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Spectacular sounds of Memphis Soul coming to Calf Pasture

By Mike Horyczun Published 12:00 am, Thursday, July 28, 2016



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Audiences will be grooving to those sounds with Memphis Soul Spectacular performs at Calf Pasture Beach in East Norwalk, on Sunday, July 31, from 5-7 p.m. (no rain date). The outdoor concert is sponsored by Norwalks Third Taxing District.

Memphis Soul Spectacular is a seven-piece band specifically designed to pay tribute to the Southern Soul sounds of the 1960s.

"We aim for a sound that is close to [Otis Redding](#), [James Carr](#), [Otis Clay](#), [Al Green](#)," said lead vocalist and founder of the band, [Rob Jockel](#), "funky, cool and in the groove."

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Jockel explained why the music Memphis Soul Spectacular plays is so important to today's audiences.

"This is the birth of the music that rocked the planet and still does," he said. "It's the roots of rock and roll. This sound started it all. New bands like Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, who were born with this music on their CD players or turntables, are touring nationally writing soul music. There would be no **Rolling Stones**, Allman Brothers and dozens more without dipping into a batch of good Southern Soul."

A typical set list for the band includes "B-side and some A-side hits from the '60s and '70s," said Jockel, "like 'Take Me to the River,' 'Try a Little Tenderness,' 'Some Kind of Wonderful,' 'Love And Happiness,' 'I've Got Dreams to Remember,' 'I Can't Stand the Rain,' 'Funky Broadway,' and lots more. Elvis steps up the mic once or twice, as well. He lived in Memphis and died there, too."

The lead singer explained how Memphis Soul Spectacular's instrumentation fits its music: "The bass and drums hold down the fort," he said. "That is the base we build on. The piano fills in all those important chords with fills that give the music flavor, and the guitar is like a bee sting. And every band needs an amazing guitar player that makes people take notice. The horns give it that punch and kick that makes the song exciting. The vocals tell the story."

Memphis Soul Spectacular has been together for nearly a decade, and Jockel notes that the group's roots are solid. "I started the group, but of course the sum of its parts make the band, and that is what makes our bond strong. We are only strong as a unit."

The vocalist, who was an original member of Eight to the Bar, as was bassist **John Brown**, has been performing since his early 'teens. "In seventh-grade I met my friends, close to this day, who turned me onto the blues, soul, Southern Soul, rock and roll, where it came from and started and its influences. I was hooked, and I have never let go."

Jockel has also been on the other side of the entertainment business for more than three decades. He runs Cutting Edge Entertainment and Event Planning, a live entertainment company in Canton that produces concerts and events, has an interactive games department, and represents a variety of artists, including Memphis Soul Spectacular. He said the band stays busy most of the year.

"We are on the road spring, summer and fall. In the winter, I am working with my business and go on trips to meet buyers. We would love to play as much as possible."

Sunday's concert takes place in the Showmobile at Calf Pasture Beach, located at 99 Calf Pasture Beach Road, in East Norwalk. The weekly shows, which continue through August, have become popular events.

"Residents of East Norwalk and from all over Norwalk come to these shows on a regular basis," said **Ron Scofield**, the Third Taxing District's Assistant General Manager, who books the bands for the series.

"We average about 300 people, and we get bigger crowds too, depending on the quality of the groups themselves." Series opener, **Tim Currie's** Motown Band drew "about 850, the most we ever had," he said. Sunday's headliner Memphis Soul Spectacular has performed at the East Norwalk series several times before. "It's an exciting performance," said Scofield. "Rob Jockel is a real showman to me and really puts himself into this."

The outdoor concert is free but has an entrance fee for those without a Norwalk beach pass of \$30 per car until 5 p.m., \$10 after 5 p.m. For cancellation information, call 203-854-7938.

In other concerts at Calf Pasture Beach, a Rod Stewart **Tribute Band** is there at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 3 (rain date, Aug. 4), in a show sponsored by **First County Bank**, and **Bruce James** plays contemporary covers at 7 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 5, in the Tiki Lounge at Calfé Mu. There's a parking fee to the beach for those without a Norwalk beach pass.

Norwalk's Mathews Park at 295 West Ave. features Fuzzbone playing classic rock dance music at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 4, in a show sponsored by Bankwell. And Freeze Park, on the corner of Wall and Main Street in Norwalk, hosts its weekly "Open Mike Night" from

7-9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 2. For cancellation info on these shows, call 203-854-7938.

Drummer John Cutrone brings in Hiroshi Yamazaki on piano and **Henry Lugo** on bass to The Sono Seaport Seafood Restaurant's jazz jam series at 100 Water St. in South Norwalk, on Sunday, July 31, from 3-5 p.m. Call 203-854-9483.

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