

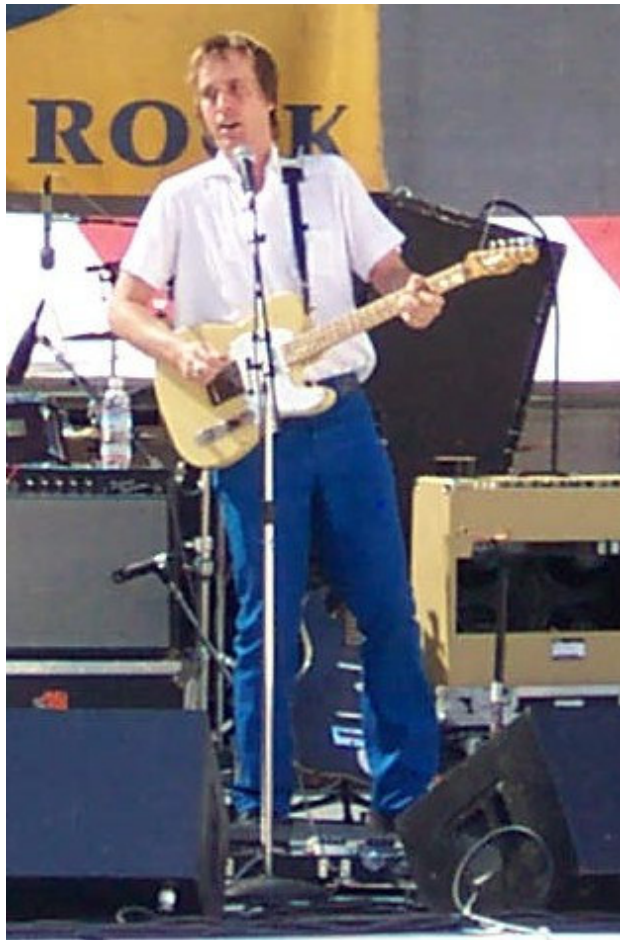
**OAKLAND ART & SOUL**  
**FRANK OGAWA PLAZA**  
**LABOR DAY 2002**



Well, let's do indulge in something more cheery now. Oakland is celebrating its 150th birthday this Labor Day Weekend with a massive bash sprawling all through the City Center complex and over onto Frank Ogawa Plaza. Five stages presenting continuous live music from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm host the very best of Oaktown's multiethnic heritage, with blues, gospel, cajun, rock, soul, funk, rap and everything between all getting things stirred up among the diverse crafts and food concessions.

As if to grant a special blessing from the Big Guy up there, the nasty old fog that had been hanging around cut loose for a cloudless perfect two days.

We showed up for most of Chuck Prophet's gig at the main stage where he served up quite a tasty platter of stuff from his new CD *No Other Love*.



Chuck appears to be finally getting some attention after spending years in the pipeline performing his own special brand of idiosyncratic jazzy, blues-inflected rock. His latest CD is the most pop-accessible in terms of subject matter and traditional rhythms and with Big Rick Stewart bringing some focus on newer talents at KFOG, it appears that this Prophet might be just about ready to come in from the desert. His "Summertime Thing", now hitting heavy rotation on

several stations nationally pleased the crowd in the midst of a very energetic performance.



Took a stroll around the City Center among the lovely crowds of people and caught a piece of Sugar Pie DeSanto's band. Sugar Pie is a local, born over across the water in Babylon, who has performed with Ray Charles, the Pointer Sisters, Patty LaBelle and other Greats and her band was, of course, top notch. Then it was back for the headliner of the day.

## WHAT IF GOD WAS ONE OF US



When Joan Osborne came out with her quirky album, *Relish*, in 1996, she busted open a congealed industry of false homilies and insincerity with some authenticity and genuine heart, quickly earning accolades as well as two million in record sales, eventually going triple-platinum and earning her a well-deserved Grammy Award. Not much seemed to follow that effort although the lady showed definite promise in several live performances as well as a prickly alt-rock attitude that cost her some fans when she made several public endorsements of Planned Parenthood. Those fans could not have been worth a great deal, coming from the ultra-religious right, to institute a boycott of her works, and many would grant that such attention is a special badge of honor.

2000's *Righteous Love* got critical acclaim after a postponed release, but sales were anemic after her record label, Polygram, abruptly dropped her.



In various one-off projects, including a duet with Bob Dylan, Osborne has indicated that her voice shows a great deal of promise. Well, now Joan is coming out with a new CD of Soul covers in mid-September and if today's performance was any bellwether, the lady just might be staring at another Grammy before long, for the marriage of old school soul to this lady's husky but powerful pipes is a match made in music heaven. At last Joan gets to really work that voice over an emotional range worthy of the instrument.



She opened the set with a smoky, sultry version of her "St. Therese" then did several soul standards, including a Stevie Wonder piece -- which she performed at his induction into the Rock N Roll Hall of Fame. The crowd did not want to let her go, but, like most open public events, the stop time of 6:00 pm remained inflexible. Nevertheless, she held the packed plaza in her palm for a full one and a half hours without seeming to break a sweat while the blue and green tube "men" danced up on the roof of City Hall.

She also performed a very nice bluesy and slowed-down version of the Barrett Strong classic "War" and you could see all the old Nammies in the crowd nodding their approval then did her wonderfully subversive and extremely testing "One of Us".

At the end of the day, the crowds all streamed out well sated with good music and that good BBQ from Everett and Jones. Other than some minor traffic contratemps it was a peaceful day on Oaktown's 150th. The way it should be.

All photos here are courtesy of [Island-Life.net](http://Island-Life.net).