



gathering of the vibes

GATHERING OF THE VIBES
Seaside Park/Aug. 9-12

by *Adrienne and Jaylen Rizzo*
 BRIDGEPORT, CT—Another year, another sunny August day, and the folks and I headed out to the Gathering Of The Vibes. The festival returned to Seaside Park for the first time in many years for four days of music and celebration. I couldn't believe how spread out everything was. It was incredible! At the beach was the Solar Stage, where you could swim and listen to music at the same time. Scarecrow Collection and John Hickey Band were among 25 bands that played there. Further down, the Terrapin stage and bandshell were set up next to each other so you didn't have to move to see the bands. "Is there anybody out there?" was the call to the Vibe tribe that signaled the start of the festival. U-Melt started it off with a great set. A fusion of jazz, funk and rock, their songs flowed seamlessly from one to the next. Next was John Brown's Body. I heard my mom say, "Wow!" They are a great reggae band and everyone seemed to love them—especially the hula hoopers.

Dark Star Orchestra came on in the evening and the lawn was packed. I was wide awake for the whole set and found myself yelling "Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!" at the celebration surrounding me. Fluorescent hula hoops glowed in the night. Jugglers tossed red-lit balls while they danced to familiar songs like "Not Fade Away," "Love Light" and "Dancing In The Street." "Terrapin Station" and "Ripple" were sentimental favorites with this being the 12th anniversary of Jerry Garcia's death.

On Friday it rained until the late afternoon and was very cold. I spent most of the day in the car with the heat on. (I figured out that I don't like being wet.) Music transcends weather so the sheets of rain blowing sideways didn't stop the smiles on the faces of the crowd at the Tea Leaf Green set. There was a white-out over the water so you saw nothing past the rocks along the shore. It made you feel like there was nothing beyond this place and no one else in the world but us. Zero reminded me a little of Modest, Martin & Wood, with their funky jams, saxophone and organ.

Railroad Earth brought the warmth back with bluegrass. They play good music to eat to and make you forget the rain. Dickey Betts was almost like having the Allman Brothers there. "One Way Out" and "Melissa" are made for outdoor shows. Betts wove a little Hendrix into "In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed" with the riff from "3rd Stone From The Sun." Nice! Later, the spectacle that is George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic gave up the funk with a groove that made thousands forget the dampness. There was an old man in a diaper, backup singers, Clinton with his colored dreads and a band that many other bands wish they could be. Deep Banana Blackout ended the night by opening their James Brown tribute with "Funky Good Time," and it was!

Saturday was beautiful. I walked for what seemed like forever and went to the beach. We hung out by the campsite too and still heard a lot of music. Ryan Montbleau sounded terrific. A lot of people brought bicycles with them and I played with other kids. Saturday night we saw Les Claypool and Ratdog. Claypool ended his thumping set with Bob Weir by his side. They went out with The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows." Ratdog played to a whole lot of love. Bob Weir did what he does so well—he played the music everyone wanted to hear, sing and dance to. It

is also music you reminisce to. All over, you heard people talking about past Grateful Dead shows, their favorite sets and what they did before, during and after the shows. It's like being around family you didn't know you had.

Sunday was hot! With The Dirty Dozen Brass Band playing "When The Saints Go Marching In" it felt like New Orleans in Connecticut. Martin Sexton was mellow, The Wailers played old school reggae hits, and Buddy Guy played his guitar until they told him he had to leave the stage. Los Lobos were the last act of the festival. For the crowd that remained, it was an awesome show. They played everything from rock to blues to reggae. They are so much more than La Bamba. And then they played "Bertha." Everyone was up on their feet dancing like it was still the first day. My mom put me on her shoulders and we went as close to the stage as I had been. I stared wide-eyed at everything around me, clapping my hands and bopping my head as much as I could. I loved every loud note! By the time we left the festival I was sticky, sweaty, dirty, stained, stimulated, wild-eyed, overwhelmed,

overjoyed and initiated into The Tribe. My experience this year was different than last year's. One reason is because I'm two so I saw more. I met people from Rhode Island and West Virginia. Someone gave us organic squash he grew in his garden. I played with kids I had never met before, tried to hula hoop and discovered glow-sticks, glow-



balls, glow-paint and every other kind of flashing thing that lights up the night. I saw the garbage that builds up when not enough people care to pick up after themselves. I saw other people care so much that they picked up garbage that wasn't theirs. I saw someone confront a thief who stole his flag. The thief refused to give it back so the good guy let the flag go because he felt the thief needed it more. There was a food drive, solar power, a kids tent with arts and crafts and a teen tent with instruments to jam with. I saw that the Gathering is not just about music, it's about community. I can't wait for next year!

