



The Gathering of the Vibes

Seaside Park

July 29 - August 1, 2010

BRIDGEPORT, CT—The 15th annual Gathering Of The Vibes once again took place in Bridgeport, CT, from July 29 through Aug. 1. The festival made its home for the fourth year in a row at Seaside Park where roughly 20,000 revelers per day enjoyed four days of beautiful weather, incredible music and NO MUD! The only rain felt was the intermittent sprinkling that came down early Thursday morning during the camper check-in. Soon the menacing clouds and storm predictions blew away along with most of the cares and attachments of everyday life. Thursday began the reunion of the Vibe Tribe family and the brief but very real Vibes way of life—which is all about great music, great friends and great times.

One of the best things about Gathering Of The Vibes is the bringing together of the old and the new, the different and the same. Many of the acts have some sort of a connection with the Grateful Dead and others are connected simply as being jam-based bands. Whichever category, they all seem to mesh together beautifully in the end. The festival began Thursday with established acts Donna Jean Godchaux Band, Dark Star Orchestra and New Riders Of The Purple Sage. The late night party rocked New Orleans-style with Big Sam's Funky Nation led by master trombonist, "Big" Sam Williams.

Friday was one of the best single days in the past five years because of the lineup. It was, in this order: The Radiators, the great voice of blues-singer Jackie Greene, Steve Kimock Crazy Engine, soul singer Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings (in their dapper and suited best), blazing pedal steel guitar great Robert Randolph & The Family Band followed by a four-hour set by Further.

The scene is just as important as the music at Gathering Of The Vibes and the Further set began with an almost lyrical sight: a paper balloon heated by a candle floating gracefully up, up, up with the Tribe clapping and cheering it on then slowly drifting away as the band opened with "Golden Road." People sang along with "Jackstraw" and swayed to "Ramble On Rose"—ah, the magic! Seriously. How can you not dig that?

And that was just the main stage! On the Green Vibes Stage were equally great sets by Kung Fu, Caravan Of Thieves and 12-year-old guitar wonder, Quinn Sullivan who mesmerized the audience in the late afternoon sun. Sullivan has already played with blues legends B.B. King and Buddy Guy. In fact, Guy brought Sullivan out during his set at last year's Gathering Of The Vibes offering the crowd a glimpse of what he and many others know is certain to be a brilliant career.

The night didn't end with Further. No way! It continued until 3 a.m. with Mix Master Mike on the late night stage. His speakers and turntables blew out minds and left hearts and eardrums ringing long after the last scratch. In fact Dennis M. from Troy measured MMM's decibel level at 115 (concert-level loud) from the side of the stage. He heard another fan saying as he walked away from the stage, "I can't hear a fucking thing!" Indeed!

Saturday was strong with performances by Assembly Of Dust and Galactic (another New Orleans band), who had guest performer Cyrus Neville on percussion. Umphrey's McGee was followed by the Rhythm Devils with Grateful Dead drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann and featuring guitarist and singer Keller Williams.

The most highly-anticipated performance may have been by Primus with original members Les Claypool, Larry Lalande and one of their original drummers, Jay Lane. Fans rejoiced as the stovepipe-hatted Claypool chirped out favorites like "Laws Of Tradition," "Bob," "Those Damned Blue-Collar Tweakers" and "American Life." They surprised some with a faithful rendition of Pink Floyd's "In The Flesh." One thing about the Primus show was that those who weren't fans, and may have stayed at their camps listening on the simulcast, quickly found themselves wanting to know more about them and wishing they had seen it live. That Claypool!

The Green Vibes Stage featured The Trapps from New Paltz, NY, King For A Day and The McLovins with seminal funk band Deep Banana Blackout for the late



Sunday started with the Harlem Gospel Choir and Little Feat brought it back old school with their classic “Dixie Chicken” and segued into “Tennessee Jed.” Their set also included “Willin’,” “Don’t Bogart That Joint” and “Fat Man In The Bathtub.” Drummer Richie Hayward was absent due to illness but the band sent a shout out to their mate from the stage and everyone wished him well. Ryan Montbleau and Martin Sexton held down the afternoon before the festival took it in another direction with their closers.

Gathering Of The Vibes expanded its musical circle this year by adding reggae star Damien Marley with rapper Nas as the Sunday headliners and closing act. Despite several negative responses from “purists” who objected the inclusion of a hip-hop act to the festival, the main stage field remained crowded following the extended set by reggae legend, Jimmy Cliff.

The energetic Cliff, dressed in glorious yellow, was onstage until after 7 p.m. singing his own hits like “The Harder They Come” and covers of Cat Stevens’ “It’s A Wild World” and Johnny Nash’s “I Can See Clearly Now.” Cliff’s spiritual vibe was clearly evident as was the fun he was having on stage. His set delayed the Marley/Nas set but the crowd endured the nearly hour-long downtime in between the two. When the DJ hit the stage after eight, he inappropriately dropped an F-bomb and hyped the crowd about smoking weed seemingly oblivious to the many children who were still about. Not the best way to win over the haters but luckily Marley and Nas blasted out a dynamite set, satisfying all.

There were fewer campers this year, which allowed people more space to create their compounds. Security was tighter and a fence was erected to keep day-passers from entering the camping area. This made for a longer walk to enter the festival grounds, but prevented the thefts and complications found at past Vibes. Although there were fewer campers, there were more day-pass attendees this year. Concert-goers donated \$25,000 to the families of two Bridgeport firemen who lost their lives battling a fire in the week prior to the event. 5,000 lbs. of food was collected for the local food bank and money was raised for several other charities.

At this, the 15th anniversary of the death of Jerry Garcia, Gathering Of The Vibes is still growing. What started as a tribute to Jerry has developed into one of the premier festivals of the summer. People go then return the next year with friends and soon the caravan has grown to seven carloads and 20 people. You become family for those four days, surrounded by other families who seem to know the same thing—enjoy yourself, be good to each other and the music never dies.

—by Adrienne Rizzo, September 1, 2010