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DAYTON FUNK FESTIVAL

Levitt shines spotlight Sunday, 4



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ATTRACTIONS

Get in the groove at Dayton Funk Festival this weekend

Current acts celebrate Dayton's musical legacy Sunday at Levitt Pavilion.

By Don Thrasher
Contributing writer

The Funk Music Capital of the World. Funk City U.S.A. The Land of Funk.

No matter what music-related moniker you want to attach to Dayton, there's no denying the Miami Valley has generated an extraordinary number of classic acts, from the Ohio Players and Zapp to Heatwave and Lakeside.

The City of Dayton's Department of Recreation is celebrating Dayton's funk heritage with the Dayton Funk Festival at Levitt Pavilion in downtown Dayton on Sunday, Aug. 14. The lineup includes current local and regional acts like Big Gil & the Funky All Stars, LYD and the Larry Humphrey Band.

"We want people to know we're the capital of funk music," said Department of Recreation program coordinator Nick Terbay. "We don't want to shy away from it. We'd rather lean into it and remind everyone of Dayton's place in the origins of funk music. We definitely have a rich tradition here when it comes to the genre of funk music. New genres aren't just popping up every day. To be able to do something like that, to have that synergy and be able to get that off the ground, is really special. The Funk Festival adds a little bit of history to our roster, a little bit of tradition Dayton is known for in the funk music genre."

This year marks only the third year of the Funk Festival. In 2019, the event joined



The Dayton Funk Festival returns Sunday, Aug. 14, at Levitt Pavilion in downtown Dayton. Several funk music acts will take the stage, including Big Gil & the Funky All Stars, Thump Daddy Funk Band and the Larry Humphrey Band.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS/DAVID A. MOODIE



Patrons join forces to dance to the grooves of last year's Dayton Funk Festival. The event returns Sunday, Aug. 14, at Levitt Pavilion in downtown Dayton.

the roster of Department of Recreation-sponsored festivals for reggae, jazz and blues. The festival was can-

celed in 2020 due to coronavirus concerns but returned last year.

"We pride ourselves on



Marty and Yolanda Drake of LYD (pictured) will be among the acts on the bill for the Dayton Funk Festival at Levitt Pavilion in Dayton on Sunday, Aug. 14.

being the capital of funk music, so this festival was a perfect fit," Terbay said. "Adding that genre to the

summer music series was an easy decision for us to make, and it has been a great success. The community has

HOW TO GO

What: Dayton Funk Festival with the Next Phaze, Big Gil & the Funky All Stars, Thump Daddy Funk Band, LYD and the Larry Humphrey Band

Where: Levitt Pavilion, 134 S. Main St., Dayton

When: 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 14

Cost: Free

More info: 937-333-8400 or www.downtowndayton.org

been behind us. People come out and enjoy themselves, so it's been a lot of fun."

The audience

Arthur "Hakim" Stokes of Taje Music Entertainment, talent booker for the Department of Recreation-sponsored festivals, echoes Terbay's sentiments. The longtime vocalist with the Motown Sounds of Touch has a direct link to Dayton's funk history. He was a founding member of funk band Platypus, which was signed to Casablanca Records in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

"Dayton is the funk music capital of the world," Stokes said. "The Funk Fest has been received really well from the beginning. Not to make the other festivals out to be any less fun or have less talented people, but the funk and reggae festivals always seem to have a very good turnout. We're expecting a good crowd this year, too. Coming out of the pandemic, people are ready to get out and have somewhere to go and have something to do."

According to Terbay, the turnout has exceeded expect-

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tations for a newer addition to the festival roster.

“Our blues and jazz festivals don’t normally have the attendance of the reggae festival,” Terbay said. “As soon as we started the Funk Festival, people were coming out. The attendance numbers we were looking for were there. It was definitely embraced by the community immediately. When people in Dayton hear about funk festivals and funk music, they’re coming out. Last year was our first year back with this festival, and the numbers were there. We were afraid people would be hesitant to come out, but we haven’t seen that. For our festivals, they have been coming out in droves. It’s kind of like the good old days before COVID.”

The talent

The Next Phaze kicks off the festival with a 1:15 p.m. set, followed by Big Gil & the Funky All Stars at 3 p.m. Music continues until 9 p.m. with performances by Thump Daddy Funk Band, LYD and festival closer the Larry Humphrey Band.

“We have a good lineup,” Stokes said. “The groups are good and entertaining for the people. Larry Humphrey has been around a long time. He’s played with some of the big boys in the industry. He plays bass and he does an excellent job. He’ll close it out, and I’m sure he’ll give them a lot of good funk to remember. It’s going to be a great day.”

Gil Frazier, who has been playing blues for years, recently expanded his sound to include more funk and R&B. The trombone-playing frontman of Big Gil & the Funky All Stars brings his ever-expanding band to Levitt Pavilion on Sunday.

“I’ve never done the Funk Festival, but I did the Blues



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The Department of Recreation presents the Dayton Funk Festival at Levitt Pavilion in Dayton on Sunday, Aug. 14, featuring current local and regional acts like Big Gil & the Funky All Stars, LYD and the Larry Humphrey Band.

Festival last year,” Frazier said. “I’m looking forward to doing the Funk Festival this year because that day

going to be a very powerful funk music event that nobody should miss.”

The venue

Except for a few years at RiverScape, Dayton’s free summer genre-themed festivals were always held at Dave Hall Plaza, now the site of Levitt Pavilion. It’s fitting the events have returned to the original location near the heart of downtown.

“For the City of Dayton and the Rec Department to be able to come back and do the festivals at Levitt Pavilion is like a homecoming for us,” Terbay said. “The pavilion has all the amenities you need to host a good concert during the summer. The stage is nice, and they have an updated sound system, so it sounds wonderful. It’s a nice green space in the middle of a metropolitan area. It’s beautiful with all the buildings around. It works almost like an amphitheater with the sounds bouncing off those buildings. It’s perfect. It really is.”

The Department of Recreation festivals aren’t part of the Levitt Pavilion’s official concert season, but the venue is the perfect partner for these free hometown events.

“I like the Levitt,” Stokes said. “It’s a nice facility, and they do a nice job of keeping it up and taking care of it. (Executive Director) Lisa Wagner is doing a wonderful job. I say kudos to her because the Levitt brings in a lot of great music each year. With the Levitt and RiverScape, the Dayton area is getting it done. These free concerts are great because taking your family to a big concert now is about as bad as going to a pro basketball or football game. Prices are going up and gas is so expensive, so we’re fortunate to have these free concerts.”

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Nick Terbay
Department of Recreation program coordinator

brings such a diversity of people together. The lineup is great and (feature) hometown bands, so I think people are going to have an awesome time.”

David Matthews, percussionist for the Funky All Stars, expanded on Frazier’s comments.

“This is the land of funk,

so the groups we have for this particular festival are all good,” Matthews said. “Each one of them is going to try to outdo the other ones just because that’s what we do as performers. Dayton is a very competitive city when it comes to music. Because each group is going to try to outdo the next group, it’s