

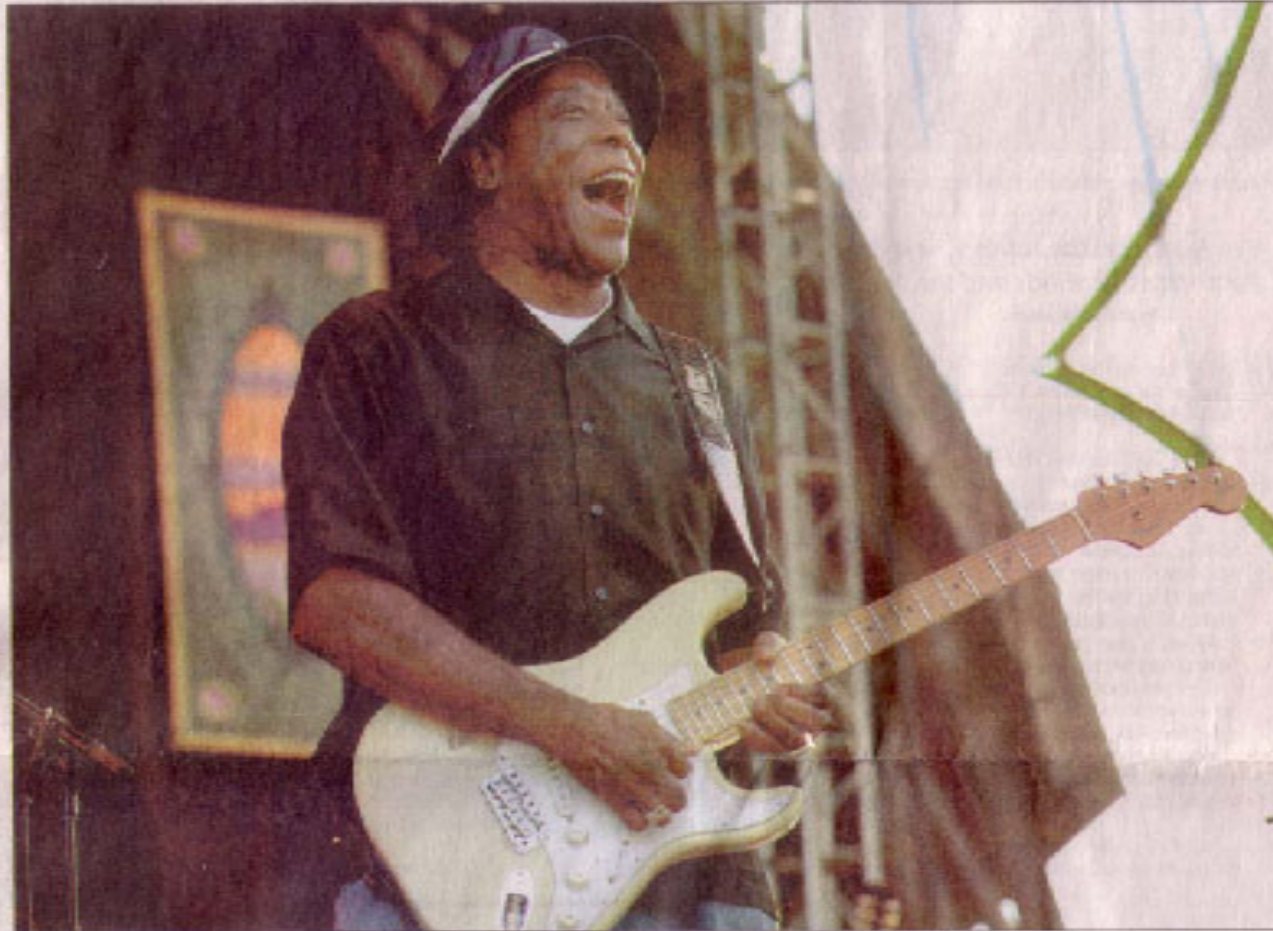
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ROCKING TO A CLOSE



Legendary bluesman Buddy Guy performs during the final day of the Gathering of the Vibes music festival in Bridgeport Sunday.

Steve A. Pascale/Connecticut Post

Attendees leave with good vibes

Concert goers leave Bridgeport
psyched about city's hospitality

By KEN DIXON
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BRIDGEPORT — The Gathering of the Vibes reverberated to its conclusion on Sunday, and while the economic benefits to the city may be minimal, the public relations value could be priceless.

Under the second consecutive sunny day, Vibesters strolled along the seawall, swam in Long Island Sound and slowly came to the realization that while the music may never stop, their four-day stay at Seaside Park was coming to an end.

The \$40,000 weekend-long rental of the park was undoubtedly cheap compared to the 10,000 people who paid up to \$150 — some VIPs paid \$350 — for each camping ticket. Thousands more paid \$70 a day.

Since the 370-acre landmark is relatively isolated, a peninsula overseen by a huge statue of P.T. Barnum, festival goers were self-contained, away from Connecticut's largest city.

Except for an unsteady stream of campers walking up Park Avenue for cases of beer from grocery and package stores on Saturday, the local economic ripple was negligible.

"It's more about prestige for the city," said Roxie Ray, director of the Academic Resource Center and First-year Studies Program at the University of Bridgeport. "It's not about spreading money around, but people are celebrating a feeling and we really need that."

Ray and her son Louis, 35, were sitting at a UB table in the shaded nonprofit area to the east of the main stages.

Festival sponsors good feelings about Bridgeport

Continued from A1

"We've had movies shot here his summer and now we are hosting this music festival," she said.

Ray said that passers-by had been friendly and interested, all weekend. "I was a child of the '60s, so I know what Woodstock was about and this is a mini Woodstock."

"It's not too far away where a lot of poverty and crime happens," Louis said, adding that while a lot of the festival people may only notice the few neighborhoods they see before getting back on Interstate 95, they'll have good memories of the city.

At the western edge of the festival, where the security boundary ended and Vibers mixed with unticketed Bridgeporters out for a day at the beach, Clergerton Swaby, 50, of Bridgeport said he thought the festival was a big boost for his city. He said he didn't feel excluded, as his listened to a bluegrass band called Hoe that

played late Sunday morning at the small Solar Beach Stage to several hundred people standing and stretched out on the sand.

"I don't know how much money this means to the city," said the native Jamaican who has lived here for about eight years. "The people are enjoying themselves and I have no complaints about them taking up most of the park."

After Hoe's performance, Chris Teskey, a guitarist in the band who is a long-time host on WPKN-FM, agreed that the benefits for the city are seemingly intangible but might eventually be quantified in the calculus of the city's active economic rebound.

"For starters, Seaside Park is one of the most beautiful parks in the Northeast," Teskey said in an interview. "I've met people from Westport, from all over New England and it's great PR for a city that's had a bad reputation. This park is so underutilized."

Teskey, who's been playing music over the Bridgeport-based WPKN since 1978, said it was a



John Galayda/Connecticut Post

Tom Williams, right, of Charleston, R.I., cheers as Martin Sexton performs Sunday during the Gathering of the Vibes in Bridgeport.

natural coup for the nationally known, nonprofit community radio station to snag the rights to broadcast The Gathering's main-stage events live.

"The park is awesome," said Victoria Bell, of Princeton, N.J., whose tent occupied the grassy circle of a park rotary, with an

unbeatable view of Long Island Sound. "We call this spot the aisle of Vibes."

Bell and her husband, Howard, a physicist and small-business owner who fuses rare-earth oxides, had along their four kids, ages 3, 6, 8 and 10.

Howard described the weekend-

long scene in two words: "positive energy." Over by the four portable toilets in the shadow of the Civil War monument, Steve Malone, 50, of New Haven, emerged from one of the blue privies, proclaiming them clean and stocked with paper.

"I grew up in Stratford and I remember getting on the bus to go shopping at the old Lafayette Mall downtown," Malone said. "Eventually, Bridgeport became the place not to go to."

But with more than 20,000 people, campers and day-ticket Vibesters alike, enjoying a memorable weekend in Bridgeport, the good will should create a momentum of its own, especially if Vibes returns.

"We have people from Alaska over where we're camped," said Malone, an executive with the New Haven-based Edible Arrangements.

"They can't believe they're in Bridgeport," said Malone, who couldn't remember the last time he was in the park prior to this weekend. "I'm hoping the city can use this, somehow."

At 6:30, just before the East Los Angeles band Los Lobos torched the remaining few thousand people, Ken Hays, executive director of Terrain Presents, the festival organizers, told people to check the Web site to see if a deal is struck with Bridgeport for a reprise next year.

"What do you guys feel about Bridgeport?" he asked after blues legend Buddy Guy finished performing at around 6:30.

The crowd roared. "Yeah, we feel the same," Hays said.

Los Lobos added a bilingual flavor for the festival's coda, but finished their set with an old rocking Grateful Dead staple, "Bertha," which the younger band made a hit of their own in the late '80s.

Finally, as Vibesters were asked to clean up the debris on their way out, a melancholy, 35-year-old version of the Grateful Dead's "Walk Me Out in the Morning Dew" was played on the sound system, as the Gathering became the Bridgeport diaspora of August 12, 2007.

Quest to see all reaps musical bounty

By **SEAN SPILLANE**
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One of the things I endeavored to do at the Gathering of the Vibes, my first festival, was to catch as many of the main-stage acts as possible. It was a much harder task than anticipated.

There wasn't a press tent where I could file my stories and blogs on the Web site at Seaside Park, so occasionally I would have to head back to the *Post's* State Street office to write. Not too big of a hassle, but I did end up missing a few shows, as well as parts of other performances that I would have liked to have

seen in their entirety.

Here's a quick roundup of what I saw and heard during my four days at Seaside Park.

THURSDAY: It was basically just people setting up their campsites with three bands on the two main stages. U-Melt, from New York City, got things going on the Terrapin Stage and it was a decent jam band, nothing spectacular.

The eye-opener for me was catching The Dark Star Orchestra that night. Usually, I'm not a fan of cover bands, but DSO has taken it to a whole new level. If I didn't know better, I'd have sworn it was The Grateful Dead come back to life. I can see now why this group has

risen so far above the other Dead tribute bands out there.

What I missed Thursday: John Brown's Body.

FRIDAY: Jam band Zero soldiered on through the cold and the rain and was joined by ex-Grateful Dead singer Donna Jean Godchaux. Actually, it seemed as if she joined in with every jam band at the festival.

► Please see **JAM** on **A6**



A member of The Wilsons performs Sunday at the Gathering of the Vibes at Seaside Park in Bridgeport.

Jam bands rock at Seaside Park

Continued from A1

One of the best performances was turned in by Dickey Betts and Great Southern, but I was only able to catch the last 30 minutes or so. Still, it was an absolute treat to hear the former Allman Brother Betts blazing away on ABB classics like "In Memory of Elizabeth Reed" and "Jessica."

Bluegrass-based jam band Railroad Earth was OK, but I got called away by the wedding taking place at the same time in the VIP tent. I mean, how could you not want to witness a young couple being joined in holy matrimony by that eminent religious figure Wavy Gravy?

The Mickey Hart Band was quite ragged, but it was nice to see local legend Jen Durkin singing in front of her tribe. Grateful Dead alum Hart even admitted his band was "very unrehearsed, but enthusiastic" before he left the stage.

The night took a turn for the funky as the inimitable George Clinton led P-Funk on to the Bandshell Stage for a wild, sweaty workout.

The reunited local band Deep Banana Blackout, capped the night after a rousing introduction by Bridgeport Mayor John M. Fabrizi.

What I missed Friday: Chuch and Tea Leaf Green.

SATURDAY: Assembly of Dust,

led by Reid Genauer; put on a good show of acoustic-based tunes that appealed to jam band fans and those who just appreciate solid songwriting.

Guitar whiz Keller Williams has a nice following, but his music is just a bit too goofy for my taste. His set was saved when The Dead's Bob Weir, at the festival with his band Ratdog, joined in for three songs, including a memorable run-through of "Scarlet Begonias."

Former Primus frontman and bass player extraordinaire Les Claypool was definitely different, but his schtick got old pretty quickly and I began to lose interest. Weir and his Ratdog mates once again saved the day by joining in for a whacked-out rendition of "The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows."

Finally the band that seemingly everybody at the festival was most excited about, Ratdog, took the stage. Weir and Co. were in fine form and were joined by Godchaux for The Dead's "Shakedown Street." Another Dead classic, "Eyes of the World," also sounded good.

What I missed Saturday: The Ryan Montbleau Band, Donna Jean and the Tricksters and Strangefolk.

SUNDAY: Martin Sexton was all right and he has his fans, but I was underwhelmed. Even his cover versions of Johnny Cash's

"Folsom Prison Blues" and Billy Preston's "Will It Go Round in Circles" didn't move me.

Up next was Bob Marley's former band, The Wailers. Even though Marley's been gone for more than 25 years, the band is carrying on his tradition and sounding great doing it. Classics

such as "Stir It Up," "Lively Up Yourself," "Get Up, Stand Up" and "No Woman, No Cry" still seemed fresh and you can't match the musicianship of The Wailers.

Blues legend Buddy Guy is always a pleasure. I've seen him play three or four times now and I'm never disappointed. I'm almost

surprised blues fanatic John Mayer didn't come back to his hometown to play with Buddy again.

The Vibes closed with Latin rock band Los Lobos, which sounded great, even though the members seemed to be making the set list up as they went along. Whatever confusion there was on

the stage didn't translate into the music, as the band sounded tight. It was the band I most looked forward to seeing and, I'm happy to report, Los Lobos didn't disappoint.

What I missed Sunday: Kevin Hays and The Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

As Vibes ends: 'They were awesome'

By **KEN DIXON**
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BRIDGEPORT — As the hours dwindled for the Gathering of the Vibes, the festival peaked late Saturday and into the wee hours Sunday.

9 p.m. Saturday Amanda Raczynski, 24, says that Bridgeport reminds her of parts of her hometown of Buffalo, N.Y. She just finished spilling some of her newly purchased Magic Hat beer on her dress in the beer tent. The 24-year-old bartender is on her honeymoon.

"I feel like we're in a big herd," she said. "I've been, like, Moo! Moo!"

9:22 p.m. In the VIP tent, Joe Carini, of Hamden, who presides over the famous bar at Richter's in New Haven, is balancing one of his three children on his shoulders.

He had to work on Friday night, so it's more crucial to get a good look at Bob Weir and Ratdog when they come on stage at 10.

"Normally, we don't do anything like this, but it's Bob Weir," said Carini, who bought his full-festival tickets months ago.

Indeed, toward the end of Les Claypool's set on the Terrapin stage, Weir joins his Ratdog band mates who have been backing up the former bassist for Primus.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Edward Van Halen," Claypool says by way of announcing Weir, the 59-year-old former veteran Grateful Dead guitarist, who in this crowd certainly needs no introduction.

10:13 p.m. Weir starts his three-hour set with an

appropriate tune for Bridgeport: "Shakedown Street."

"They tell me this town ain't got no heart," Weir croons. Well, that's wrong.

Weir weaves a set centered around vintage Dead, some Bob Dylan and even a version of the band's early space-jam piece — "Dark Star" — then loops back to "Shakedown Street" and "Eyes of the World" before a break.

11:53 p.m. The second set starts with the country-tinged "Me and My Uncle," then steams into Dylan's "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall."

SUNDAY

12:30 a.m. Ratdog's cooking up The Beatles' "Come Together," then they head back to "Dark Star" for a while. Weir sings of the "transitive night fall of diamonds." It's clear over Bridgeport and the Perseid meteor shower is active over head.

Weir's joined on stage by Donna Jean Godchaux, a former Grateful Dead singer who toured with the band in the early 1970s, when many of the Vibe's attendees were children.

The encores finish with "One More Saturday Night" and the sentimental "Ripple" from the Dead's "American Beauty" album.

SUNDAY MORNING

10:40 a.m. Mike Potashnick, the MC, looks out over the empty, but clear area in front of the main stages.

"Is anyone out there?" he asks. "Wake up you sleepy heads."

In fact, hundreds of Vibesters are out and about and wading into the Sound at the seawall. The big Vibes festival secret for next year: bring a bicycle.

11 a.m. At the Solar Stage, a mile down the seawall from the Park Avenue entrance, Hoe is playing bluegrass for a couple of hundred people. Trash cans that were overflowing yesterday are clean today; testament to the cleanup crews.

Members of the band notice that marijuana is in the air here, as it is nearly everywhere else. They develop an on-the-fly euphemism for it: "sun screen." Chris Teskey, the guitarist, says toward the end of the set that the feeling of the festival "disproves the existence of time."

Noon. Casey Shanahan, 19, of Amherst, Mass., and a college student who's at the festival with her father Patrick, puts down a thick book and stands up on the seawall. She has just finished the seventh and last installment of "Harry Potter."

How was it? "I just can't stop smiling," she says, discussing names of wizard children.

12:05 p.m. Charley Brumley, 42, of North Haven, who estimates he saw "a couple hundred" Grateful Dead shows before the death of guitarist Jerry Garcia 12 years ago, says Weir's show the night before was very memorable.

"They were awesome," he said, adding that Bridgeport is shining this weekend. "People are realizing that Bridgeport is not as unsafe as everyone thought."

1:06 p.m. Eighteen people are lined up at the Bank of America's ATM on wheels in the food court.

1:19 p.m. The Dirty Dozen Brass Band segues into "When the Saints Come Marching In" before about 2,000 people on the main stage.

1:20 p.m. Sara Newman, down from Burlington, Vt., to sell jewelry for the weekend, doesn't appear to be a big fan of the monk parakeets nest in the fir tree where they're camped nearby.

"They're waking us up at 6 a.m.," she says. "We thought at first they were howler monkeys."

1:26 p.m. Over at the first-aid tent, Sara Wessel, 22, also of Burlington, is letting American Medical Response personnel bandage her toes, which have been chewed up by the asphalt roads and sidewalks over the last four days.

"I love the shore," she said of the venue. "I've really enjoyed our time here."

Like many people at The Vibes, Wessel has some great-looking tattoos. Unlike almost everyone else, she has inked angel wings that take up most of her back.

She's had the tattoos for three years, and they cost her about \$1,000 raised over a period of the months she had the work done in sections.

"I spent more on the tattoos than I made that summer," said Wessel, who works in the bottling department at the Magic Hat brewery.

2 p.m. A large white truck rumbles by in front of the Perry Arch at the base of Park Avenue, the main entrance of The Gathering of the Vibes.

A passer-by notices it's a vehicle owned by A Royal Flush, which has been cleaning the portable toilets all weekend.

The truck driver looks out his window and acknowledges the applause of a long festivalgoer who offers a solitary ovation and cheer.

Cop assault called 'isolated incident'

By **KEN DIXON**
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BRIDGEPORT — The relative calm at The Gathering of the Vibes was finally broken late Saturday night when a New Hampshire man, allegedly under the influence of drugs, assaulted several police officers and the festival security staff.

The incident started about 10 p.m. inside the festival's main entrance on Park Avenue and ended up about 150 yards away, outside the main entrance to the twin stages, when as many as six police officers finally restrained him.

The main casualty was Deputy Police Chief James Honis, a 37-year-veteran who sustained a broken metacarpal in his left hand after tackling Eric Dubois, 26, of Manchester, N.H.

When they rolled to the ground, Dubois' weight broke the bones in Honis' wrist, he said.

"In all fairness, this was just an isolated incident," Honis said Sunday afternoon, a fresh cast on his left arm that was put on by emergency room personnel at St. Vincent's Medical Center.

Two other cops, Sgt. Brian Fitzgerald and Officer Brian Pisanelli, were also injured in the incident, which apparently resulted from a bad reaction to hallucinogenic mushrooms, which may have been spiked with PCP, police said.

The incident began when Dubois allegedly punched David Wolfe, a Gathering of the Vibes se-

curity worker, twice in the face.

"The suspect had the strength of four or five men," said Honis. "He literally ran through one of the fences as if it were papier-mâché."

Police used pepper spray, then a stun gun five or six times before they could handcuff Dubois. Honis said several bystanders threw cans and other objects at the officers, but it was nothing overly threatening.

"Other people in the crowd said, 'dude, give it up,'" Honis recalled during an interview in the city's mobile command post, which spent the weekend near the Perry Arch entrance to Seaside Park.

Dubois was held on \$10,000 bond, charged with assault on a police officer, third-degree assault, interfering with an officer and breach of peace.

Dubois calmed down when he got to Bridgeport Hospital. Police reported that "bad mushrooms" probably laced with PCP, seemed to set off Dubois. Phencyclidine was created 50 years ago as an anesthetic, but can cause adverse psychotic reactions if ingested.

"The vast majority of this crowd are good people," Honis said, adding that the broken bones are not the worst thing that happened to him during 37 years on the job.

"I can stand one more bad day or five more good years," said Honis, who led the weekend-long police detail.