



Words by: [Brian Bavosa](#) & [Bill Clifford](#) | Images by: [Adam McCullough](#) & [Robert Chapman](#)

## **Gathering of the Vibes :: 07.31 - 08.03 :: Seaside Park :: Bridgeport, CT** **Thursday - 07.31.08** **By: Brian Bavosa**

There is no denying that our "scene," as we know it today, owes a big debt to [The Grateful Dead](#) - the roads they paved, the lessons they taught us and the musical memories that continue to linger in our collective mind. Thirteen years ago, just after the passing of Jerry Garcia, [Ken Hayes](#) (at the time head of Terrapin Tapes) and pal [Bob Kennedy](#) decided that the legacy of The Grateful Dead just needed to be carried on, and thus the [Gathering of the Vibes](#) was born.

"Everybody congregated to the music of The Grateful Dead, the philosophy of The Grateful Dead, the community of The Grateful Dead," said [Donna Jean Godchaux-McKay](#) backstage on a plush couch. "And here we have it, a gillion years later and everyone still wants to do the same thing, and that is congregate around good music and a [like-minded] philosophy. It never ceases to amaze me that this prolonged experience that I first experienced back in 1971 is still as vibrant or more – it's right here."

Returning to the ideal setting of [Seaside Park](#) in Bridgeport, CT for the fourth time ('99, '00, '07 and '08), this year's festival remained true to its Dead-infused roots by featuring no less than three remaining members - and one defacto clown, [Wavy Gravy](#) - of the band that started it all over forty years ago. Boasting the return of [Phil Lesh & Friends](#), [Donna Jean & The Tricksters](#) and a band led by [Bill Kreutzman](#), this installment of the Vibes showed that community, family and the ever-present spirit of Jerry Garcia and the GD will continue to flourish long after the music has faded away.

This year's Vibe Tribe also happened to gather on what would have been Garcia's 66th birthday (08/01/08). With a picturesque setting along the Long Island Sound, where patrons can even dip their toes into the water should they please, the sun just seems to shine a little brighter when this event comes to town. And, lucky for us, The Vibes and the town of Bridgeport have sealed the deal to consummate this sacred marriage for the next five years, ensuring that the Vibes will flock to beautiful, southern Connecticut for many more fests to come. There's also a non-profit village that boasts the likes of [HeadCount](#) and [Rock the Earth](#), and [Radio Vibes](#), which makes sure those camped along the water never miss a beat of the action. This year's Vibes also offered many activities for kids, morning yoga sessions and everything in between.

Another awesome aspect of the Vibes is the double main stage set-up. With a natural band shell for one and another stage directly next to it, there are no overlapping sets on these "[Sun](#)" and "[Moon](#)" stages, and allow for a quick turnaround with a merely a lull in the action. It's just another unique aspect of the Vibes that makes it easy to be in one spot, soak in the sunshine - or torrential, sideways rain like on Saturday morning - and be able to hear all of the main acts. So, please gather around as we conjure up the spirits of the Dead - past, present and future.



*Phil Lesh :: GOTV '08 by Chapman*

## DONNA JEAN & THE TRICKSTERS

To hammer home their point like dynamite candles on a birthday cake, organizers started things off with a bang. With birthday cakes, clowns are not far behind, and Master of Ceremonies, Wavy Gravy played his part to perfection. Introducing Donna Jean & The Tricksters (The Zen Tricksters by the way, are one of only two bands to play all 13 Vibes), played some choice numbers off of their latest release together, highlighted by Grateful Dead and Jerry Garcia numbers "Crazy Fingers" and "Tore Up Over You," respectively, which Donna Jean often sang in her heyday with each respective band. This performance also marked the first of numerous appearances she would make with varying acts throughout the weekend, earning her one of the most valuable players awards of the vibe-filled weekend.



*DSO with Donna Jean :: GOTV '08 by Chapman*

## DARK STAR ORCHESTRA

The following act is not so subtle in what they do and whom they represent. As if this festival was lacking homage to Garcia and company, Dark Star Orchestra played two, monster sets from 9 p.m. until 1 a.m. recreating the entire Dead show from 11/06/77 from the Broome Arena in Binghamton, NY; it is hard to not appreciate what this band does - like 'em or not. And who doesn't like The Grateful Dead? The first set saw the band weave their way through such numbers as "Jack Straw" and "Passenger," with Tricksters guitarist **Jeff Mattson** even "tagging in" for **John Kadlecik** to play Jerry's part for "Mexicali Blues" > "Me & My Uncle" and "Friend of the Devil." The first set closed with a spirited "Music Never Stopped," a nod to this festival and the tradition it continues to carry on.

Set two also featured Donna Jean on vocals for much of the material, both joining and taking over vocals for **Lisa Mackey** - who "plays" the role of Godchaux in DSO - for "Samson & Delilah," "Fire on the Mountain," "Not Fade Away" and others still. The first night of music ended with yet another tribute, as all followed up the "Johnny B. Goode" encore with a stirring rendition of Garcia's "Don't Let Go" and capped it off by the spiritually laced "We Bid You Goodnight." With only the first of four nights under our belts, the music of The Grateful Dead had managed to speak volumes already and point the Vibe Tribe in the right direction on what would have been Garcia's 66th birthday.

## **Thursday - 07.31.08 - Take Two**

**By: Bill Clifford**

The Vibes invites campers – those staying on the park premises for the duration of the weekend – in a day early on Thursday, but does not open up Thursday's festivities to day pass patrons. Arriving early in the afternoon gave this scribe a chance to set up home base, and then ride around the grounds to get my bearings. The lay of the land at Seaside Park is perfectly suited for a large scale festival - flat terrain with long, winding roads and beach front sidewalks perfect for feet, bikes, skates, blades or boards.

I was very pleasantly surprised to find the **Solar Stage**, a third, smaller stage powered by renewable energy sources centrally located this year, as opposed the 2007's spot at the furthest end of the peninsula where hardly anyone dared to venture. A further improvement over last year, instead of one main stage and a smaller band shell stage that acted as two main stages, they built two gigantic main stages of equal size, placing them against the setting sun to block the late afternoon rays and offer fans some shade from the heat while in front of the stages.



*GOTV '08 by Chapman*

## GROOVESECT

The main stage music began Thursday with Groovesect, one of several unfamiliar acts for me on the lineup. A small crowd had assembled as the band took the stage at 5:30 p.m., with others milling around the vendors located on the back tree line of the concert field. Once the band began to lay down its soulful, instrumental jazz grooves, the crowd did indeed grow. This young New Orleans-based ensemble impressed with their infectious funk, led by the rich layers of sax and trombone laid down by **Tim Sullivan**. This band is certainly an act to keep an eye and ear upon in the future.

Friday - 08.01.08

By: Brian Bavosa

### PORTER-BATISTE-STOLTZ

During a delay (I heard traffic) that caused PBS to run a bit behind, Assembly of Dust frontman **Reid Genauer** played a solo, acoustic version of "Speculator," a song I remember seeing him play on this very stage almost a decade ago with his former band, Strangefolk (whose new incarnation played the following day). If PBS was late, they sure made up for it upon hitting the stage, even if their set seemed abbreviated. Bringing their dose of New Orleans' flavored funk, the concert field seemed jarred loose from the melodic, sticky goodness. This set was an all out ass-shaker that showcased some of the most prolific musicians of our time in George Porter Jr., Russell Batiste and Brian Stoltz.



Porter & Stoltz - PBS :: GOTV '08 by Chapman

### ASSEMBLY OF DUST

In many ways, I enjoy the GOTV more than any other festival.

Besides the location and lineup, the organizers of this fest - more so than many others - are fans themselves. In short: they get it. One thing that has always represented this fact is where they place the acts and the time slots they give them. AOD was a picture perfect example. Genauer's acoustic sound, soaring, heartfelt vocals, along with **Nate Wilson's** keys paint a perfect mood for the late afternoon hours when the sun begins to fade, the sweat subsides from your brow and your buzz begins to brighten up your smile. In particular, "Westerly," another song I vividly remember hearing at the '00 Vibes, transported me back in time to my younger days when responsibilities were fewer and reminded me to "settle down." Donna Jean joined AOD for her first reading in almost 35 years of "You Ain't Woman Enough (To Take My Man)," a Loretta Lynn number that she sang often with The Dead, most notably in 1973.

### ZAPPA PLAYS ZAPPA

Easily the most impressive act of Friday was **Dweezil Zappa** channeling the spirit of his father Frank with Zappa Plays Zappa. With a set sharper than a switchblade, Dweezil led **Aaron Arntz**, **Scheila Gonzalez**, **Pete Griffin**, **Joe Travers** and **Billy Hulting** through some choice cuts. **Ray White**, vocalist for Frank's band, was also on hand and most notably made his presence felt during a set closing "Cosmik Debris" that really stood out. White also contributed to "Don't Eat the Yellow Snow," another zany example of Frank's brilliance AND words we all should try to live by.



Dweezil Zappa :: GOTV '08 by Chapman

### DEEP BANANA BLACKOUT

Another tradition of most Vibes, especially in Bridgeport, has been to reserve a semi-headlining slot for hometown heroes, Deep Banana Blackout. Last year, DBB teamed up with George Clinton & P-Funk for an all-star funk tribute to James Brown. This year, the band focused on mostly their own material, with original frontwoman Jen Durkin.

"This is the best gig of the year," she said. When I asked her about the hometown connection, she replied that the Vibes are unique because "the people around here are so sophisticated because of NYC and the whole world music scene that comes out of there. Bridgeport is like 'Come to my 'hood and see how cool it is here!' The people make it."

Spanning their catalogue with old chestnuts like "Breakfast at Volo's," "Tug" and "Bump & Sway," DBB looked comfortable as only locals can and funk'd long into the night, led by the horn section of **Rob Somerville** and **Rob Volo**, and were even joined by **Karl Perazzo** (Santana) on percussion. Also worth noting, before the start of their set DBB served as the backing band for eight-year old guitar whiz Yuto Miyazawa for Ozzy Osbourne's "Crazy Train" and "Mr. Crowley," securing his lore as the youngest professional guitarist, an honor he received from The Guinness Book of World Records several days later.

## Friday - 08.01.08 - Take Two

By: Bill Clifford

### KING FOR A DAY

King For A Day opened the main stages on Friday. Fittingly, in 1996, guitarist and Fairfield, CT native **Dan Labich** played the first notes at the first related event, then located on the SUNY Purchase campus in upstate New York and called "Deadhead Heaven: A Gathering of the Tribe." This band also includes bassist **Benji LeFevre** of Deep Banana Blackout fame. Unfortunately, KFAD's slow, bluesy, wailing rock failed to impress, at least this critic, and I rode off before the end of its set.

### AMERICAN BABIES

Led by former Brothers Past frontman **Tom Hamilton** and his bassist brother **Joe**, and bolstered by guitarist Scott Metzger (RANA, Particle) and Duo drummer Joe Russo, this supergroup of sorts gave a pleasant performance of songs from its debut recording. The up-beat, melodic rocker "Brooklyn Bridge" with three-part vocal harmonies had many moving and singing along, and the slower, quieter "Broken English" kept the small crowd listening intently to Hamilton. When he brought the music to a rest on the lovely countrified waltz "One For The Road" you could have heard a field mouse squeak. Sadly, just a few braved the beautiful, warm afternoon sun to hear the Babies' set.

### RYAN MONTBLEAU BAND

Four summers ago, the festival invited a young New England singer-songwriter into the fold, and the Ryan Montbleau Band has been invited back each year since. As the festival has grown in size and stature, so too has this band. A sea of peeps assembled in anticipation of this six-piece's set, and the band didn't disappoint.

Opener "Draw The Line" and "The Boat Song" took on a ska feel courtesy of the rhythmic keys of **Jason Cohen**. With the blazing hot sun finally falling behind the stage, the way too funky love song "Inspired By No One" inspired a spirited Montbleau to mark the occasion, "It was Jerry's birthday, and we were dancing, dancing on stages/ I don't remember much but I know it was amazing/ All of these friends of mine, gettin' down/ gettin' down at the Vibes/ We was feelin' all right."

Later, the band was joined by DBB's horn section. With a throbbing electric bass anchoring the low end, the soulful, infectious cover of Paul McCartney's "Let 'Em In" had the crowd shuffling their feet and shaking their asses from side to side. In the bridge where Sir Paul lists names of friends to be let in, Montbleau improvised, running down a list of festival entertainers, keeping in tune with the song: "Deep Banana, Donna Jean, Dweezil Zappa and AOD. Brothers Neville, Phil & Friends, open the doorway, let 'em in." With the next band stuck in traffic on I-95, the RMB was granted a three-song encore, finally closing with their apropos original "Dancing In The Sunshine."

### THE BREW

Later, over at the Solar Stage, another New England rock band, The Brew, was tearing it up. This straight ahead rock quartet has been running up and down the East Coast, developing quite a stage presence and tight musical prowess. As people sauntered along Barnum Avenue by the shore, many were drawn in, and the audience grew song by song. Brothers **Chris** and **Joe Plante** have a distinct vocal harmony, especially present on "Chance Reaching." By the closing song, the classic rock sounding "Birds On A Window," they had amassed a large, appreciative crowd of new fans



Tom Hamilton - American Babies  
GOTV '08 by McCullough

## THE BLACK CROWES

Friday's closer, The Black Crowes let their freak flag fly. As if the Crowes needed to add more Southern fried blues to its soul and gospel, the addition of [Luther Dickinson](#) of [North Mississippi Allstars](#) brings just that – more rolling, bluesy swagger. Given a two-hour set time, the Crowes played the part of headliner well, including a smattering of past hits and flavoring the set with songs from their new CD, *Warpaint*.

They got off to a mellow but groovy start with "Thorn In My Pride," while fans both young and old filed into the concert field. The song built to a peak with a searing solo from Dickinson and thick swells of keyboards with harmonica from a rail thin **Chris Robinson** adding the final detail. While not normally shy, Robinson said very little between songs. The band did nod to Garcia and The Dead with an elegant cover of the traditional folk song "Cold Rain and Snow," followed by the jazzy New Orleans vibe of "Locust Street" from *Warpaint*.

"Wiser Time" absolutely burned the stage down with long improvised jams and Chris Robinson sauntering from one side of the stage to the other, flaunting his style, tossing his black hair behind him as he moved. The tempo slowed for another *Warpaint* ballad, the beautiful "Oh Josephine," and then rose again with "Remedy" and "Hard To Handle," both of which enticed the crowd to sing-along in unison, before they closed with "Wounded Bird." The Crowes addition to the lineup may have struck a negative note with some Vibes regulars but they once again proved why they're one of the great Southern rock bands of all time.



Chris Robinson - The Black Crowes  
GOTV '08 by McCullough

## Saturday - 08.02.08

By: Bill Clifford

## THE ALTERNATE ROUTES

Bridgeport's own The Alternate Routes began the day at the main stage, but were literally overshadowed by an oncoming storm, which kept many campers at their sites. At just about noon, the thunder and lightning began and then the sky opened up, dumping oceans of rain and torrential winds down on Bridgeport. Concertgoers who'd spent two days seeking shade from the sweltering sun scrambled to find shelter from the storm, and the concert field became a muddy quagmire.

## NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE

Jerry must have been smiling on some old friends, because at 4:20 p.m., the storm had passed and the power had come back on, and we welcomed the New Riders of the Purple Sage to the stage. Strangefolk, a Vermont band that plays infrequently but gets back together every summer to play the Gathering (the second band that's played every GOTV), was the only band bumped from the main stage, but played later at the Solar Stage.



New Riders of the Purple Sage :: GOTV '08 by McCullough

## SAMANTHA STOLLENWERCK

Over at the Solar Stage, Samantha Stollenwerck impressed with a short, acoustic trio set. She's a newcomer singer-songwriter based in San Francisco whose salty dog vocals and soulful pop songs remind one of Sheryl Crow or Liz Phair. While this set was entertaining, I'd welcome an opportunity to hear her songs with a full backing band.

## BILL KREUTZMANN TRIO

In the late afternoon, the former Grateful Dead drummer and now bandleader, Bill Kreutzmann and his Trio followed the New Riders. The Trio includes Allman Brothers bassist and Aquarium Rescue Unit founding member [Oteil Burbridge](#) and New England's own [Scott Murawski](#) of [Max Creek](#) on guitar. "Franklin's Tower" got the crowd moving, and the familiar song drew more fans from the nearby vendors and campsites. Murawski noted they were going to try a new song that included some lyrics by [Robert Hunter](#) before a countrified jam that included the line, "I ain't afraid of my death/ I'm just waiting on a message from God." The Trio closed with an up-beat rendition of "Bertha" that, despite the mud, inspired some of the most free-spirited dancing of the whole weekend.

## MIKE GORDON

Murawski took the short walk from one stage to the other, where former [Phish](#) bassist **Mike Gordon** was warming up his band and getting tuned as soon as the trio finished. Murawski and Gordon have been working together on one musical project or another since just about the time that Phish split, and this band is showing the rest of the country what we New Englanders have known about Murawski all along. He's certainly been one of the most under-appreciated guitarists of his time, especially considering that Max Creek has been making music for over 30 years.

They played music from Gordon's new album, *The Green Sparrow*. A loose warm-up improvisation found its way into "Dig Further Down," with a sly, playful smile between Murawski and Gordon and shared vocals on the chorus. The concert field had filled in quite a bit by now, and up front, younger Phish phans were glad to have the chance to catch a glimpse of the bassist up close. "Traveled Too Far" was delivered with high energy and a fast tempo, as well as Gordon's thick, rolling basslines. Murawski, plays a Languedoc guitar, like Gordon's Phish mate Trey Anastasio, which he played fluidly and gracefully, stepping up for solos when asked and always holding the rhythm tight. To the large crowd's delight, they closed their all-too-short set with Gordon's raw Phish nugget, "Meat."



Mike Gordon :: GOTV '08 by Chapman

## **Saturday - 08.02.08 - Take Two**

**By: Brian Bavosa**

## PHIL LESH & FRIENDS

People always seem to gripe about Phil headlining every fest. Well, my answer to that is simple: how often do you get to see a living legend do his thing? And, in the case of the Vibes, he did his thing so friggin' well. The lineup consists of boy-wonder [Jackie Greene](#), outer-space dynamo [Steve Molitz](#), drum hurricane [John Molo](#), veteran axe-slinger [Larry Campbell](#) and his wife, singer **Teresa Williams**, along with the anchor of all anchors, Lesh. They are surely gelling and experimenting with reckless abandon after more than a year on the road together. Set one included some nice nods to the overall laid-back vibe of the weekend with "Cumberland Blues," "Lose," and "Dire Wolf," but the absolute balls-to-the-wall magic that can be the beauty of live music - particularly that of The Dead - lay ahead in the second set.



Lesh & Greene :: GOTV '08 by McCullough

"Of course I'm really excited about the chemistry in this band with Phil," said Molo. "We really like playing with each other. From the first time I saw The Grateful Dead in 1973 at American University, they always sparked an interest in me. I liked the crowd almost as much as I liked the band, and I liked their open-mindedness about what the band was doing."

Bubbling up with a patient "Scarlet Begonias" that saw the appearance of Donna Jean, Phil then led his mates into an absolutely ripping "All Along the Watchtower;" something unexpected, but certainly welcome as Campbell used to shred this number when he played in [Bob Dylan's](#) band, and it rocked - hard. Easily the most poignant moment of the weekend was "He's Gone," which brought tears to many eyes. However, the set really got cooking with a Molitz led space/funk jam that led into "Elevator," a tune Molitz played with Particle, before absolutely exploding into Phil's pile-driver monster, "The Eleven" and finally "I Know You Rider," which made me realize that something bigger than ourselves was driving the northbound train with those who have gone before us acting as the headlight. Lesh must have gotten Superman's liver, because this set flat out soared. Hands down, the best music I heard all weekend.

## Sunday - 08.03.08

By: Brian Bavosa

### JACKIE GREENE

Having been handpicked by Lesh to be the new face in his latest gathering of Friends, many forget that Greene is a prolific singer-songwriter in his own right. A beautiful mix of blues, rock and stirring ballads made up his Sunday afternoon set, capped off by a hint of "New Speedway Boogie" in the middle of his own "Rusty Nail" and an extremely sexy "Sugaree," with - you guessed it - Godchaux. Greene has breathed his own, unique life into "Sugaree" since he began playing it with Lesh.

### SAM BUSH

Another living legend, often referred to as the "King of Newgrass," Sam Bush treated fans to a sprinkling of his bluegrass-meets-rock brand of mandolin. Saxophonist **Bill Evans** accompanied Bush for most of the set, which was a nice change of pace for a lazy Sunday afternoon.



Sam Bush :: GOTV '08 by McCullough

## Sunday - 08.03.08 - Take Two

By: Bill Clifford

### DEREK TRUCKS & SUSAN TEDESCHI SOUL STEW REVIVAL

A large contingency of fans exited Sunday morning, missing two of the festival highlights. Husband and wife **Derek Trucks** and **Susan Tedeschi** ended their Soul Stew Revival tour at the Vibes. They retraced blues and soul standards such as opener "Tell The Truth" and "Anyday," both written by Eric Clapton, with whom the young guitar prodigy has toured. Tedeschi took the lead vocals on the scathing Paul Butterfield blues chestnut "Get Out My Life, Woman," her bellowing, gritty rasp echoed by Trucks' searing slide playing, with a touch of added R&B courtesy of a three-piece horn section. The Beatles' "Hey Jude" encore was re-imagined here as a Memphis soul classic, with Tedeschi and **Mike Mattison** wailing together on vocals.



Tedeschi & Trucks - Soul Stew Revival by McCullough

### UMPHREY'S MCGEE

There was a dichotomy evident between the older fans (at least those that had stayed this long) of the Soul Stew Revival and the younger audience for Umphrey's McGee, who drew the largest crowd of the day. They seemed in fine spirits considering the previous night's cancellation of an outdoor arena performance in Atlanta due to the weather.

They warmed up with "Walletsworth" and ran through eight songs, each finding more room for their trademark improvisation and tight musical collaboration. Mid-set included a slow, funky instrumental, "Jimmy Stewart," which segued into a high-energy rendition of "Plunger" with several changes in tempo. "Words" followed seamlessly, and by this point the Umphrecks were going nuts, which certainly had an effect on the band's playing.

"Gathering of the Vibes, we've heard about it, but we've never been. This is badass. Thank you for having us. It's about time we came," noted guitarist **Jake Cinninger**.

They closed their set with a butt-shaking take on "JaJunk." From just under the shade of the giant oak in the center of the field, it was an inspiring sight to watch a sea of fans move and sway together to the music.

## THE NEVILLE BROTHERS

Under the shade of that same giant tree, I watched as fans emptied the concert field in droves after Umphrey's McGee's set. Disappointingly, yet maybe purposely, GOTV puts on a big name as the festival closer, but not one that keeps every fan around. New Orleans' legendary Neville Brothers had the unfortunate spot in '08. They performed a moving set for a few hundred fans lingering around the concert field, one only wishes more could have experienced this lasting legacy.

A celebration of the life and music of the late Jerry Garcia and The Grateful Dead that began in 1995 in San Francisco, when Garcia passed, has found a home and a family on the East Coast.

Bridgeport, Connecticut and Seaside Park gladly welcomes the Vibe Tribe with open arms. It does seem as if the sun shines a little brighter when we gather, though it also seems as if yearly somebody dumps a brief "Box of Rain" on the celebration. Regardless, the Vibe Tribe will continue to return to Seaside Park, on the land donated by circus impresario P.T. Barnum, to rejoice together and ensure that Garcia's memory and the spirit and music of the Grateful Dead will live on for years to come.



*The Neville Brothers :: GOTV '08 by Chapman*