



Steppin' Out
"High School Musical 3" among the fall holiday movie schedule.

C1

The Hour

Sports
Super Bowl combatants met in NFL preseason finale.

B1

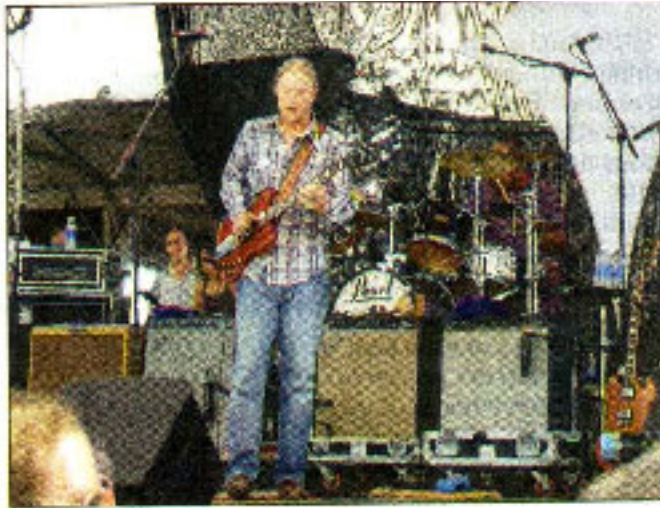


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Derek Trucks

Sound Surfing

Musical highlight of summer had plenty of good vibes



MIKE HORYZCUN

This summer, Fairfield County hosted one of its busiest and brightest music seasons ever. On just about any night of the week, you could find an outdoor concert at places like the Levitt in Westport, Alive @ Five in Stamford, CHIRP in Ridgefield, the Library Series in Wilton, the Chill Out Festival in Fairfield, Sounds of the World in Bridgeport, the Ives Center concerts in Danbury, and at all the events sponsored by the Norwalk Recreation and Parks Department.

One of the biggest happenings of them all was the Gathering of the Vibes celebration at Seaside Park in Bridgeport. The four-day event, which drew 20,000 participants per day, capped off a brilliant summer of music for area fans. The Vibes was my personal favorite not only because I liked many of the headliners this year but also because I experienced the sounds of the festival in a variety of ways.

Before checking into the concert site on Thursday night, I made a quick stop at local radio station WPKN. The studios are walking distance to Seaside Park, and the station was broadcasting the concerts live over its 89.5 FM and 88.7 WPKM frequencies. During the weekend WPKN was dubbed Radio Vibes. I volunteer for WPKN, which is a community volunteer, listener-supported station, and I host a radio show there twice a month. One of my duties that weekend would be monitoring the board at the studio during the Friday afternoon shows.

When I arrived at the concert site that night, the crowd was grooving to Donna Jean & the Tricksters. Thursday's crowd was limited to weekend ticket holders, so getting close to the stage that evening was easy. The weather was clear and warm, and Donna Jean Godchaux MacKay provided the perfect aural backdrop for

see SOUND C2

from C1

the gorgeous sunset over the city. The Vibes main stage was actually two large stages set up next to each other underneath the huge band shell in the center of Seaside Park. As one band plays on one stage, another band is either breaking down equipment or setting up to play next.

Following Donna Jean on the main stage was Dark Star Orchestra, playing note-for-note renditions of a Grateful Dead concert as it closed out the Vibes opening night. The band returns to the area, playing The Klein in Bridgeport on Nov. 23.

Friday afternoon, I was back at the WPKN studios, monitoring the Vibes live broadcast while my colleagues manned a board behind the main stage at the concert site. I got to hear the highly original pop and jazzy sounds of Ryan Montbleau, who did a great improvised version of Paul McCartney's "Open the Door, Let Them In," placing the names of various Vibes performers in the chorus. Porter Batiste Stoltz, who got stuck in traffic on I-95, arrived late but still cooked with funky New Orleans rock and fusion. Assembly of Dust followed with pop originals that combined folk, rock, a bit of country and improvisation. Donna

Jean even joined in on one of the tunes. The band will play the Fairfield Theater Company on Oct. 2. After this set, I left the radio station studios and was off to the concert site in person. The crowds seemed to have tripled in size from the night before. I got there just in time to experience the end of the Zappa Plays Zappa show. The band, led by Dweezil Zappa, son of the late great Frank Zappa, did not disappoint. Dweezil played superb guitar flourishes that echoed through the fields and out into the streets of Bridgeport. He's returning to the area, too, playing a show at The Klein on Nov. 1. Local stars Deep Banana Blackout came on next. Introduced to the stage by Bridgeport Mayor Bill Finch, the band played a highly charged mix of rock, funk and jam band excellence. They ended their set jumping in unison to the music, like they were on pogo sticks, to the ecstatic crowd. Friday's closing act, the Black Crowes, took the stage at 11 p.m. The band, led by charismatic lead singer Chris Robinson, galvanized the festival audience with hard, loud, rock and heavy doses of twin lead guitar solos by Rich Robinson, Chris' brother, and Luther Dickinson, formerly of the North Mississippi All-Stars. The Crowes

set ended a full two hours later, at 1 a.m.

Saturday, the festival experienced an afternoon rain delay, but not before the Alternate Routes returned to its hometown after touring the country in support of its nationally distributed debut disc on Vanguard Records. The Routes opened up the day's main stage show, which I heard over the radio, with pop originals, singer-songwriter tunes, and meaty rock jams. Later in the day, I also caught parts of the Taj Mahal Trio's funky blues on the radio, knowing that Taj's seminal music has been a staple on WPKN for decades.

Sunday, I returned to the concert site in time to see Derek Trucks share the stage with his wife, blues star Susan Tedeschi. Trucks is one of the leading guitarists on the scene today, and seeing him and his wife trading songs and guitar licks was itself worth the price of admission. Closing the day and the weekend, the Neville Brothers provided the ideal finishing touches for the Vibes. I listened to the band's patented New Orleans funk and vocals emanating from the stage as



Zappa plays Zappa, featuring Dweezil Zappa, second from left.

Continued photo: Mike Horyczun

I sat by the water and looked out on Long Island Sound. Although the Gathering of the Vibes dispersed a few weeks ago, the festival returns to the same Seaside Park location next summer. Concert organizers reached an agreement with the City officials that will keep the Vibes in Bridgeport for several summers to come.

If you're looking for a festival this Labor Day week-

end, check out the Rhythm & Roots Festival presenting a mix of blues and Zydeco sounds at Ninigret Park in Charlestown, R.I. The festival takes place tomorrow through Sunday and features Paul Geremia, Keb Mo, Marcia Ball, Robert Cray, David Bromberg, Dan Hicks, Steve Riley and many, many more. Ninigret Park is located just off U.S. 1 on Rhode Island's South

Shore. Festival hours are Friday from 5 p.m. to midnight, and Saturday and Sunday, noon to midnight. For more information, including performance schedules, visit www.rhythm-and-roots.com, or call 1-888-855-6940.

Got concert or music news? Send it to: Mike Horyczun, P.O. Box 2308, Stamford, CT 06906-0308.



Black Crowns