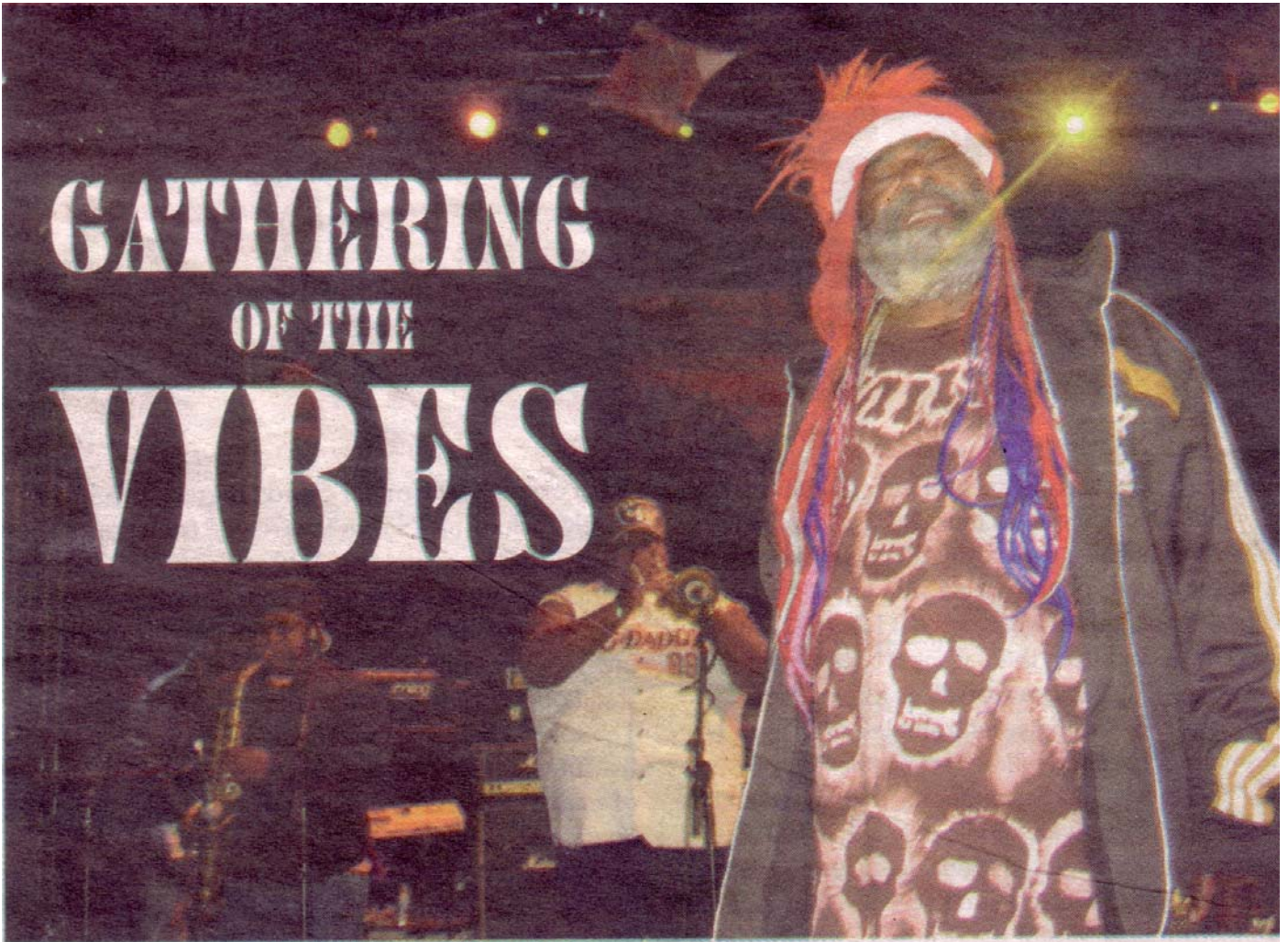


# FAIRFIELD COUNTY WEEKLY

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Four page photo review



If you're curious about what traveling with the circus is like, living with the smelliest and craziest people on the planet on some of the hottest days of summer, or if you've ever wanted to party with men on 12-foot stilts spinning in the sun, ignoring all your brain cells to the point of complete musical serenity, go to the Gathering of the Vibes in Bridgeport next year. It's coming back, right? Vibes Communication Director Jon Lobdell said, "We are very hopeful to be welcomed back. We loved it there."

What's not to love? The usually empty fields of Seaside Park were filled with thousands of hippies, scores of vendor's tents and a giant yoga peace circle. P.T. Barnum sat in his giant chair looking out to the Long Island Sound and had no idea what was going on behind him.

Until the place was cleaned up Sunday night, every picnic bench was taken, every trash can was filled and all the grass was trampled. Native Americans cried single tears all weekend and the hippies were too high to notice. But we were all a part of the Vibes Tribe, and I saw so many people picking up cans and bottles all weekend that I was moved to do the same.

Only the baseball fields were off limits to campers and no space was off limits to drug dealers. You had to listen close or you could miss out. "Rolls" are ecstasy pills, "doses" are LSD, "headies" or "nuggets" means pot, "tabs" is acid, "boomers" is shrooms and "yip yap" is cocaine. Oh, beautiful Bridgeport park, how innocent you were with your small-scale drug dealing before this jam-packed insanity rolled on through. George Clinton showed everyone why "Funk is so Loaded" by requesting a bowl from the crowd, and receiving one. Deep Banana Blackout came out in black suits, and the normally-shirtless Fuzz kept his on the whole time. Jen Durkin and Bob Weir were at the top of their festival game, playing with almost everyone Friday and Saturday, each time more energetic than the last. Les Claypool scared everyone with his pig mask and wildly eccentric bass solos before removing the mask and playing with Weir and a drummer in one of the most confusing performances of the weekend. The Wailers revived Marley's songs with great Jamaican energy and was a common favorite from what I heard on my many walks to and from the camping area.

Life at the festival was hot, sweaty, hungry, thirsty, and it reeked of pot. The point was to get as gross and dirty as possible, and we all survived with a smile. If hippie geezer Wavy Gravy can, anybody can. The man was the human manifestation of psychedelic mushrooms, announcing tripped-out revelations about space and time before each band.

You let go of everything outside the fenced perimeter and allowed the music to seep in through your red, raw skin. Vibes was all about hearing great music, finding the shade, loving your fellow man and woman and dancing like an absolute idiot. Work doesn't matter, traffic is a long-lost worry and clean clothes are pointless to the point of being a hilarious afterthought. Become an animal, jump in the mud, come along for the ride. You're not in a cubicle anymore, and you're not even stuck doing yard work. It's just feel-good funky music playing from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m. for no other reason than to help you wiggle in the sun. Joyful adults, laughing children and a completely friendly attitude that's different from anything you can find anywhere else. People literally travel across the world for this sort of thing. This was the true "Bridgeport. Who Knew?" moment.

—text by Sean Corbett; photos by Corbett and Mike Putnam



