

## SHOW REVIEWS

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### Gathering of the Vibes, Bridgeport, CT, 7/29-8/1

Gathering of the Vibes was my last festival of the summer and I had seen a lot of fantastic shows this summer, so I was a little wary of seeing anything new. But, the 15th annual Vibes, held on the Long Island Sound in Bridgeport, Conn., was comfortingly familiar. With the cool offshore breeze blowing all weekend under cloudless skies, I couldn't help but be in a content mood.

As we rolled into the festival grounds, it was evident that last year's unfortunate circumstances resulted in an increased amount of security, complete with mounted police and bracelets that could be scanned.

On the opening day, we headed over to the Green Vibes Stage to check out New York City-based band Turbine. Turbine – who won the New Groove poll on jambands.com – put on a groovy set of Americana, full of harmonica and vocals that bring to mind (dare I say it?) Trey Anastasio.

Dark Star Orchestra headlined Thursday's acts. Though Dark Star has been playing more original setlists, Thursday's setlist was taken from a 1982 show in Santa Fe, featuring "Candyman," "Althea" and a spacey "Estimated Prophet > He's Gone."

Although I had said I would stick to the small stage, Friday's main stage lineup led me to do otherwise. Jackie Greene played a set that showed off his guitar ADD, switching between instruments within a song while playing favorites like "Gone Wanderin'" and "Scarlet Begonias," where he brought out Phil & Friends' drummer John Molo.

Steve Kimock's Crazy Engine featured his signature light, ambient and beautiful guitar playing. Though I think that Kimock's guitar is functioning in the role of a vocalist and the band doesn't need a singer, Crazy Engine played "Everything is Everything" with Chris Burger rapping over the instrumentals.

Sharon Jones threw down one of the best sets of the day, playing a lot of sing-alongs, including her fantastic funk version of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land."

But the set of the day has to go to Robert Randolph and the Family Band. Randolph's sacred steel kept the crowd dancing to both original numbers as well as a good number of covers, including "Papa Was A Rolling Stone" and teases of Lady Gaga's "Poker Face." Towards the end of the set, Randolph asked for an audience member to help out on guitar. After several guys proved they didn't have what it took, a 19-year-old took the stage and wowed Randolph and the audience, and he stuck around until the encore.

Dark Star's set on Thursday was pretty magical but Furthur, with two of the original members of the Dead did the group one better. Furthur had clearly recovered from its first night Nokia disaster. The audience chimed in on vocals for songs like "Ramble on Rose," "Friend of the Devil" and the band later encored with a complete "Terrapin Station Suite."

Saturday's highlights include Zach Deputy, a one-man band who woke everyone up with his reggae-infused tunes, and Umphrey's McGee, who went old school with "Hajimemashite" and a "Pay the Snucka>White Man's Moccasins, The Fuzz>Pay the Snucka" sandwich.

But the most impressive, surprising and bizarre sets of the night belonged to Primus. I, along with many others in attendance, had no idea what to expect from Les Claypool and the band. Primus changed the tone of the weekend from a Grateful Dead fest to a heavy metal freak show with Les stomping around and the audience moshing to the bass-heavy tunes. I had to escape the weirdness within the crowd and retreated to watch from afar, continually impressed. Primus was a welcome change from the slew of Dead-inspired bands.

Deep Banana Blackout took the late night slot and, though it wasn't a typical late night rager, the band played smooth, groovy funk songs and closed with one of the greatest covers of the day – Marvin Gaye's "Let's Get It On."

Sunday brought in a slew of new people who only bought day passes, significantly altering the vibe of the festival. Jimmy Cliff's high energy set showed off his original hits, as well as a couple covers like Cat Stevens' "Wild World" and Johnny Nash's "I Can See Clearly Now." Damien Marley and Nas continued on with the reggae vibe of Sunday's music, while also delving into hip hop and somewhere in between.

The festival ended with perfect weather and without any unpleasant hitches, an improvement from the previous year. The diversity of the musical acts this weekend held everyone's interests and closed out my festival season with good vibes.



*Photo by Julia Rickert*