when Lennon was transitioning from the Beatles and into a role as a prominent peace activist. The events essentially boiled down to the newlyweds chatting up folks about peace from their hotel beds, but they also allowed the ever-clever Lennon to be viewed as an idealist, a provocateur and an anti-garbs wiseguy.

The first bed-in, immortalized in the Beatles' song *The Ballad of John and Yoko*, was held at the Amsterdam Hilton. The second was supposed to be in New York City, but Lennon could not enter the United States because of a marijuana conviction.

The enduring moment of the Montreal bed-in was the recording of *Give Peace a Chance*, with people in the room banging on tables. Deiter's many shots of the recording include an image of the big poster



JOHN AND YOKO: Journalists get an early look at the photographs at a preview of *Give Peace a Chance: John Lennon and Yoko Ono's Bed-In For Peace* at The Museum at Bethel Woods.

on the wall that served as a cheat sheet with Lennon's lyrics "... ragism, tagism, this-ism, that-ism."

Music producer Andre Perry, called out of the blue to record the song, recalls setting up his four-track recorder in a room with lousy acoustics and dozens of people singing and playing percussion, some quite badly.

"There were people with bells and people banging on all kinds of stuff, and it was like a bit of a disaster," Perry says. "It sounded like a

brewel, a little bit."

Perry says Lennon's energetic singing and strumming (aided by co-guitarist Smothers) was enough to make the tune succeed. The producer later added extra voices and created a thumping beat by pounding a telephone directory.

Deiter also caught one of the strangest cultural confrontations of the decade when *Li'l Abner* cartoonist Al Capp stopped by, cheerfully introduced himself as a "Neanderthal fascist" and ridiculed the couple for several minutes.

Amid the constant hubbub, Deiter zeroed in to capture affecting images of Lennon sniffling a blossom and of Lennon and Ono, heads resting on big white pillows, gazing at each other.

Exhibit curator Joan Athey says Deiter captured the obvious affection they shared.

"Even though they were constantly surrounded by people, they were in this bubble," says Athey, author of a book about the photos.

Athey says the weeklong assignment changed Deiter, who moved west to British Columbia and packed away the negatives. He lived to see some of his photos displayed in a Canadian museum before he suffered a fatal heart attack on Dec. 9, 2005, a day after commemorating the 25th anniversary of Lennon's death.

The exhibit debuted in May in Liverpool and runs at Bethel through Sept. 7.