



# GOOD VIBES

**ONCE A HIPPIE,  
ALWAYS A HIPPIE** BY WENDY LOGAN



A weekend-long music festival on the edge of the Long Island Sound unites young and old and brings the funk (and the blues, soul, pop, rock and even the Harlem Boys Choir) to Fairfield County from July 23 to 26 at beautiful Seaside Park in Bridgeport. And yes, you read it right: Bridgeport. Seaside Park offers one of our area's most scenic waterfront vistas, unobstructed by smoke stacks, power plants or other eyesores as is the case for much of the county's shoreline.

I first attended the festival in 2007 and, at 45, I was nothing if not wary. While I was drawn to the band lineup, I shuddered at a conjured vision of being mashed into some big festival crowd of sweaty hippies for three days straight in the summer sun, scarfing greasy burgers and deep fried dough, and gulping warm beer. My



cynical midlife mind had created a bad scene (and it was in Bridgeport) and I told myself that my days as a Deadhead, swirling and twirling and singing along to Jerry (rest his soul) and Bob were over. Then I arrived at Seaside Park. Cue the choir.

There were pretty, tree-shaded areas, a walking path, a rocky shore, and acres and acres of green fields. Along the entry path and the left-hand perimeter were concession stands serving falafel, Asian veggie stir-fries, fresh lemonade, pizza, and grilled chicken skewers, to name just a few of the food options, and beer – icy cold Magic Hat (!) in a variety of flavors. A long line of booths to one side of the field featured a diversity of craftspeople selling jewelry, clothing, leather, art. Up along the waterfront path, tables were allocated to a variety of nonprofit organizations dedicated largely to conservation education.

As we walked toward the ticket areas, random festival goers of every age greeted us, "Hey, how ya doin'?" Have a great time! Beautiful day! Enjoy the show." The festival's centerpiece, its two giant stages, were being prepped and wired and plugged in by roadies and festival personnel. Newly arrived friends were hugging each other and children were scurrying around the well-designed kids area, getting their faces painted and watching entertainers booked especially for them. There was plenty of tie-dye, for sure, but there were also khaki shorts and J. Crew shirts. Balloons were batted around, hula hoops were hula'd and there was plenty of space for all.

Beyond that, it was all about the music and when The Dark Star Orchestra took the stage on the first night of the show, an inescapable force took me over and I found myself twirling and dancing and singing along just as I had done in my more bohemian days. We returned every day to the festival that year and the following year as well, taking our teenaged sons along for the ride, and having a truly joyful shared musical experience.

This year, Gathering of the Vibes celebrates the 40th anniversary of Woodstock. The legendary Crosby, Stills & Nash, The Grateful Dead's Bob Weir, celebrated



drummer **Levon Helm** and the ever-bizarre **Wavy Gravy** serving as M.C. carry the theme, but with blues great and five-time Grammy Award winner **Buddy Guy**, funk master **George Clinton**, Boston-based indie rockers **State Radio** and **Guster**, and even **The Harlem Boys Choir** on the bill, there's truly music for everyone.



Locally, Norwalk-based singer, songwriter and musician **PJ Pacifico** recently earned the coveted opening slot on the Main Stage, having been chosen out of a pool of over a thousand musicians vying for it. Norwalk-based band **King for a Day** will also perform on the Main Stage on Friday. The festival also features a separate, "Green Vibes" stage, run partially on solar power, that will feature a host of more local and up and coming bands. Tickets are sold as weekend passes. You can camp out (even for a die-hard like me, that wasn't happening) or simply return each day as we did. Young or old or in between, whether your inner hippie has been long-buried or has yet to emerge, Gathering of the Vibes is a road trip worth taking.



For ticket prices, the full band lineup or other information, go to [gatheringofthevibes.com](http://gatheringofthevibes.com).

*From top, Stephen Stills, Dave Crosby, and Graham Nash will headline the closing day of the 2009 festival; Levon Helm; moe; Seaside Park in Bridgeport. Left, from top, Phil Lesh of the Grateful Dead and his band Phil and Friends from Gathering of the Vibes '08; Buddy Guy (inset); a fan pauses to remember Jerry Garcia, in whose memory the festival was founded.*

