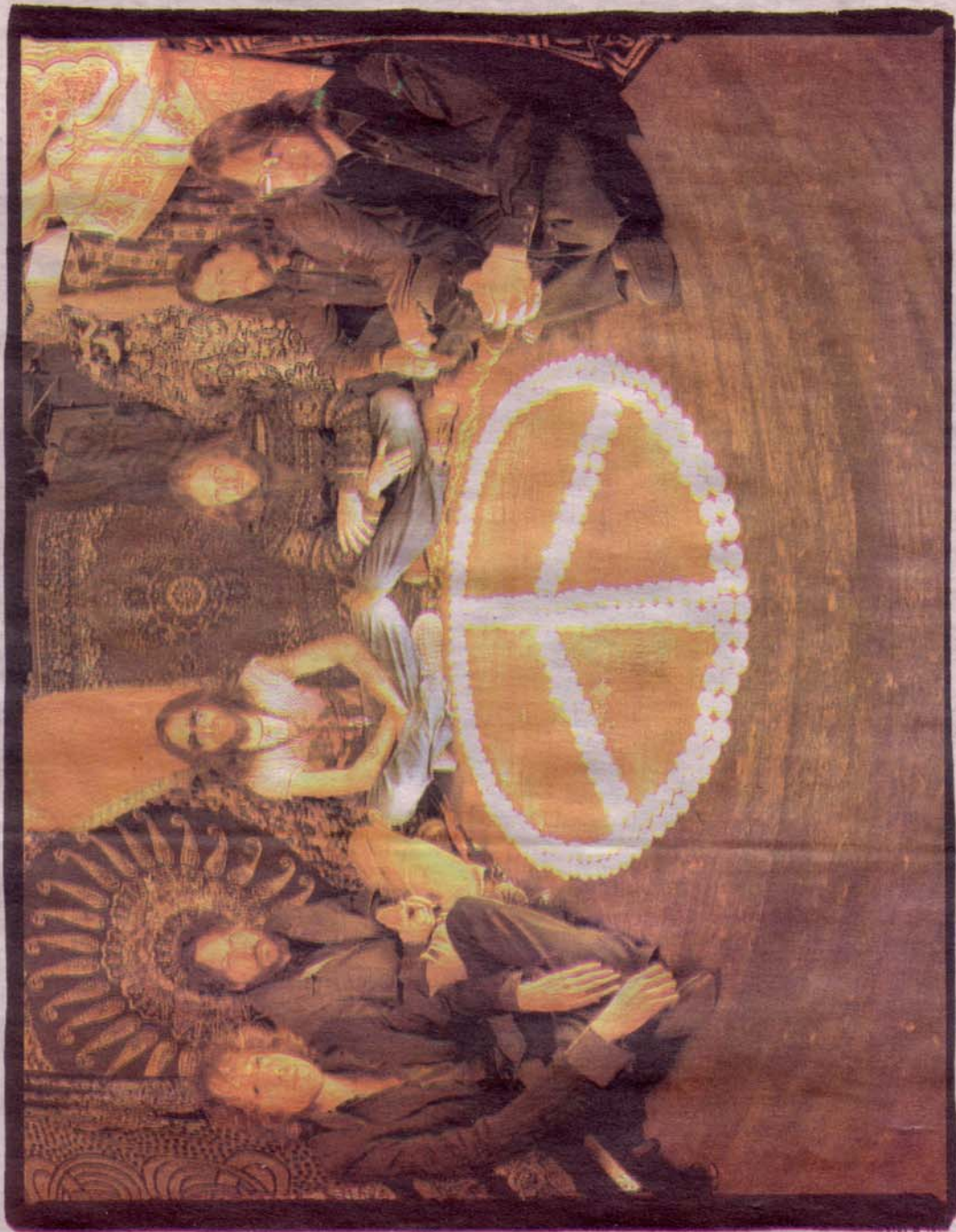


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Contributed photo

The Black Crowes will headline on the Gathering of the Vibes Main Stage on Friday night, when the fest returns to Bridgeport.

A VIBES HEADS-UP

Big fest returns, so here are some handy tips if you plan to attend

By **SEAN SPILLANE**
Staff writer

The Gathering of the Vibes is returning to Bridgeport's beautiful Seaside Park for a second straight year Thursday through Sunday and will feature a variety of big-time musical acts, as well as a full slate of local performers.

The festival was founded as a tribute to the late Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia, so naturally there are a few acts coming that spun off from that band — such as Phil Lesh & Friends, The Bill Kreutzmann Trio and Donna Jean and the Tricksters.

Other headliners include The Black Crowes, The Taj Mahal Trio, New Riders of the Purple Sage, Mike Gordon of Phish, Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi's Soul Stew Revival, The Neville Brothers and Dweezil Zappa's salute to his father, Frank, called Zappa Plays Zappa.

Local bands getting prime spots on the Main Stage include The Alternate Routes, King for a Day and, of course, festival-favorite Deep Banana Blackout.

The Vibes also has a second venue, called the Solar Stage, that is powered purely by solar and wind energies. This is where you can catch many other bands from the area.

If you're planning on going to the Vibes, there are a few things you should do to prepare yourself.

1. Have a plan

At last year's Vibes, there were site maps handed out that showed the locations of the food and merchandise vendors, stages, medical facilities and everything else you might need to know. Grab one as soon as you reach the site and hang on to it.

Check out the music schedule for the Gathering of the Vibes at www.connpost.com and select which bands you want to check out and which ones you're not so keen on seeing. Print a copy so you'll have it with you at the festival.

You can get a good spot in front for the acts you want to see and do a little sightseeing at the park during the performances you're going to pass up. Remember, the shows get more crowded later in the day and at night, so it might not be so easy to get up front for those events.

2. Be smart with your clothing choices

The festival takes place right along Long Island Sound, so if it's sunny and warm at the beginning of the day, it could very well be cool and windy by

the time some of the major acts hit the main stage at night.

You might also pack a light jacket or even a large plastic garbage bag in case a summer storm passes through.

Definitely check the weather forecast before leaving your home to see what you may encounter during your Vibes stay.

3. Sensible shoes are a must

One thing you can be sure of is that you will be doing some walking — from the parking lots to the festival and then some. Pick your footwear accordingly.

There is a lot to take in at the Vibes, including a food court, artist tents and merchandise vendors, and not all of it is located around the main concert area. There also is a second musical venue at Seaside Park worth the walk, called the Solar Stage, which will feature local bands and other performers.

Also, don't miss an opportunity to take a stroll along the beach at Seaside, with its wondrous views of Long Island Sound. It's even better during the Vibes as there are very few, if any, cars buzzing around the site.

4. Bring cash

There is an ATM on site for the festival, but there often are long lines to get at it. You don't have to go too crazy with the amount of money you bring, as I don't recall the prices for food and beverages as being exorbitant. Still, it's good to have some cash on hand just in case something catches your eye at one of the merchandise tents.

5. Play by the rules

What made last year's Vibes so special was the people. Thousands descended on Seaside Park and there was very little trouble over the four days, mostly because the people in attendance treated each other with respect.

Let's just say that if you're looking to get drunk and rowdy, the Vibes probably isn't the place for you.

The rules in place are pretty much just common sense: No glass bottles, no pets, no weapons or tools that can be used as weapons, no tents or canopies on the concert field, no open fires, etc. For a full list of rules, go to www.gatheringofthevibes.com.

To quote from the Vibes' Golden Rule: "Respect each other, the staff and the local community. . . . Let's create a memorable, trouble-free weekend together."

For ticket information, call 908-3030 or visit www.gatheringofthevibes.com.

Getcha program

NOTE: Thursday's events are for weekend camping ticket-holders only.

MAIN STAGE Thursday

Groovesect, 5:30 p.m.
Donna Jean and the Tricksters, 7:15
Dark Star Orchestra, 9

Friday

King for a Day, noon
American Babies, 1:25 p.m.
The Ryan Montbleau Band, 2:50
Porter Batiste Stoltz, 4:15
Assembly of Dust, 5:40
Zappa Plays Zappa, 7:10
Deep Banana Blackout, 9
The Black Crowes, 10:45

Saturday

The Alternate Routes, 11 a.m.
Strangefolk, 12:45 p.m.
New Riders of the Purple Sage, 2:30
The Bill Kreutzmann Trio, 4:15
Mike Gordon, 6
The Taj Mahal Trio, 7:30
Phil Lesh and Friends, 9

Sunday

The Organically Grown Gospel Choir, 11 a.m.
The Jackie Greene Band, 12:15 p.m.
The Sam Bush Band, 1:45
Derek Trucks and Susan Tedeschi Soul Stew Revival, 3:15
Umphrey's McGee, 4:45
The Neville Brothers, 6:30

SOLAR STAGE Thursday

Roxy Perry, noon
Graylight Campfire, 1:15 p.m.
Andrew Hoover, 2:30
Phonograph, 3:45
930moon, 5
BuzzUniverse, 6:15

Friday

Turbine, noon,
The Grapes, 1:15 p.m.
Nate Wilson, 2:30
The Bridge, 3:45
The Brew, 5
The Brakes, 6:15

Saturday

Dylan Connor, noon
Caravan of Thieves, 1:15 p.m.
The Heavy Pets, 2:30
Samantha Stollenwerck, 3:45
The Durkins, 5
David Gans, 6:15

Sunday

Saint Bernadette, noon
Scrapomatic, 1:30 p.m.
Bridgeport Jamz, 3