

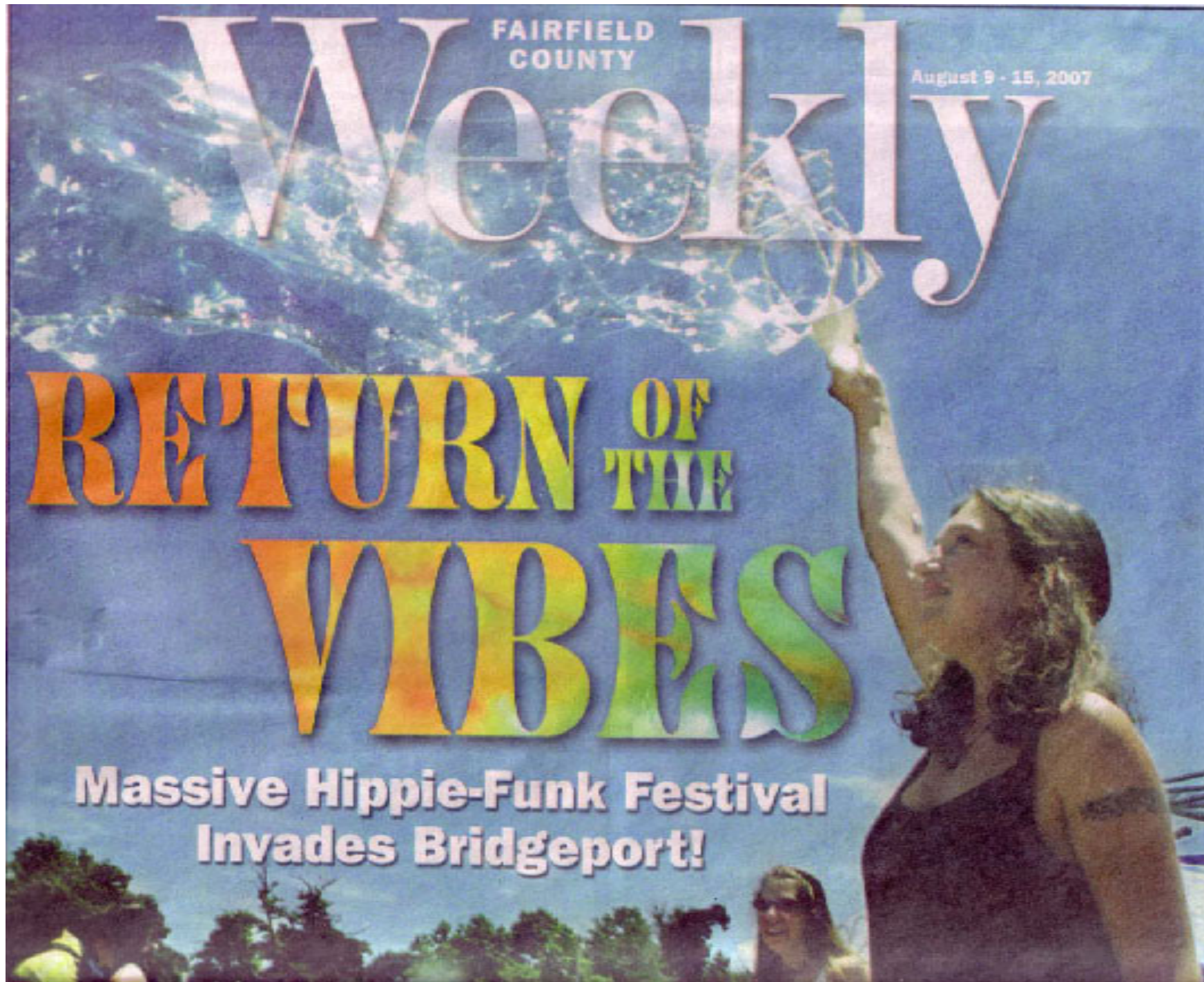
FAIRFIELD  
COUNTY

# Weekly

August 9 - 15, 2007

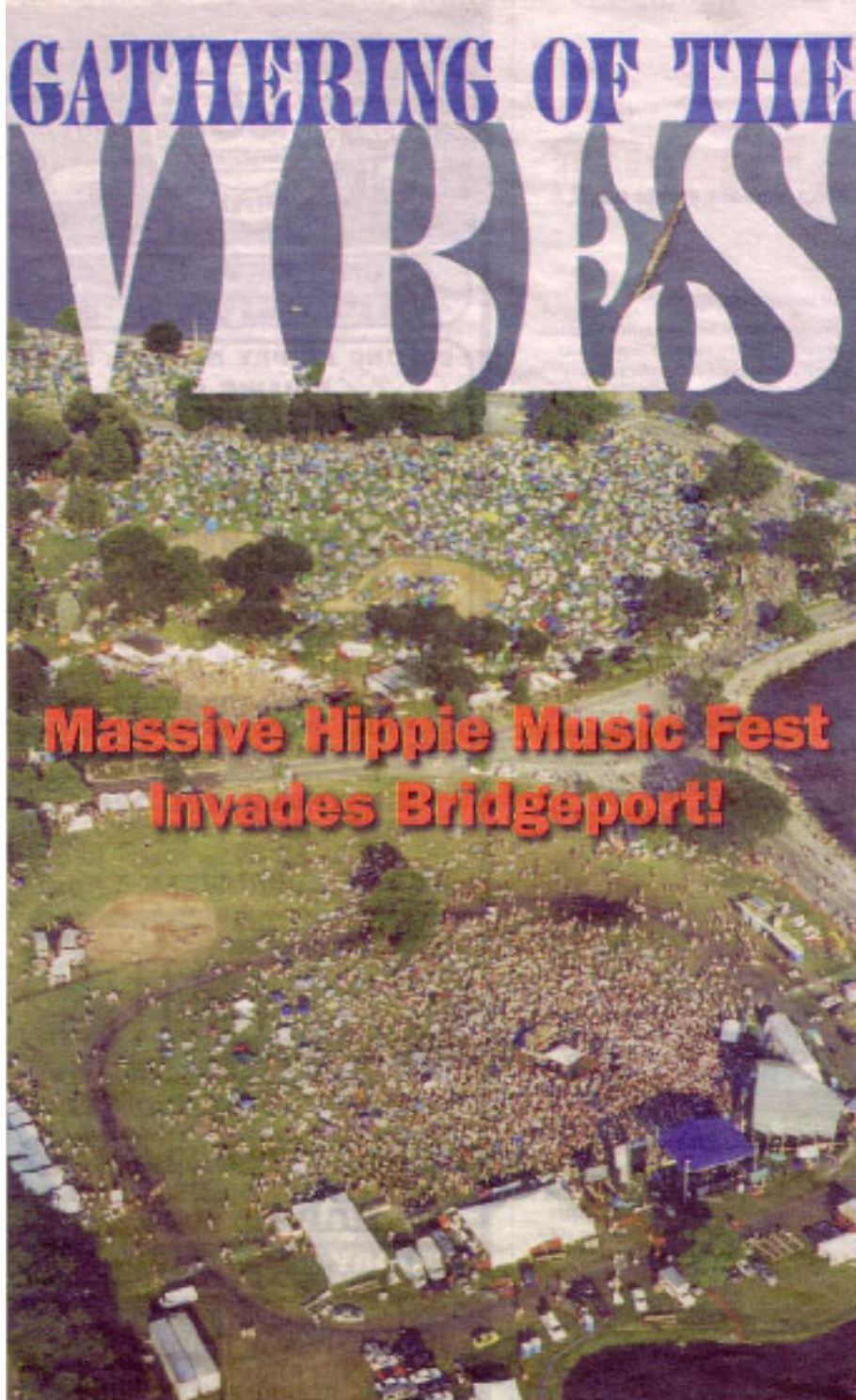
## RETURN <sup>OF</sup> THE VIBES

**Massive Hippie-Funk Festival  
Invades Bridgeport!**



# GATHERING OF THE VIBES

## Massive Hippie Music Fest Invades Bridgeport!



I remember slogging around the shin-high septic-tinged mud on the last morning of the Woodstock 1994 concert up in Saugerties, N.Y., embraced by this idealistic and wholly ridiculous sense, which I wrote about at the time, that some kind of consciousness changing possibility had been unleashed that weekend of cross-genre, cross-generational rock. I wondered if this consciousness shift I was “detecting” would take hold among the attendees, and what it might mean. Was there a new Movement afoot, or what! I was in the last gasp of a ’60s swoon, and I was looking for that moment where the hundredth monkey would show himself. World Peace would be the result.

The mud was deep and full of shit. Ditto my thoughts at that moment. I smoked a fat joint and sipped back some espresso, purchased on-site, and got totally ripped as I proceeded to listen to Country Joe and his re-tooled Fish sing about how he don’t give a damn, since the next stop is Viet Nam.

*Viet-Whodat?*

When I sat down hours later at a friend’s nearby country home to write the piece, I could not help but declare how totally weird it was that Country Joe didn’t even bother to update the lyrics to reflect, say, the major international conflict of the day, which was the Clinton-Carter incursion into Haiti.

On reflection, why should he have updated those lyrics, sang famously at the original Woodstock festival in 1969? Rock festivals have always been held out as some sort of “coming together” of like-minded sensibilities. The opportunity for sharing yer doobage and scoring with seral hippies is present—but anybody who’s spent any time learning about the 1960s knows that the heavy political activists of the era were often at odds with the culture guys. Pete Townshend almost beat the shit out of the Yippie Abbie Hoffman for trying to jump on the Woodstock (1969) stage to make a big fat speech about AmeriKKKa. Sing your dissent, vent the message, but save the speech for the SDS rally.

So, I say. To hell with politics this weekend, when the Gathering of the Vibes returns to Seaside Park with its hippie-funk mandate. It’s a mandate to groove, and that is exactly what I plan on doing.

The Gathering of the Vibes is a commercial enterprise first and foremost—just like its revered antecedents. It’s by no means a political event. It’s a great commercial enterprise, but just as I’m looking forward to turning off, tuning out and dropping dead (or whatever that Timothy Leary slogan was), I am going to the festival with the absolute certainty that 294 calls for Eush’s impeachment will be made from the three stages, that the war in Iraq will be critiqued by at least half the musicians, Obama will emerge as the Choogler in Chief, and that when Sunday night rolls around and the music fades—the war must go on but the show will end.

MySpace is the new Yasgur’s Farm, and the real political action is on the Netroots, not at Seaside Park. And don’t let the dread spectacle of Bridgeport mayoral candidate Chris Caruso spinning in a heavy skirt to “Sugar Magnolia” as he angles for the hippie vote, make you think any different.

—Tom Goggin

# THE SOUND AND THE FUNKY

LOLLAPALOOZA VS. GATHERING OF THE VIBES: GOTY VS.81

By Drew Taylor

Music festivals are generally speaking terrible. I don't know what's more irritating: the \$8 bottles of water, the health-possible offers, the thousands of sweaty, stinky teenagers ruffling up against you or the fact that before the concert is over you'll be hot, have passed out from dehydration, exhaustion, or confusion. How is repeatedly riling yourself? Who are these guys again? Still, I keep finding myself at them, and they keep finding me. This weekend I'll be attending the main one of Lollapalooza Festival in Chicago, while back home the Gathering of the Vibes prepares to wrap as the gelling tentacles around Redgipet's Sausalito Cafe.

The two festivals aren't that dissimilar, until you realize that one's nothing about them that's even remotely the same. The Gathering of the Vibes is, by all things, a hippie festival. Started after Jerry Garcia died, it's the kind of event that encourages camping, competitive games of Hazy Side and lots of pot smoking. What's amazing about Gathering of the Vibes is how close to its original mission statement it still stands. 23 years later. Good, groovy times and a community being constructed are still firmly in place, you often see hipsters who enjoy Lollapalooza, or the other hand, sold out in an airplane. What was once a tree-level of youth culture, an exciting place to experience new ideas, new

music, and cool hairstyles, has instead become as repetitive as McDonald's apple pie.

A few years ago, in an effort to revive the ragging festival, Bruce and James Addison from their band, Party Animal, partnered with local organizers CD Presents, now its Lollapalooza in name only. Look no further than the stage names: MySpace, AT&T, My, Netcar, U2, Adidas, Bud Light. Go look at the placement of Band's band Seattle Party (again) in the Backstage on the first night, and you know how far this festival has fallen from grace.

Yet still, it's the same.

The festival's exposed distasteful demographics happen to happen together every year. While CD Presents has bands like Deep Forest and Medwyn, the folk-leaning Wolf Man's Wife and art-funk power Las Claypool, Lollapalooza has British space-rockers Wise and French disco-fied rockers Red Peak, both of whom may not jam, but will have a lithe light show that will rival the best of Club Paradise's New York.

Therein lies the biggest difference between the two: the art and the artificial. Gathering of the Vibes genuinely cares about the musicianship of the performers, even if they're terrible and no one's ever heard of them or wants to see

them. At least they've done it. They're real, and they have the dirt under-the-fingernails work ethic associated with that kind of thinking.

Lollapalooza, by contrast, with its lineup of local bands and old standards (Food Jam, still, I hear?) and people still like going? What's new? It's just as slick and capitalist as the national-level Clear Channel as sponsoring the festival.

You can say of these ping-ponging festivals if you want, or you can look up to the scraggly bearded folk and folk singers of Gathering of the Vibes because they're hard-scrabble. Even if they suck, at least they're trying.

On the other hand, James Murphy of LCD Soundsystem, who's paying out Lollapalooza's first night, could record an answering machine message that would probably be played in the clubs for the better part of a year. He's effectively talented, and like most of the Lollapalooza DJ, has a career of pop music ahead.

If Gathering of the Vibes has come from Earth like some Earth on which you're camping and smoking back, then Lollapalooza has come straight from the factory, processed and pre-screened for optimal consumption.

You know where I'll be drinking my \$8 bottle of water and wondering how the show's going in Redgipet.

# MARTIN SEXTON

By Lorraine Geago

In the library to his new CD, *Seek*, Martin Sexton singles out a number of people "who have helped [him] along the way," and among them is Bill Houston of WFLX, the indie 97.6 station at Frost-Hearst University in the Bronx. "It's thanks to Houston that at my age, I was contacted by Sexton's voice which has been described as "angelic," but can be growlingly delicious or eerily raspy singing "Love Keep Us Together," a bluesy sweet, up-tempo tune about abandoned parenthood and growing up. CD track debut, *Don't Sleep at Last* I don't know what to make of this somewhat wise manlike, post-perfect baritone could fall me into dreamland one moment and then rocket it into an Aerosmithed blues-rock riot, leaving me to wonder: Who is this guy?

But Bill kept filling the envelopes with his sound, and pretty soon I was embracing him as close to becoming a groupie. Over the past decade or so, I've seen him

perform in a variety of venues—from a Concord, N.H. high school gym to Irving Plaza in NYC, and at a bunch of summer festivals like the Gathering of the Vibes.

Though I was far out of the seven CDs he's recorded, I only just learned through his website, [www.martinsexton.com](http://www.martinsexton.com), that Sexton made a Christmas recording, *Core Holiday*, which I'll be sure to get this season, including *Don't Sleep*, the double CD of his North American tour. There's just no substitute for an in-the-flesh performance. The guy's got a set of pipes—the East thing you notice—and he uses them East to the max. There's a rockabilly beat, it's several qualities of his live performance that have audiences breathless. Don't mean Bill in love with Sexton after hearing it on the radio for the first time. I've seen it happen.

Though his voice is what hooks you, it's Sexton's guitar playing, mischievous and energetic stage presence that make it worth the effort to catch his live per-



Martin Sexton

formances. Sexton is an improviser and a showman who manages to get the sound of an entire band out of his guitar, which he leads on like a drum and induces as he's playing or wiggles all sorts of sounds out of it. He also vocalizes an impressive array of mouth instruments: keyboard, guitar, horns, and more with the best of them. The guy's genius.

Sexton carries this creativity into the

studio. On *Seek*, he plays percussive guitar (electric and acoustic), harmonica, piano, organ, flutes, Mooshoose jug bass and something called a latin new pocket. The multitasking has become a trademark, although fans of his music may not be aware of the extent of Sexton's talents unless they've read the liner notes.

With *Seek*, Sexton shows that he's also returned as a songwriter. I love that he wrote and semi-scripted "manager" from Eric Clapton's "Thought I Knew You," a breakup song that harp-oozes roller-thriller-thrill-hipness from LA, and still manages to be self-deprecating. But it's in songs like "Wild Angel" and the beautifully pared-down "These Go On" (written with Uri Caine) that the light that's always shown through in his work comes through as something deeply nourished with the experiences of living.

Sexton plays on Aug. 12 at 8 p.m. on the Jumpy stage.

## **GATHERING OF THE VIBES**

# **WHAT'S WITH THE NAME?**

**By Nick Keppler**

**You're familiar with Los Lobos, Martin Sexton and George Clinton. If you frequent health food stores, finer head shops or the state of Vermont, you also know all about Assembly of Dust, Strangefolk and all the Grateful Dead-related projects and tribute bands playing the Gathering of the Vibes. But what if you want to explore some new bands, someone who might**

**even have the time to smoke a bowl with you after their set? Luckily, the festival's Solar Beach Stage is hosting local favorites and mid-career jam bands from throughout the Northeast. Here's a list of highlights from Gathering of the Vibes' third stage. Check them out and you'll have I-was-into-them-first bragging rights at next year's show.**

| Band                        | Time              | Description   | So what's with the name?   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>Indobox</b>              | Thurs., noon      | The Alston, Massachusetts-based foursome takes the tried and true route of loose instrumentation and Santana-trippy lyrics ("Flow through the sky on an eagle's wing/Dazed on the current of a solar wind/Saw my reflection in the desert sand/God held me in the palm of his hand.") | The group originally went by Moonbox, but discovered another band by that name. "We wanted to keep the box part," guitarist-vocalist Joe Zarick told Boston's WERS. He said that Indobox "wasn't some magical thing that came to us in a dream. It was just...something nobody else would think of." |
| <b>Hubinger St.</b>         | Thurs., 3:45 p.m. | In 1995, the group began filling Southern Connecticut clubs with its lengthy, Irish-ish jams. After a few years of performing on and off again, they've returned with a new bassist.  | Hubinger St. is a small lane between Edgewood Park and Whalley Ave. in New Haven. We guess Eli T. Grasso Boulevard Overdrive was taken.  |
| <b>Big Apple'achia</b>      | Fri., noon        | Perhaps the oddest duck of the festival, this middle-aged quartet presents old-timey folk without irony or watering down.   | What else would you call a New York City band that plays Appalachian music? NYPD Blue Grass?   |
| <b>Fro</b>                  | Fri., 1:15 p.m.   | Here to entertain axe-heads, Brooklyn's Harold Davis, Jr., plays a virtuosic, if a little show-offy, hodgepodge of blues, rock and psychedelia.   | Davis has a head of hair that makes Sly Stone look like one of Ralph Lauren's token black models.  |
| <b>Cosmic Jibaros</b>       | Fri., 6:15        | This eight-piece has established itself as one of Bridgeport's top Spanish language bands. They have political undertones that may fly over the heads of the un-lingual, but their Latin rhythms will move even the palest concert-goer.  | Jibaros is a Puerto Rican term for a mixed blood peasant worker. We hear Cosmic Jibaros was also the name Telemundo Puerto Rico used for overcutted airings of Star Trek: The Animated Series.   |
| <b>Rolla</b>                | Sat., 2:30        | The side project of James "Fuzz" Sengiovanni, guitarist for Deep Banana Blackout (the local favorites who close the Bandsheil stage on Friday), Rolla features a softer vibe, no doubt thanks to the vocals of his wife Carrie Ernst.   | We have no idea, and given that "Deep Banana Blackout" has never been properly explained to us, we aren't holding our breaths.   |
| <b>King for a Day</b>       | Sat., 5:15        | Another band featuring DBB alumni, King for a Day is one of the more rapidly growing bands in the area. They've secured a steady stream of club gigs and positive press since their founding last year.   | See above.   |
| <b>The Bomb Squad</b>       | Sat., 6:15        | The local R&B band recently gained Brooklyn-raised American Idol finalist Brenna Gethers as a lead singer and was picked by a re-animated Dick Clark to play the American Music Awards. Hopefully, their commercial sound won't be buzzkill.  | Sheer unoriginality. The Bomb Squad is also a Windsor, Ontario-based Motown throwback group, a Bend, Oregon business that removes dog feces from yards, the nickname of the branch of the FBI that deals with explosives and, of course, Public Enemy's legendary production team.                   |
| <b>Scarecrow Collection</b> | Sun., 2:30        | The New Jersey band, which has two albums under its belt, has a schuffy Allman Brothers sound. But don't expect any 20-minute improvisations. Although considered a jam band, they've made it a point "that songs come first" in interviews.  | Songwriter Gerald Fee told a newspaper that "scarecrow" evoked the rural blues songs that influenced him and "collection" denoted that the project was communal. "The words are kind of separate," he explained. "They just came together after a while."  |
| <b>The Breakfast</b>        | Sun., 3:30        | The East Haven trio bills itself as a jam band but its strength may be its range. "Good Things," from their latest Moxie Epoxy, is a piano band with an Aimee Mann-ish deliver while "Intension" is almost Black Sabbath-esque in its guitar grinding.                                | It's there for bad puns and hyperbole if their website bio is an indication: "The Breakfast is ready to be served if you are ready for a power trip playing some of the finest progressive funk rock on the scene today!"  |



# KELLER WILLIAMS

By Sean O'Connell

**A**s you step on your Baker's dobs (if you do, you're dead) and some that hippie social service for the weekend is gathering at the Vibe, you'll want to start working on your concert schedule. It should be no hard thing because the Vibe looks much easier to handle than large festivals with very few bands overlapping.

The soft rock-developing show is the growing community, ready or not, to lead Keller Williams. He will be a one-man band this time around.

For the Vibe festival Williams is playing with Larry and Jerry Kest, maybe of the Gas Station and the Road. Jerry plays the upright bass and fluffy Larry (a childhood friend of Williams') is a renowned bluegrass fiddler. Williams is known for his guitar playing. It's a blend of jazz originals and for the classics to cover in original ways. He'll play some Beethoven, some Elton, some Dead and he'll cover best of some Tomasco. Don't know, Jackson.

A Keller Williams' show is typically a wild and goofy, tonnage of multi-instrumentation, but if they stick to the mainstay, the show could be a lighter and more stripped-down folk-rock show. Whatever the case with Williams on the line, you be sure to expect his bands to be equally ridiculous with their instruments. Or better yet, that the performance will normally be an out-of-the-or-

inary bluegrass show with some classic Keller Williams psychedelically mixed in. Keller and the Kests released an album, *Gas*, in 2006 and they did some light touring in support of it. The album is mostly a garage and acoustic batch of Americana-type music and comes complete with a bluegrass version of "Another Brick in the Wall," which is sure to get the crowd worked up and the folk on stage. The "Gas" live is "Get My Baby Out of Jail" sound like they're right out of *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* and that's a good thing.

As a result of the custom "the guy playing the Vibe show with the Kests" was supposed to be an award in an interview, but Williams is in the middle of a career tour and we were unable to track him down.

In case of a direct answer from the man himself, we'll speculate that he won't be playing the whole show as a bluegrass trio.

He's too unpredictable.

Maybe he'll have the dogs, Sheila and Earl (names courtesy of Weisfeld) at one point and perform an eclectic-career-pop-rock-folk-funk. And the audience is a group of kids in a group, a little *Yes!*

Whatever the case, it'll be nice.

Keller and the Kests play Sat. at 6:30 p.m. at the Vibe stage.



Art by [illegible]

## GATHERING OF THE VIBES

# THE MUSIC NEVER STOPPED

BUT THE GRATEFUL DEAD'S SENSE OF ADVENTURE DID  
By Andy Greene

**B**y 1995, the Grateful Dead had become a band of steady habits. Sadly, it took Jerry Garcia dying to snap them out of it.

Back then, in Garcia's final year, touring Deadheads could predict show openers with relative ease based on what the band had played the night before. If Garcia opened the show one night, Bob Weir would open the next. They'd alternate lead vocals through two sets and an encore like clockwork. The Dead had hundreds of songs in their repertoire, but only a few dozen in the rotation at any given time. New songs were mostly introduced in February. Old songs were rarely revived once retired.

Nowadays, the Dead's spin-off bands delight in throwing their crowds off-kilter by pairing newer Grateful Dead songs with long-retired ones like "St. Stephen," and tunes the band hardly ever played live at all, like the obscure "Mountains of the Moon."

Any song from the band's 30-year history is fair game. It's a Deadhead's paradise—hearing songs played live that you've only drooled over in the

pages of Deadbase or heard on hissy bootlegs from the '70s (those are Type II Maxwell tapes, right?).

The Gathering of the Vibes reunites three members of the Dead—Weir with his band RatDog, drummer Mickey Hart with his Mickey Hart Band, and onetime singer Donna Jean Godchaux-Mackay, with Donna Jean & the Tricksters—for what promises to be a...um...well...yup

*A long strange trip down memory lane!*

If recent RatDog set lists are any indication, expect to hear the graybeard Weir (looking more like Garcia every day) haul out once-rare songs like "Dark Star" and the three-part "Weather Report Suite." Hart's been known to rap a version of "Fire on the Mountain" wearing one of those headset microphones. And Godchaux-Mackay, who was fired from the band in 1979 and formed her new band after appearing onstage at the 2005 Vibes festival, draws liberally from the Grateful Dead and Jerry Garcia Band repertoires.

The Dead's members have loosened up a lot in the post-Garcia years. Unfortunately, it kind of makes you wish they'd done it while Jerry was still alive. It's almost like they woke up one day and realized they've got all these great songs that the crowd loves to hear, and they love to play. Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh, who tours with a rotating cast of Friends barking him up (as in, Phil Lesh and Friends), has revived a bunch of old songs from the dawn of the Dead in the late '60s. Weir's playing all these great old Dylan and Beatles numbers, like "She Belongs to Me" and "Dear Prudence," respectively, that the Dead rarely, if ever, played during the Garcia years. But the novelty only goes so far when a song's missing Garcia's fireside-folkie voice or his noodling guitar.

If you're a strict traditionalist, catch the Dark Star Orchestra, the tribute band that recreates historical Grateful Dead shows in their entirety. Dark Star sounds more like the Dead than the Dead sometimes, and the resemblance between the DSO, Weir, and the real one is almost eerie. Dark Star Orchestra plays Thursday. Weir takes the Terrapin Stage Saturday night. If they meet face-to-face, the universe will explode.

*RatDog plays on Sat. at 10 p.m. on the Terrapin stage; DSO plays Thurs. at 7 p.m. on the Terrapin stage (\$20); Donna Jean & the Tricksters play Sat. at 2:30 p.m. on the Terrapin stage; the Mickey Hart Band plays Sat. at 7 p.m. on the Bandshell Stage.*



RatDog: Hair of the Dead that bit you