

# Vibes

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The music at this festival represents some of the best around in my opinion. Today I came to see Derek Trucks and Scrapomatic. Last year I was here for the whole four days. I'm just a Wall Street guy who loves this type of music."

Looking around, it was clear that Christie was not alone. There was music for just about anyone and just about everyone got what they came for.

Along with the big names on the schedule were some smaller but burgeoning bands, one notably from right here in Fairfield County.

## King for a Day Makes Main Stage Debut

Though hardly their first foray into the VibeTribe, blues-infused rock band King for a Day, whose members hail from Norwalk, Fairfield, Darien and Woodbury, made their main stage debut this year. Lead singer Danny Labich of Fairfield was actually the first musician ever to grace a Gathering of the Vibes stage when he opened the festival back in 1996 with his band Stone Cold. That same year, Brien McMahon High School graduate Benj Lefevre, King for a Day's bass player, had just joined eight-piece funk, rock and soul band Deep Banana Blackout where he made a name for himself as one of the best in the business, touring the world with them for seven years and playing more than 1,500 shows.

While not currently together per se, Deep Banana Blackout also performed on the main stage this year and they continue to do a handful of shows annually. Stamford-born guitarist Randy Funke, who attended Darien High School and currently resides in Rowayton, has performed with bands from California to New York and was the founding member of the Grapes. In addition to his work with KFAD, he is an adept recording engineer, producer and video editor for a variety of musical projects and as such has worked with artists such as Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth of The Talking Heads, Derek Trucks, Cecil Taylor and many others. A graduate of WestConn, drummer Kurt Berglund of Woodbury has performed in every musical genre imaginable and opened for such acts as Bela Fleck & the Flecktones, The Wild Magnolias, The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, The Tom Tom Club, Toots and the Maytals, and Buju Banton.



Ned Gerard/Staff photographer

*Newlyweds Kelly and Armand Couture (left) of Saugus, Mass. and other revelers enjoy the music of The Ryan Montbleau Band on the main "Sun Stage" at the Gathering of the Vibes in Bridgeport's Seaside Park Aug 1. The Coutures were married by the event's emcee, Wavy Gravy, earlier in the day.*

King for a Day kicked off the Friday lineup with a noon show that started with just a handful of fans, but the crowd grew exponentially with every song. By the middle of their set, the audience was 50 rows deep, rockin' and groovin' to the soulful voice and lyrics of Labich, the blues-heavy, brilliantly executed guitar riffs of Funke, and the deep and rich back beats of Lefevre's bass and Berglund's drums. To add another dimension to the performance, the band brought in keyboard player Steve Detroy to fill out the sound.

"Who are these guys?!" screamed an excited audience member to his group of dancing friends. Within minutes the entire crowd was chanting, "King-for-a-Day, King-for-a-Day!" like a roaring wolf pack.

## Making the Band

The three-year old band started when Labich and Lefevre, who had known each other for some time through the music circuit, both found themselves free at the same time.

"I had a body of work that I had been building for awhile. I played some stuff for Benj, he liked it, and we just decided to go from there." Lefevre called Funke, who had occasionally sat in with Deep Banana, then also pulled in Deep Banana's drummer Eric Kalb and the band started to evolve.

Eventually, due to his work as a



Christian Abraham / Staff photographer

*Casey Roonan, of Fairfield, adds his touch on a mural at the concert.*

session musician, Kalb pulled out and Berglund was brought in. Funke describes his early take on the project.

"I was initially interested in it because it was going to be blues-infused rock, something I was

gravitating toward, and then the first time I heard Danny's music I thought, 'Wow! This stuff is really good. I'd better play really well. I'd better do this.' A few days later, they called back and we went in to my studio and started to record

stuff. We had no drummer yet and we weren't doing any gigs. We just wanted to see how it would all come together and how we would connect as musicians."

Both Funke and Lefevre said this kind of collaborative, organic style is one they've settled into nicely as a band. They both credit Labich with bringing the inspiration to the table with his songs.

"Danny will write something really great and then we'll all work together to flesh it out, adding our own nuances to each piece," said Lefevre. Funke is even more effusive.

"Danny comes with flashes of mirrored genius. We then take his idea and try and reflect that back to him with our own perspectives on it. It's a nice process and we all honor the connection."

If the Vibes audience is any indication, the process is working. Starting in 2009 they plan to hit the road with shows up and down the eastern seaboard.

As for their first large scale performance at Vibes, Labich said it was the best show they've ever done. "It felt incredible," he said.

"And we're just getting warmed up."

King for a Day's tunes are available on iTunes and their CD is available for purchase online.

For more information on KFAD shows and music, go to [www.kingforaday.net](http://www.kingforaday.net).

Gathering of the Vibes will be hosted at Bridgeport's Seaside Park, a stunningly, surprisingly beautiful waterfront venue that's open to the public, annually for the next four years.

For information, go to [www.gatheringofthevibes.com](http://www.gatheringofthevibes.com).

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*Courtney Derivan, of New York, plays with a hoola hoop during the festival.*