



Familiar Faces Launch 2009 Gathering of the Vibes

Written by Relix Admin

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The 14th annual Gathering of the Vibes kicked off Thursday night at Bridgeport, CT's Seaside Park. The multi-day event was originally known as Deadhead Heaven-A Gathering of The Vibes and continues to place special emphasis on the music of the Grateful Dead. Thursday night's offering celebrated that spirit with marquee performances by Dark Star Orchestra and the Donna Jean Godchaux Band. The former group has played the Gathering of the Vibes four times since 2004, while Godchaux has been a Vibes staples since her first appearance at the festival in 2005. Her guitarist—Zen Tricksters frontman Jeff Mattson—is one of the few musicians to play the festival each year since its inception.

Dark Star Orchestra's headlining set was cut short due to inclement weather, though Godchaux was able to join the lauded Grateful Dead tribute act for a few songs. The evening's late night entertainment—the Pink Floyd cover band The Machine—continued on as planned, marking the first time Gathering of the Vibes has hosted late night music at its current location.

The sun peaked out early Friday morning, and the day's entertainment began at noon with Vibes veteran King for a Day. Friday's schedule welcomed back several classic Gathering of the Vibes performers, including moe., Strangefolk and Deep Banana Blackout. Strangefolk and moe. both appeared at the inaugural Gathering of the Vibes in 1996 and Deep Banana Blackout has been a staple since the festival's second year. Backstage before his set moe. guitarist Al Schnier emphasized the sense of community at that inaugural event, as a generation of players weaned on The Dead and thrust into the spotlight in wake of H.O.R.D.E. shared the stage for the first time. Likewise, Strangefolk continued its Vibes tradition of covering Grateful Dead songs by busting out "Candyman," while Deep Banana Blackout paid an emotional tribute to its past Vibes collaborator Merl Saunders and nodded to the 40th anniversary of Woodstock with a Santana jam.

In addition, Keller Williams made his fifth appearance at the festival, this time with Keith Moseley, Gibb Droll and Jeff Sipe. The quartet offered a cover-heavy set that referenced both Phish ("Birds of a Feather") and the Grateful Dead (a take on "Eyes of the World" featuring bonus vocals from Godchaux). The day also featured afternoon sets by New Groove Jammy winners Cornmeal and Spin Doctors singer Chris Barron on the eco-friendly Green Vibes Stage.

moe. returned to Gathering of the Vibes for the first time since 2000 to close the evening's mainstage festivities. But, after running through a few classics like "Not Coming Down," "Wormwood," "Stranger than Fiction," "St. Augustine," "Mexico" and "Hi & Lo," the group's set was cut short due to the threat of lightning. Fans were asked to return to their cars as an intense lighting storm hit the festival grounds, but the music resumed shortly after 1 AM in time for Lettuce's late night set.

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