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Damian Marley, Nas, Others Bring Fresh Sound To Gathering Of The Vibes

Duo join Further, Jimmy Cliff, Sharon Jones and more at the festival beginning Thursday in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

By James Dinh

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Nas and Damian Marley

Photo: Redferns

Bridgeport, Connecticut's Seaside Park is about to be transformed into the annual celebration of art, camping and jamming known as the [Gathering of the Vibes](#) festival. From Thursday (July 29) to Sunday, fans will be treated to the sounds of Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley and Nas, Further (a.k.a. the surviving members of the Grateful Dead), Jimmy Cliff, Primus, Robert Randolph and the Family Band, Sharon Jones and the Dap Kings, and many more.

"This is an event that was put together 15 years ago," event publicist Jonathan Lobdell told MTV News. "And it sort of morphed into this great big family reunion with people who come back every single year and grow these tremendous bonds that last lifetimes."

The Gathering is also *literally* a family affair, with a crowd that consists of kids, parents and even grandparents that get to escape for a few days. "Every year, when we get into our cars to go home, we have to get back into reality," Lobdell added.

The Gathering of the Vibes began back in 1996 when fans of the late Jerry Garcia came together to celebrate the Grateful Dead frontman's life. Since then, the event has grown in popularity, venue-hopped throughout the Northeast and remained a platform for established and up-and-coming musicians. This weekend marks its sixth return to Seaside Park.

Among the other acts scheduled to perform are the Radiators, Little Feat, New Riders of the Purple Sage and Beastie Boys DJ Mix Master Mike. The festival is anticipating 20,000-plus spectators per day to attend. MTV News spoke to a few attendees about the festivities and it's clear that the Gathering of the Vibes is definitely one anticipated event.

Though he lives just across the street, 29-year-old Tom Prokop has never officially attended the Gathering until this year. "This year will actually be my first trip inside the gates, but I have sat on my porch every year and listened to the great music," he said. "I haven't been inside yet, but have seen many people over the years at Vibes, and I would say that people should be prepared for the best 80 or so hours of their lives."

New York native Colin Cosell pointed to Nas and Damian Marley's presence as a welcome sign of the fest's increasing musical diversity.

"I admit I was surprised when I saw them on the lineup but greatly appreciate the fact that an act like theirs is performing in a festival like Vibes," he told MTV News. "It definitely breaks some barriers and expands the Gathering's horizons beyond the Grateful Dead culture and feel."

Jen Waldron, 39, said her first time at the Gathering set the bar high. "It

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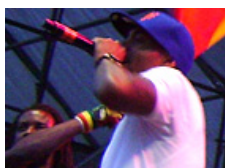
was a life-changing experience," she said. "I've never felt so much positive energy in one place in my life. This is not normally my scene either."

Are you going to go to this year's Gathering of the Vibes festival? Who are you looking forward to seeing? Share your thoughts below!

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