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VIBRANT RAIN



Jesse Neider/Staff photographer

Lauren Swanson, 18, of Trumbull, raises her arms in triumph after pinning Jonah Gropper, 22, of New York City, while wrestling in the mud on Saturday afternoon at Gathering of the Vibes in Bridgeport.

Rains douse festival, but the music goes on

By **SEAN SPILLANE**
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BRIDGEPORT — It was too good to be true.

After two days of beautiful weather, the Gathering of the Vibes at Seaside Park was hit with a brutal storm Saturday afternoon, which brought a hard rain, booming thunder and dangerous lightning to the thousands of revelers that had looked forward to a relaxing day of music and other forms of fun in the sun.

Concert-goers had spent the first



Go online for videos, schedules, blogs and a photo gallery from the Gathering of the Vibes.

two afternoons of the festival seeking the coolness of the shade under a blistering sun. Saturday they were scrambling to find shelter from the storm and, when the clouds finally passed, a suitable spot from which to settle in and watch the performances.

Local rock band The Alternate Routes was on the Main Stage when the clouds opened, but managed to complete its set by the time

organizers called a halt to the proceedings a little past noon.

"I guess it wouldn't be a music festival without rain," said Andy Aros, of Southington, who is working security at the Vibes.

"We are just waiting for the lightning and the wind to die down before we get the bands to start playing again."

The show must go on as they say and, four hours later, it did, albeit with some minor changes.

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Music schedule adjusted after downpour

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Vermont based jam band Strangefolk was the only act bumped from the schedule and all of the artists preceding headliner Phil Lesh & Friends had their time on stage shortened by 10 or 15 minutes.

"We're going with shortened sets for the rest of the day until we get to Phil Lesh," said Jonathan Lobdell, the Vibes' director of communications, before quickly adding, "Pending any further interruptions from Mother Nature."

At 4:20 p.m., the music returned to the Main Stage as The New Riders of the Purple Sage performed,

followed immediately by The Bill Kreutzmann Trio. Both bands have close ties to the late Jerry Garcia, who the festival was founded to honor in 1996. Garcia helped found NRPS and Kreutzmann, like Lesh, was in the Grateful Dead with the guitarist.

There were no major weather incidents at last year's Vibes, which marked a return to Seaside Park after six years in upstate New York.

The festival itself, however, has been hit hard by rain in past years.

"It's funny, but we do seem to be get a lot of rain," Lobdell said.

"But it never dampens the Vibe Tribe's spirit."

A Vibes employee, who didn't

want to give his name, said lightning struck a tree near his campsite Saturday, but nobody was injured.

"It was scary," he said, "watching the leaves and branches just pop off the tree," said Andrea Giunarro of New Hartford.

"The rain was just brutal. We had a huge tarp covering three tents and eventually the wind just blew it away."

The four-day festival comes to a close tonight at 8. Tickets for today's session are \$85 and are available at the gate. For more information, visit www.gatheringofthevibes.com.

Staff writer Everton Bailey Jr. contributed to this report.

Vibers take downpour in stride



Nelta Joseph, of Burlington, Vermont, reaches out to catch some bubbles Saturday during the Gathering of the Vibes in Bridgeport.

Andrew Phares/Post-Record

By EVERTON BAILEY Jr.
Staff writer

BRIDGEPORT — The weather outside may have been frightful but that did not cause festivalgoers to lose their "vibe."

"What's a music festival without a little rain?" said Dillin Hodges from Westchester, N.Y., one of the thousands at the Gathering of the Vibes music festival at Seaside Park on Saturday.

The start of day three was met with a huge thunderstorm causing musical acts to stop performing and had everyone else braving the elements as they waited for the

rain to pass. "One band came on and started playing at around 11 o'clock and then the rain and thunder came and then they had to stop," said Mike Burke, a native of Saratoga, N.Y.

During the storm, people spent a variety of ways passing the time. Tony von Baeyer, from Wallkill, N.Y., and his son, James, 5, practiced their hula-hoop skills in the VIP tent.

"We're still learning," said the father with a laugh, who was also with his wife, Kimberley; daughter, Sofia, 4; son, Matthias, 1; mother-in-law and brother.

"We are just making sure we have ample snacks, keep the kids'

spirits up and wait for the music to start back up," he said. As his family watched, James successfully managed to make the hoop go around his waist a few times.

"It's fun and it helps us move and groove," said the youngster. Others found more creative ways to kill time.

Caleb Lipkin, 12, from Orlando, Fla., and Savva Etnet, 11, from Black Mountain, N.C., used large pieces of plywood as makeshift surfboards to glide over a shallow pool of muddy water a few hundred feet away from the main stages.

"We wanted to use an air

mattress but while we were walking around, we found these floating in the water," said Caleb.

The pre-teen said he has been travelling with his father, a vendor at the event, to festivals all around the country and said Vibes was his eighth of the summer. "I don't know much about surfing, but this is pretty fun," he said.

Himun Padilla, 24, a gems and minerals vendor from Upsate New York who joined the two youngsters as they slid back and forth over the water, coined the activity "u-ban longboarding."

Brian Eisenhaur, 18; Valerie Parenton, 18; and Eric Leigs, 26, all from Dudley, Mass., decided to

spend the day by throwing water balloons at their friends.

"It just seems like a fun thing to do," said Eisenhaur.

Meanwhile, Kayla Singleton and Rob Lesperance, both from Rhoé Island, both clad in blue ponchos, decided to climb down rocks off the coast of Seaside and take a walk on the beach.

"I love the beach and shells and we wanted to test out our new sandals," said Singleton, referring to the pair's straw sandals they bought from a vendor for \$35.

"We were really looking forward to taking a stroll on the beach today and we decided to met let the weather stop us," she said.

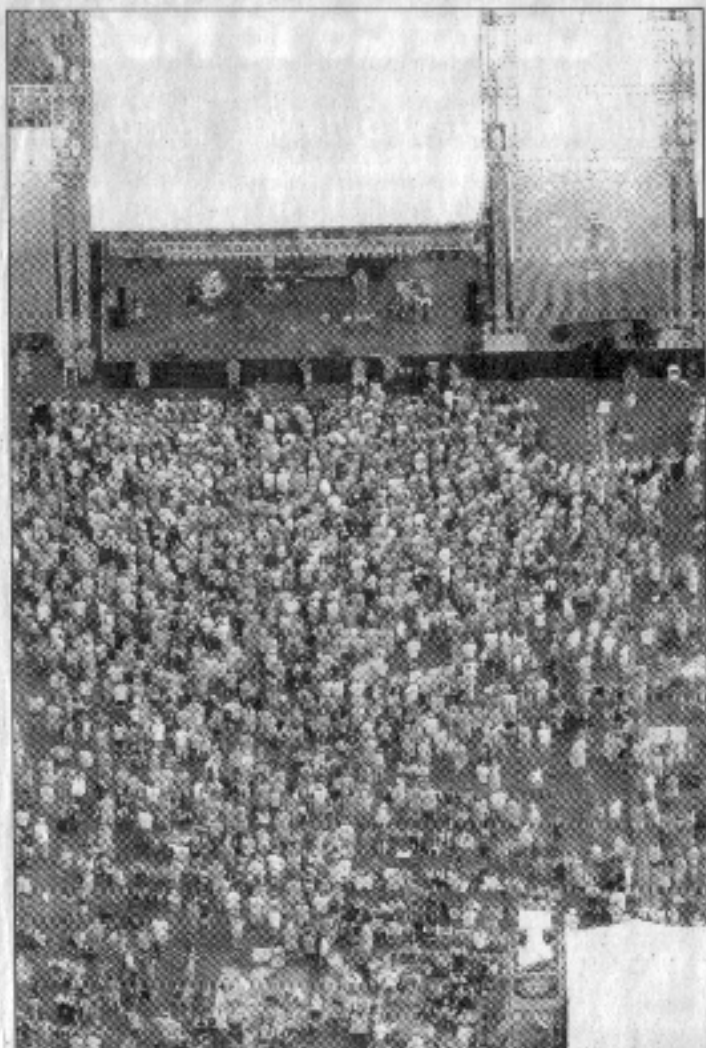


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Autumn Kinase/Graft photographer

Nine-year-old Chris Martino, of Branford, pulls his friend Nick Zielski, 9, through a giant puddle at Seaside Park Saturday while delayed the Gathering of the Vibes.



After the rain, the music returns to the stage and so did the crowds watching the entertainment. Photo by Morgan Kaolian/AEROPIX.



Jill Labruzzo, 19, of Harvard, Mass., stays dry under her umbrella hat Saturday at Seaside Park during a rain delay.