

# Blues City Journal

HARD ROCK HOTEL & CASINO'S

# SATURDAY IN THE PARK 2026



Grammy-nominated blues rock artist Bonamassa will headline the 36th Saturday in the Park festival on July 4.



Kansas City native Tech N9ne will headline Saturday in the Park's Abe Stage on July 4.



# Your guide

## TO SIOUXLAND'S PREMIER

# MUSIC FESTIVAL

BY EARL HORLYK

**W**ere our founding fathers fortuitous enough in making the 250th birthday of United States fall on the same day as the 36th annual Saturday in the Park?

Um ... probably not.

Still, it wouldn't surprise us if ol' Ben Franklin was really a closet blues fan boy, playing air guitar while SITP headliner Joe Bonamassa strummed a real one in Grandview Park's historic Bandshell.

What about Alexander Hamilton? Yeah, we can picture him as being a Tech N9ne aficionado, doing some serious moshing by the Abe Stage, during a set that included "I'm a Playa," "Midwest Choppers" and "Sickology 101."

While the entire nation celebrates America's semi-quincentennial on July 4, SITP attendees will have another reason to party like it's 1776.

After all, who wouldn't be hooting and hollering over a Main Stage lineup that included the critically acclaimed Marcus King Band or an up-and-comer like Evan Honer?

Similarly, the Abe Stage will include everybody from the fast-rhyming Tech N9ne to the surprisingly lively 2Dead Boyz to Foxpelt, a three-piece band playing everything from emo to alternative rock to punk.

SITP cofounder Dave Bernstein said this year's acts, with the aforementioned Bonamassa at the headliner, is a throwback to the festival's bluesier roots.

Indeed, Bernstein and his friend, Adam Feiges, started Saturday in the Park as a blues festival in 1991.

However, we think this year's array of performers is as eclectic as any other year.

Don't believe us? Then ask any of the more than 25,000 people who flock to SITP each year.

Obviously, the major draw is the music. Artists as diverse as Jason Isbell, Aretha Franklin and Bleachers have headlined Sioux



TIM HYNDS PHOTOS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

**Above:** Fans watch as fireworks end the 2025 Saturday in the Park festival. **Left:** Teddy Swims performs on the main stage during the 2025 Saturday in the Park music festival in Sioux City's Grandview Park.

City's premier summer music festival in the past.

But wait, there's more than music. SITP is also home to the Kids Zone, Arts Alley and one fantastic food vendor after another.

OK, let's say you don't like music, art or food. SITP is still a terrific place to people-watch.

Austin, Texas is famous for its "Keep Austin Weird" advertising campaign. So is the equally weird community of Portland, Oregon.

Will Sioux City give Austin or Portland a run for their money, weirdness-wise, on July 4?

Well, we wouldn't be surprised if we saw some shirtless dudes in powdered wigs or, maybe, a Betsy Ross wannabe with tattoos as colorful as the Stars & Stripes.

You'll get a sneak peek of the weird and wonderful in this supersized edition of the Blues City Journal.

In this issue, we'll profile many of this year's SITP performers, as well as everything you'll experience at this year's festival.

Wait, we forgot to mention there is going to be a drone show right before the fireworks go off. That's pretty awesome, right?

Now that you know what's inside this year's explosive Blues City Journal, we'll be off to our next assignment.

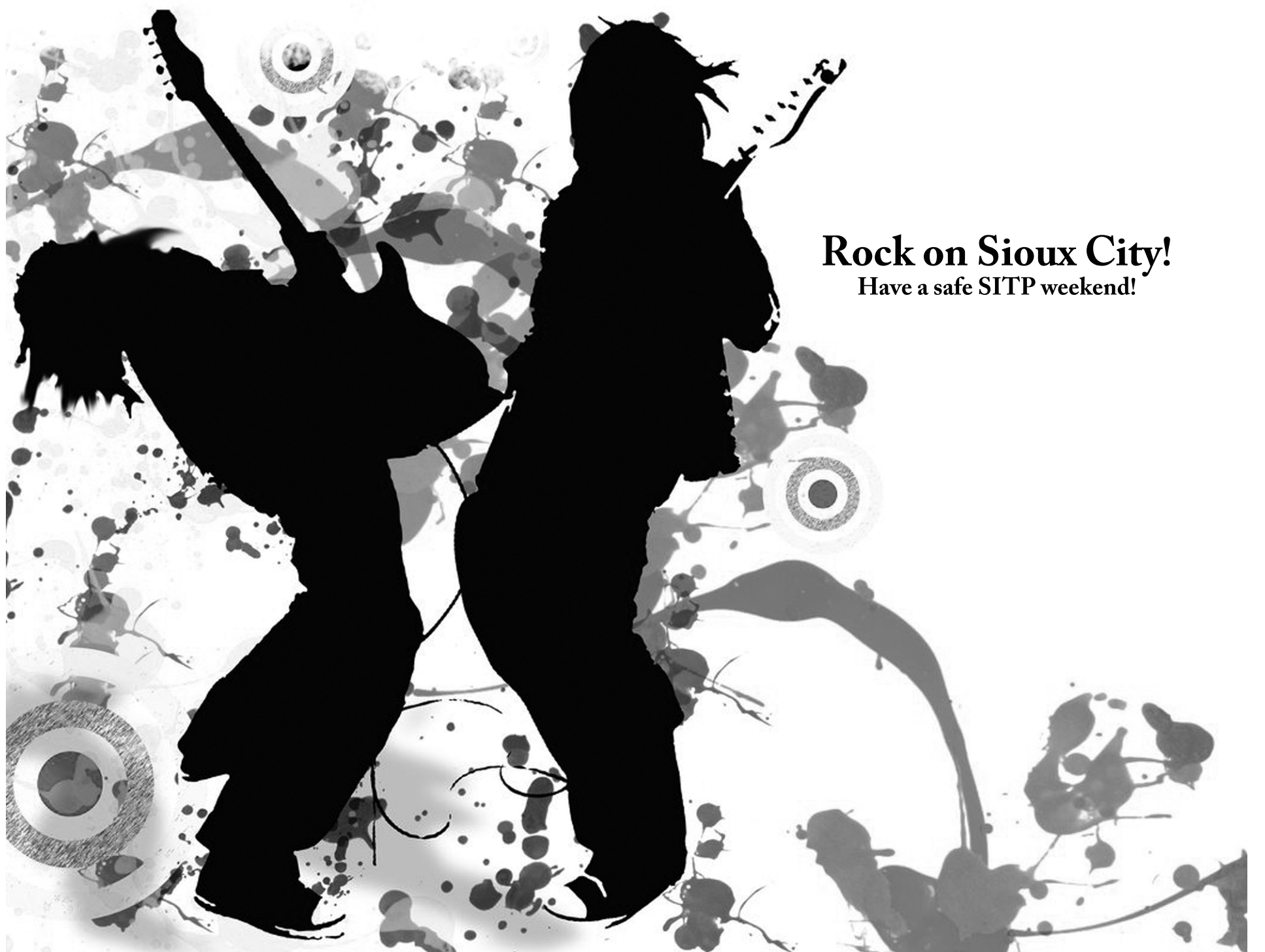
You wouldn't happen to know where we could get a cheap powdered wig, now would you?



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Have a safe SITP weekend!

# A star-spangly lineup OF TOP PERFORMERS

BY EARL HORLYK

**S**aturday in the Park's Main Stage lineup will be appropriately patriotic with acts featuring musical genres that were created in America.

As he has for the past several years, Phil Claeys (aka River-Cade's Kingdom of Riverssance's "Fallen Friar Phil") will start off the day by singing the National Anthem on the Grandview Park Bandshell at noon July 4.

After Friar Phil's howling, they'll bring out the big dogs ... or more precisely, MoonDogz.

A couple of familiar faces will follow in short order.

Bluesman Kris Lager has played at various Sioux City venues over the



Singer-songwriter Evan Honer will perform on the Main Stage at the Saturday in the Park festival on July 4.

USA TODAY  
NETWORK

past 20 years or so, with or without the Kris Lager Band. At SITP, he is slated to play a solo set.

Following Lager will be Joanna Connor, a powerhouse blues singer from the Windy City of Chicago. If you're attending the 7 p.m. July 3's Downtown Live concert at Fourth & Virginia Streets, you'll already know Connor as the show's headliner. She'll be doing double-duty the next day at Saturday in the Park.

After that, the New Orleans'-based Bon Bon Vivant — featuring front-woman Abigail Cosio and saxophonist/vocalist Jeremy Kelley — will create "a sound that



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Phil Claeys and his grandsons, Silas, left, and Sully, sing the National Anthem at the Grandview Park bandshell to kick off the 2025 Saturday in the Park festival.

feels like a street parade, a late-night cabaret, and a rock show all rolled into one."

With its mix of Americana and Bourbon Street party music, this is a band that will make you prouder than a catfish swimming in the Mississippi River.

Rising new artist Evan Honer will then blend acoustic folk and indie alternative pop in a set that will likely include his cover

## Main Stage Players

**NOON:** National Anthem  
with Phil Claeys

**12:05 p.m.** MoonDogz

**12:45 p.m.** Kris Lager

**2:00 p.m.** Joanna Connor

**3:15 p.m.** Bon Bon Vivant

**4:45 p.m.** Evan Honer

**6:45 p.m.** Marcus King Band

**8:50 p.m.** Joe Bonamassa

of Tyler Childer's "Jersey Giant."

Honer credited his dad for introducing him to the music of James Taylor, Jim Croce and the Eagles.

The critically acclaimed Marcus King Band will follow with some "soul-influenced psychedelic Southern rock."

Please see **LINEUP**, Page 57

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# America 250 parade on riverfront to kick off SITP

BY EARL HORLYK

SIOUX CITY — In honor of America's 250th anniversary, Sioux City's riverfront will host an Independence Day Parade, beginning at 6 p.m. July 3.

The parade, which will start at the Anderson Dance Pavilion and end at the Chris Larsen Yoga Lawn, will serve as an opening act for the 36th annual Saturday in the Park, which begins at noon July 4 at Grandview Park.

The America 250 parade is a successor to the traditional Mardi Gras-themed

Big parade, which also proceeded Saturday in the Park. Like the Mardi Gras parade, entrants this year will toss tens of thousands of beads into the crowds lining the streets.

The parade is one of a number of special events taking place in Sioux City to celebrate America's 250th birthday. For instance, Chicago powerhouse blues singer Joanne Connor is slated to perform a 7 p.m. July 3rd concert at Fourth & Virginia Streets as part of the Downtown Live summer outdoor concert series.



A crowd gathers in Chris Larsen Park for the Big Parade in this 1998 file photo. The America 250 parade, a successor to the Big Parade, will take place on the riverfront starting at 6 p.m. on July 3.

JIM LEE, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL, FILE



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## NOTES FROM THE PRODUCER

June 10, 2026... the 11th hour of the deadline for the Blues City Journal. This BCJ will be different; our deadline is much earlier than ever because there is no more Weekender. As a result, we will be inserted in the Sioux City Journal, and we greatly appreciate that honor.

With the continual “evolution” of local news, and local print news, we feel lucky we are still here alive and able to provide a preview of the 2026 Saturday in the Park Festival! Thank you to Dave, Earl, Tracy, and everyone at the SCJ. We know things get tighter and tighter, yet you still crank out the news every day and have room to produce the BCJ on top of it.



DAVE  
BERNSTEIN

This year’s fest will be awesome! We’ve wanted to have Joe Bonamassa play for many years, and this is the year. Joe is amazing and, among other things, has a cool connection to Tommy Bolin, who I believe played the bandshell once way before SITP. Earl interviewed Joe and wrote a great story about it in this publication.

This year marks the 250th anniversary of our country, and regardless of your political perspective, I think we all can agree we live in a country that welcomes free speech and freedom of expression, making presenting events like Saturday in the Park easy. I’m sure there are countries where we would have to be very concerned about content and the like, not to mention limitations on attendance size. Not in the USA. And better yet, everyone is free to attend... and for free. No limitations exist — not the color of your skin, your religious or political beliefs, nor anything else. Just show up and enjoy the show; you are welcome here, no matter who you are!

SITP isn’t easy. It takes a huge crew to put it on, and most are loyal volunteers. Without our committee first, and our sponsors, there would be no SITP. Period. One of our most loyal and long-term volunteers, second only to my own tenure on SITP, was Steve Kohl. Steve passed away at the end of last year. He worked on the fest for 30+ years in a multitude of roles. Steve was quirky and endearing, and we loved him, and we all greatly miss him. I’m convinced

that few people were happier than Steve during dinner backstage or while having a burger in the volunteer tent. He did love to eat, and he preferred the Sioux City Symphony meetings, with their lavish meals, to ours. We will miss you, Steve. This one’s for you, buddy.

This year I also lost a friend of our promoting endeavors, Mike Allard. Mike attended almost all of the shows we (with Adam) presented — all but one SITP, I believe — and many paid shows, like the bus road trips we promoted to see the Allman Brothers in Minnesota and in Lincoln, among many, many others. Mike was almost always with his right-hand man, George Norton. When he wasn’t, and I ran into him or spoke with him, he would say, “Allard, party of one.” But then Mike got married, and it became “party of two.” I had lunch with Mike and George a few months ago after I heard Mike was sick. His situation was pretty dire. We discussed shows, and because I knew we were close to booking Joe, I hinted around it, knowing he would love that. Sadly, I didn’t realize Mike had decided to stop treatment, and unfortunately, he passed away a week or so later. This one’s for Mike and George as well. There were no more loyal fans of the live music we have presented than those dudes!

So here we are: 2026, USA 250, SITP 36. It’s been a long run, but a good run. I turned 60 and will be inducted into the Iowa Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame this summer, along with Adam. Weird concept. Robert Plant will play the Orpheum in October, and Joe Bonamassa, the Marcus King Band, Evan Honer, Tech N9ne, and a ton of other great musicians will play the bandshell on July 4. There will be a drone show at the end of the night. Our city and community supports this free event with its time and resources, and amazing volunteers gather to put this on. All of this is pretty cool, and I feel pretty fortunate to be here with everyone, enjoying an amazing day in Grandview Park.

Time to wrap this ramble up and send it to AI to spell and grammar check (cue the SITP haters now...). Have a great time out there, be kind to one another and buy a random stranger a beer or a funnel cake or something... just to mess with them. It’s going to be a fun year, and we thank you for supporting us! — db

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Blues singer-musician Joe Bonamassa will headline the 2026 Saturday in the Park festival on July 4.

INVISION

# Blues legend TO HEADLINE SITP

Joe Bonamassa to bring along the Tommy Bolin guitar that may be cursed

BY EARL HORLYK

**M**usician Joe Bonamassa has a prized 1960 Les Paul guitar in his 750+ collection of vintage guitar collection.

The guitar in question was 1) once owned by Sioux City native Tommy Bolin (The James Gang, Zephyr, Deep Purple) and 2) might possibly be cursed.

By the way, Bonamassa said he will be

bringing it with him when he plays Saturday in the Park on July 4.

Let's start this story back on April 17, 2014, which was when Bonamassa last played a show in Sioux City — at the Orpheum Theatre.

"I met Tommy's younger brother Johnnie Bolin backstage at the Orpheum that night," Bonamassa said. "I was a big fan of Tommy and knew he usually played a

Fender Stratocaster. But I remember seeing Tommy playing a Les Paul on occasion in photos when he was with Deep Purple."

"I'm a Les Paul guitar collector and asked Johnnie whatever happened to that guitar of Tommy's," Bonamassa said, continuing with this circular tale of this storied instrument. "Johnnie said that the last he heard, it was in the possession of a collector from a small town in Utah."



PROVIDED

Grammy-nominated blues rock artist Joe Bonamassa will headline the 36th Saturday in the Park festival at the Grandview Park Bandshell on July 4.

## DETAILS

**WHAT:** Joe Bonamassa

**WHEN:** 8:50 p.m. July 4

**WHERE:** Saturday in the Park's Main Stage

OK, we'll now advance the story to 2019 when the Utah collector connected with Bonamassa, asking him if he wanted to purchase Tommy Bolin's guitar.

Shortly before Bonamassa gained possession of the guitar, his California home went up in flames.

After receiving Bolin's Les Paul, Bonamassa played a gig in Las Vegas with the rock band Journey. This particular version of the classic band broke up in a nasty dispute while Bonamassa was with them.

By the way, did we mention that the Utah collector who sold Bonamassa the guitar was killed in a car crash a short time later?

Also, don't forget that Tommy Bolin, himself, died of an accidental drug overdose at the age of 25 in Miami on Dec. 4, 1976, after serving as the opening act for Jeff Beck.

Now let's return to the present.

"I'll bring Tommy Bolin's Les Paul to Sioux City and play it even though the guitar might be cursed," Bonamassa said in a

surprisingly casual manner during a phone interview.

Which is, admittedly, a strange way to begin a story Bonamassa as the headliner for the 36th annual Saturday in the Park.

But Bonamassa, a 49-year-old New Hartford, New York native, seems like he is willing to risk life and limb for a good show.

After all, he was a guy who was willing to open for the legendary B.B. King as a 12-year-old.

Before he turned 18, Bonamassa was in a band called Bloodline with the sons of Miles Davis, Robby Krieger and Berry Oakley.

We guess this is a man who doesn't intimidate very easily and that has served his career quite well.

Working with some of the biggest names in the business, Bonamassa has had a record 29 No. 1 albums in the Billboard Blues Music chart.

Not only is he a well-respected, Grammy Award-nominated rock blues guitarist, singer and songwriter, Bonamassa is also the man behind the Keeping the Blues Alive Foundation, which promotes and supports the talents of other blues musicians.

If that's not enough, Bonamassa is known for putting on a high-energy show.

"I think people are really going to enjoy my set at Saturday in the Park," he said. "I'm really looking forward to it."

Well, we have our money on Bonamassa over any silly curse.



Joe Bonamassa performs at the Orpheum Theatre on April 17, 2104.

JIM LEE, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL



PROVIDED

Musician Joe Bonamassa owns a 1960 Les Paul guitar that was once owned by Sioux City native Tommy Bolin, above.

# “

**I'll bring Tommy Bolin's Les Paul to Sioux City and play it even though the guitar might be cursed.”**

Joe Bonamassa



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# Together We Sweeten Life





# Gypsy jazz

## WITH A SIDE OF SASS

BY EARL HORLYK

**B**on Vivant is a French term for a person who enjoys the finer things while still celebrating life in all its glory and absurdity.

If that's the case, Jeremy Kelley and Abigail Cosio, the husband-and-wife duo behind Bon Bon Vivant, the good life must mean double the bon bon.

"Me and Abby make a good team," Kelley, saxophonist for the dynamic, five-person Gypsy Jazz band out of New Orleans, explained. "I'm on one floor of our house making arrangements and scheduling gigs while Abby's writing beautiful songs up in the bedroom."

It's true that Cosio, the group's frontwoman, lead singer and chief songwriter, can weave a wicked tune like no one else.

But it is her throaty, expressive vocals that take the band to the next level.

"I say we are what happens when cabaret meets indie music meets dance music," Cosio said.

Which means it will be one hellava ride when Bon Bon Vivant plays Saturday in the Park's mainstage on July 4.

After all, a live performance is more than just music. It's storytelling that sends an audience into a strange new world, both intimate and theatrical, as well as love, both romantic and a bit twisted.

This is fitting for Kelley and Cosio, since they've made New Orleans their adopted

hometown.

"There is something so very enticing about a city that can be hopeful and mysterious and messy all at once," Cosio said.

Plus the "Big Easy" was also the birthplace of pretty much all American music.

Kelley said this is something that Cosio plays with all the time.

"We've started playing the same songs two different ways," he explained. "The first way will be sparse and intimate, like Abby would write in our bedroom at home."

The second way would be to add Bon Bon Vivant's very impressive horn section.

"I think audiences get a kick out of that," Kelley noted. "The lyrics might be melancholy, but the horns make you want to dance."

It is those conflicting emotions that Cosio enjoys the most.

"That's why I love playing intimate clubs so much," she said. "You can take the audience on a musical journey. There might be a few twists and turns along the way. Yet the trip will be more than worth the effort."

Sometimes, such moments are lost when performing at a music festival.

"At a club, you might be a few feet away from people," Cosio said. "At an outdoor festival, you may not even be able to see the front row because it is so far away."

During festival shows, bigger is always better.

"You become bigger and the music be-



Bon Bon Vivant singer-songwriter Abigail Cosio likes to take audiences to a place where love is passionate, messy and romantic.

PROVIDED



PROVIDED

Bon Bon Vivant's Abigail Cosio and Jeremy Kelley have a great relationship both on and off stage. Abigail writes all of the music while her husband manages both the band and the horn section.



JESS KEARNEY

According to frontwoman Abigail Cosio, Bon Bon Vivant is what happens when cabaret meets indie meets dance music.

comes bigger because the stage is so much bigger," Cosio said. "It is then that you realize you have a job to do."

Which is fine for both Kelley and Cosio who both relish the opportunity to be unapologetically rowdy.

"Both of us are foodies, and we love to try new foods," Cosio said.

However, don't be surprised if Kelley makes a side trip before the band reaches Sioux City.

"We didn't know this until recently, but

her grandfather and my grandfather were both from Council Bluffs," he said. "I might see if I have any relatives down there."

That would be the ultimate contradiction. A couple who met in California before they decided to embrace the mysterious ethos of the Crescent City may also have ties to the Heartland of America?

But it's like what Cosio said.

There might be a few twists and turns along the way during a musical journey. Yet the trip will be more than worth the effort!"



opensummer

# Know Before You Go

## 2026 Legal Stuff

1. NO GUNS, NO FIREWORKS, NO WEAPONS OR FIREARMS ALLOWED (EVEN WITH A LICENSE TO CARRY OR A CONCEAL CARRY PERMIT).

A City of Sioux City ordinance prohibits possession both inside city parks, and we prohibit them at this festival event.

2. No PETS except as needed for Disability purposes WITH CREDENTIALS, such as a doctor's letter. We still recommend that you leave such pets at home anyway if at all possible. The large crowds and heat that we frequently have at the festival are not good for your pet, who might suffer from heat stress or even get stepped on at the festival (That's not mentioning the stuff your pet may leave behind for others to sit on). If you leave your TV set tuned to Animal Planet and plenty of animal beverages around, your pets should do fine on their own. Of course, with any adult doggie beverages, make sure that your dog is at least 3 years old (21 in dog years).

3. No COOLERS except for health needs such as diabetic conditions. All coolers and containers subject to search and all beverages and outside food may be confiscated. Coolers simply take up too much valuable sitting space at Saturday in the Park, not to mention the negative impact it has on beverage and food sales that are needed to help make the event happen for free each year. Plus, we often end up picking up stray coolers Sunday morning. Please leave your own beverages at home.

4. SATURDAY IN THE PARK IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS OR DAMAGED PROPERTY OF ANY KIND

You should turn any lost people and lost personal possessions in at the Information Booth. Although we're told the Info Booth has a person who is able to figure out the owner's phone number for practically any cell phone, we cannot guarantee your lost phone (or any other item) will be returned to you. We can only guarantee that we might find one and use it to call or text your girlfriend or boyfriend.

5. ALL BAGS SUBJECT TO SEARCH

5A. CLEAR BAGS REQUESTED

6. NO SMOKING IN DESIGNATED AREAS - especially in the seating areas close to the Bandshell. If we see any smoke coming from you, we will assume that you are on fire and promptly put you out!

7. PARENTS: PLEASE KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR CHILDREN AS LOST CHILDREN ARE GENERALLY VERY SCARED AT AN EVENT LIKE SITP.

Please keep track of your kids. If for some reason you lose track of them, contact the Review & Information Booth for "Lost People".

8. PLEASE STAY OUT OF THE ROSES and FOUNTAIN IN THE ROSE GARDEN.

The roses definitely bite!

9. USE THAT BLANKET OR LOOSE IT  
SITP reserves the right to remove any unused blankets from the park. In an effort to make the Saturday in the Park festival a fantastic experience for as many people as we possibly can, this year we ask you to once again abide by our policy regarding tents, umbrellas and blankets/tarps.

The policy is:

- No tents or awnings
- No shade umbrellas larger than a standard rain or golf umbrella
- No unoccupied or under-occupied super-sized blankets or tarps reserving space for later visitors

Steve Kohl, a longtime Saturday in the Park board member who passed away in 2025, authored the festival's annual "do's and don'ts" list.

We intend to gather any rule-breaking items and store them for you at the Saturday in the Park Information Booth. They can be picked up when you head home for the night. Saturday in the Park reserves the right to take and store your items and possibly lose them. Saturday in the Park also reserves the right to use discretion in the removal of items that diminish other festival guests' enjoyment of the event.

10. NO OUTSIDE FOOD OR MERCHANDISE VENDORS ARE ALLOWED AT THE FESTIVAL PER CITY ORDINANCE

11. NO SOLICITING, ADVERTISING, OR DISTRIBUTION OF FLYERS, BUSINESS CARDS, ETC. OF ANY KIND ARE ALLOWED WITHOUT PERMISSION. THE FESTIVAL RENTS THE PARK FROM THE CITY FOR THE DAY AND HAS THE RIGHT TO PROHIBIT THIS ACTIVITY. FREE SPEECH OF COURSE IS ALLOWED AND ENCOURAGED BUT NO SOLICITING OR DISTRIBUTION OR SETTING UP OF BOOTHS ETC WITHOUT PERMISSION

12. Must be 21 to purchase beer tickets and consume beer.

Thanks for understanding,  
Steve Kohl (SITP Legal Eagle, 1991-2025) and Dave Bernstein

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# Arts Alley

## AT SATURDAY IN THE PARK

### **Bio Chi Institute/Mind & Body Connection – Sioux City**

Bio-Chi Institute of Massage Therapy will be offering chair massages again this year. Looking for something a little deeper? Get Ashiatsu Massage, where therapists from Mind and Body connection usebars to apply pressure with their feet!

### **Mystic Sales – Schaumburg, Ill.**

We are excited to return to Saturday in the Park Music Festival! Come check us out at the Arts Alley! Mystic Treasures is a family-owned small business, and we are happy to share treasures from South America and other parts of the world. Come purchase a unique item!

### **Mis Amores – Sioux City**

If you're walking through this vendor event looking for something unique, colorful, and full of heart, this is your sign to stop by. Specializing in handcrafted Mexican pottery, candles, wax melts, care freshies, room sprays and sublimated goodies, this small business brings culture and cozy together in the sweetest way. Come for the scents, stay for the pottery, and leave with something that feels special.

### **Christy's Crystals – Mankato, Minn.**

Are you ready for a magical experience? We have a huge variety of crystals, herbs, incense, and so much more. Stop by and rub some rocks!

### **Cosmic Dyes – Linwood, Kan.**

Hand- Dyed Clothing for Children and Adults.

### **Hello Madame – Sioux City**

ALL of my stuff comes from Africa and is handmade. Natural beautiful stuff.

### **Live Laugh and Shop – Sioux Center, Iowa**

Live, Laugh and Shop is a unique booth. We sell hard-to-find items with original, amazing designs.

### **The Necklace Guys – Council Bluffs, Iowa**

We love SITP. Check out our assortment of anklets, necklaces and bracelets. We have something for everyone.

### **Jen's Custom Creations – Sioux City**

Jen's Custom Creations specializes in hand-made, unique, one-of-a-kind little pieces of art that moonlight as jewelry. Whatever your style, you are sure to find something to help elevate your fashion!

### **Sidekick Caricatures – Correctionville, Iowa**

Stop by and have a caricature done by Kim. Lots of fun to do or just to watch! With experience in caricature & airbrush since 1993, Kim will give you a funny likeness that can be enjoyed for years to come!

### **Jewelry Junkies & More – Sioux City**

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# Who's on THE ABE?

From Rock to crunchy guitar licks, Abe Stage features alternative sounds

BY EARL HORLYK

**W**e cannot tell a lie. This year's Saturday in the Park has something for everybody's musical tastes.

From a Kansas City-based rapper who likes to keep things "choppy" to an offshoot of a critically acclaimed psychedelic rap group to a band made of college instructors who created a new genre of music called "Prof Rock," the vibe around the Abe Stage promises to be stellar.

Wait, do you need to bring your stovetop hat? Nah, just a pair of dancing shoes because you'll be hearing tunes that will make you want to move.

## FOXPELT

Foxpelt is a three-piece band based out of Sioux City which was formed in 2024. The group said it takes inspiration from genres like punk, emo and alternative rock. "Animal Control," their just-released EP, is available on all streaming platforms. We've heard some of their material and it's pretty good.



Foxpelt

## ZERO RITUAL

Formed in Sioux City in 2025, Zero Ritual is what happens when lifelong friends from different scenes stop pretending they fit into one genre. Instead, they start making exactly the chaos they want to hear. Specifically, this "chaos" sounds like nu metal, pink, hip-hop and "hoodcore," which is hip-hop that focuses on neighborhood identity while offering an unfiltered portrayal of street life. Yeah, we admit we had to look up the definition of "hoodcore" ourselves.

## AARON SKILES BAND

What do you get when you mix crunchy guitar licks with catchy choruses while giving it an Americana twist? According to Aaron Skiles' website, it might add up to being "a heavy country Weezer." We can't even guess what that would sound like, but color us intrigued. Skiles will play selections from his upcoming "Angels, Devils & Coin Flips" album. Also, per his website, Skiles' guitar-driven, anthemic songs are



Zero Ritual

supposed to be "crisp, catchy and designed to get stuck in your head." Huh, that actually sounds like it might good or it might be painful.

## DISCREPANCIES

Here's a fun "Behind the Music"-type of story about Discrepancies, a St. Louis-based rap rock group started by Antonio Metcalf and Garrett Weakley. The guys were working at a fast-food joint back in 2014. Whenever a customer came through the drive-thru lane, Antonio and Garrett would slip in a copy of their first demo with the food. Apparently, this guerrilla-style marketing paid off, as Discrepancies has been in high demand ever since.

## THE RURALISTS

The Ruralists were once described as "Where Norman Rockwell meets Nirvana," though Luke Hawley, the founder of the Sioux Center-based band, said the sound is closer to Rockwell than to Cobain. "We've also been called 'Prof Rock'



The Discrepancies



Aaron Skiles

## Abe Stage Lineup

12:30 p.m. Foxpelt

1:40 p.m. Aaron Skiles Band

2:55 p.m. Zero Ritual

4:10 p.m. The Ruralists

5:15 p.m. YNOTLWC

6:25 p.m. Discrepancies

7:30 p.m. 2DEAD BOYZ

8:30 p.m. Tech N9ne

because the band is made up of college professors," said Hawley, who is, in fact, a Dordt University professor. And what about the band's name? It's pretty hard to pronounce, don't you think? "Yeah, the Ruralist has too many R's and L's in it. But that's what we're known as."

Please see **ABE STAGE**, Page 48



The Ruralists



# empirical

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PHOTOS PROVIDED

Tech N9ne, a legendary rapper and entrepreneur known for his rapid-fire delivery, eclectic style and dynamic live shows, will headline the Abe Stage at the Saturday in the Park festival on July 4.



Tech N9ne has released more than 25 studio albums.

# A TECH N9NE 411

Everything you need to know about Abe Stage headliner

BY EARL HORLYK

**K**ansas City, Missouri is best known for its baseball, for its barbecue and for its crazy-ass bumper-to-bumper traffic during rush hour.

Yet the 38th most populous city in the United States is also known for its music.

Whether it is bebop, the blues or the “Shake, Rattle and Roll” bombast of pioneering rocker Big Joe Turner, the mighty KC has been the birthplace of plenty of musical genres as well as quite a few musical A-Listers.

Did you know bandleader Stan Kenton, one of most influential names in jazz world, and composer Burt Bacharach, ranked No. 35 in Rolling Stones’ list of “The 100 Greatest Songwriters of All Time,” both could call Kansas City their hometown?

So can Tech N9ne, the legendary rapper and entrepreneur known for his rapid-fire delivery, eclectic style and dynamic live shows.

Born as Aaron Dontez Yates in Kansas City in 1971, Tech N9ne is the headliner for this year’s Saturday in the Park’s Abe Stage.

Before he starts his 8:30 p.m. July 4th set, here are some fun facts that ever SITPer needs to know about Tech N9ne.

**RAP STARTED AS MEMORIZING EXERCISE:** Tech N9ne started rapping as a young child, helping him to memorize the spelling of his name.

**RAISED BY HIS GRANDMA:** Estranged from his dad and born to a mom who suffered from epilepsy and lupus, he was raised by a deeply religious grandmother.

**GHOSTBUSTER WANNABE?** As a teenager, he and a buddy would explore abandoned buildings, looking for ghosts.

**HIS STAGE NAME CAME FROM A GUN:** Rapper Black Walt started calling him Tech

N9ne semi-automatic handgun, due to his fast-rhyming rapper style.

**BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE K.C RAP COMMUNITY:** At age 20, he became a member of a rap group, called Black Mafia. Six years later, he became a member of a group called The Regime.

**STRANGE MUSIC ENTREPRENEUR:** In 1999, he and his business partner Travis O’Guin founded the record label Strange Music. To this day, he is widely regarded as the most successful independent rapper of all time.

**RECORDS OF RECORDS:** To date, he was released more than 25 studio albums.

**THE COMPANY THAT HE KEEPS:** Tech N9ne has collaborated with big names like Eminem, Kendrick Lamar, Li’l Wayne and Machine Gun Kelly, among many others.

**UNUSUAL MUSICAL COLLABORATORS:** Tech N9ne has also worked with Serj Tankian (System of the Down), Corey Taylor (Slipknot), Chino Moreno and Stephen Carpenter (Deftones) and Jonathan Davis (Korn).

**THE ESSENTIAL TECH N9NE:** “Caribou Lou,” “Am I Psycho?” (with B.o.B and Hopsin); “Fragile” (with Kendrick Lamars); “Hood Go Crazy” (with B.o.B. and 2 Chainz); “No Popcorn” with Fatman Scoop.

**KING OF KC?** When Tech N9ne isn’t rapping, he’s cheering on the Kansas City Chiefs and Kansas City Royals. He is also one of the remixers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup theme, representing Kansas City.

**A KC CITY KID, FOR NOW & FOREVER:** Tech N9ne’s 2025 LP “5816 Forest” was named after of a lime green house at KC’s 5816 Forest Ave,” where he grew as a kid.



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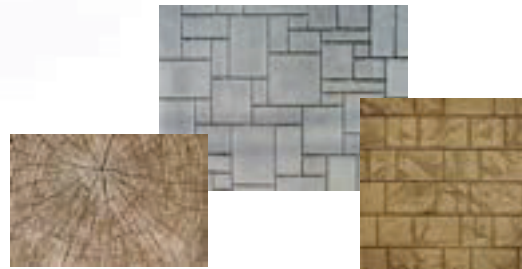


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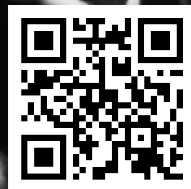


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# Goin' indie

From bars to coffeehouses,  
Foxpelt is ready for the spotlight

BY EARL HORLYK

Even though the members of the three-piece, Sioux City-based band call themselves Foxpelt, they would never actually hurt a fox.

“No way, we love animals too much,” Kolby Nibbelink said with a smile. “We called our debut CD ‘Animal Control.’ I don’t think it was a conscious decision, but a lot of our music revolves around animals.

Nibbelink, along with bandmates Tristan Perez and Kara Howard, started Foxpelt in late 2024.

“Our sound is very much alt rock and indie rock,” Nibbelink explained.

“But with punk and emo thrown in for good measure,” Perez added.

Foxpelt will be one of the bands performing on Saturday in the Park’s Abe Stage July 4.

“When I got the call saying we made the cut, I couldn’t believe it,” Nibbelink said. “Being at Saturday in the Park is gonna be huge.”

To be fair, Foxpelt has been on the road pretty consistently over the past 18 months or so.

“We’ve developed a fanbase because we hit Sioux City, Sioux Falls and Lincoln on a regular rotation,” Nibbelink said, noting Foxpelt traditionally plays bars or coffeehouses. “I think we’ll expand to include more towns.”

“I do enjoy playing bars because they have a fun vibe,” Perez, a fan of the band Modern Baseball, explained. “But coffeehouses are great because they’re more intimate and you can actually interact with the audience more.”

“That’s actually a concern for me,” Nibbelink, a classic rock fan, noted. “We’re used to doing smaller shows and not Grandview Park. We’ll have to go bigger



PROVIDED

The Sioux City-based alternative rock band Foxpelt, whose members include, from top to bottom, Tristan Lopez, Kolby Nibbelink and Kara Howard, will play Saturday in the Park’s Abe Stage on July 4.

and seriously up our banter game.”

“We banter alright,” Perez said. “It shouldn’t be an issue.”

For Howard, a fan of everything from Green Day to Rage Against the Machine, said she doesn’t know what to expect at Saturday in the Park.

“Believe it or not, I’ve never been to Saturday in the Park before in my life,” she said.

Wait, Howard is not only a first-time SITP performer, she will also be a first-time SITP attendee?

“I’m really not too nervous about it,” she said.

## DETAILS

**WHAT:** Foxpelt

**WHEN:** 12:30 p.m. July 4

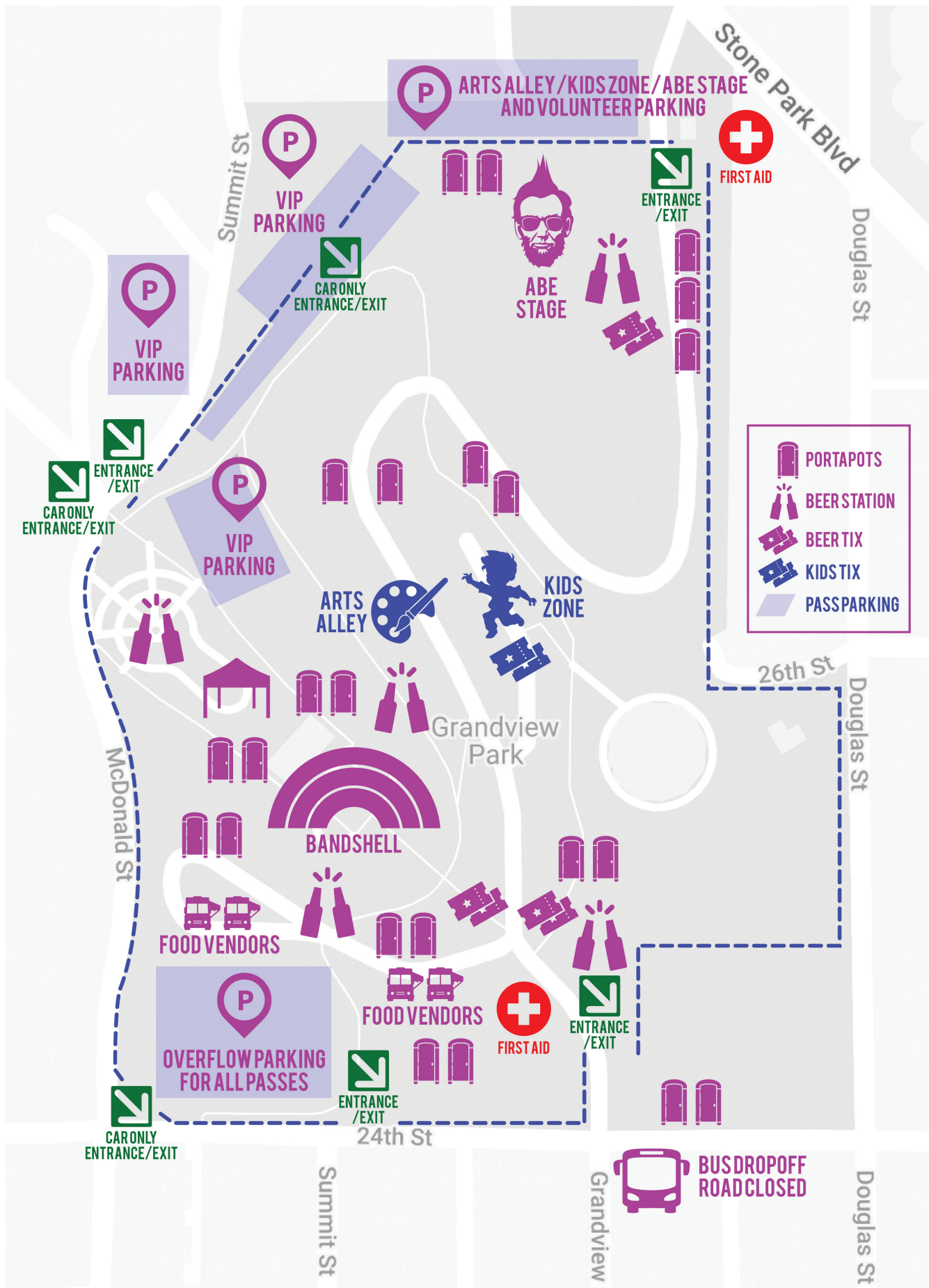
**WHERE:** Saturday in the Park’s Abe Stage

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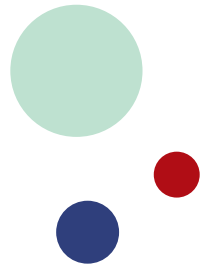
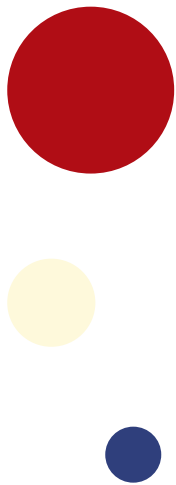
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■ **Mac's Tornado** – Funnel cakes, pretzel bites, fried Oreos, lemonades

■ **Stapleton Tornado** – Funnel cakes, corn dogs, cheese curds, lemonades

■ **Mr. Corn** – Roasted corn, elote, Agua Fresca, slushies, fruit cups, mango on a stick., Frescas Con Crema

■ **Godfather's Pizza** – Pizza by the slice, whole pizzas, monkey bread, soft drinks, bottled water

■ **Smokin's R's BBQ** – Ribs, smoked mac and cheese (topped with meat), BBQ nachos, pulled pork, pulled brisket, homemade country sausages, Cole slaw, baked beans, homemade sweet tea

■ **Marco's** – Indian tacos, super nachos, walking tacos, taco blizzard, elephant ears, smoothies, soft drinks

■ **Tornado Funnel Cakes** – Hand-dipped corndogs, cheese curds, fresh-cut

ribbon fries, lemonade, raspberry lemonade

■ **Papa John's** – Pizza slices, whole pizzas, Coke, water

■ **Greek 2 Me** – Gyros, rice bowls, baklava, soda, water

■ **The Corndog Company** – Hand-dipped corndogs, deep-fried desserts and cheese pops

■ **Blue Taquilla** – Large offering of authentic Mexican foods.

■ **Sazon Jalisco** – Tortas, tamales, ceviche and more

■ **The Parthenon** – Gyros, Greek salads, spanakopita, lemonade, iced tea, Coke, bottled water

■ **Taqueria Fiesta Latina** – Asada tacos, pupusa, quesabirrias, birria noodles, quesadillas, Coke

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■ **Hungry Boys** – Authentic Mexican tacos, burritos and quesadillas.

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■ **Made It Myself Shaved Ice (second location)** – Shaved ice, lemonade slush-



In a file photo, Diego Ruiz talks about customers at his Corndog Company food truck, which will be among the food vendors at Saturday in the Park on July 4.

JESSE BROTHERS,  
SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

ies, bottled water

■ **Greek 2 Me** – Gyros, rice bowls, baklava, soda, water

■ **Taqueria Fiesta Latina** – Asada tacos, pupusa, quesabirrias, birria noodles, quesadillas, Coke

## ABE STAGE

■ **Outside Scoop-** Specialty ice creams

■ **Smokin's R's BBQ** – Ribs, smoked mac and cheese (topped with meat), BBQ nachos, pulled pork, pulled brisket, homemade country sausages, Cole slaw, baked beans, homemade sweet tea

■ **Hungry Boys** – Authentic Mexican tacos, burritos and quesadillas,

■ **Taqueria Fiesta Latina** – Asada tacos, pupusa, quesabirrias, birria noodles, quesadillas, Coke

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# GENRE SHIFTERS

Zero Ritual blends metal, punk and hip-hop all in one band

BY EARL HORLYK

If Sioux City's music scene was a melting pot, Zero Ritual would be a tasty stew made up of the best parts of the area's top metalcore, punk and hip-hop bands.

This is because Zero Ritual was formed by lifelong musicians from completely different scenes who stopped pretending they fit neatly into one genre.

Instead, they are now playing the type of chaos that will never turn up in anyone's playlist algorithm.

A bit of musical chaos will be in store at Saturday in the Park when Zero Ritual (made up of Cody Garwood, Bill Pelchat, Drew Torgerson, Chance Corderman and Rosario "Red" Perez) play the Abe Stage for what will be their third performance as a band.

Wait, Zero Ritual has only done two pre-

vious shows before booking a primo gig at SITP.

"Yeah, we formed the band about seven months ago," Perez explained. "We've played a gig here in town and did a show in Sioux Falls not too long ago."

To be fair, Perez and the majority of his Zero Ritual bandmates already have had one or more appearances either on the Main Stage or the Abe Stage at previous SITP.

"I've played Saturday in the Park and it's always an honor," Perez said.

"I was on the Abe Stage last year as a member of GhostCat," Garwood said. "It will always bring credibility to a band when you're invited to perform, especially a new band like us."

Pelchat said what makes Zero Ritual work is the chemistry between the players.

"This isn't the first lineup we've had," he

## DETAILS

**WHAT:** Zero Ritual

**WHEN:** 2:55 – 3:40 p.m.  
July 4

**WHERE:** Saturday in  
the Park's Abe  
Stage



EARL HORLYK, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

While Zero Ritual (made up of Bill Pelchat, Cody Garwood, Drew Torgerson, Chance Corderman and Rosario Perez) may be a new band, its members are all veteran musicians.

explained. "Some guys have left the band because things didn't work out. We like making music together and that's the only thing that matters."

If Pelchat's name sounds familiar, it is because his dad is Bill "Chopper" Pelchat, a multiple inductee into the Iowa Rock 'n Roll Music Association.

"Music better be your passion," Pelchat said. "None of us are getting rich doing what we do."

"I think you also need to be a music fan,"

Perez said. "It's incredible to realize how many great artists have played Saturday in the Park. This year, the Abe Stage will be awesome. Tech N9ne will be a legend but I can't wait to see 2Dead Boyz because I know they'll put on a great show."

Even though Zero Ritual is a relatively new band, Garwood is convinced the audience will like what they hear.

"We may not be the headliners, but we have a headliner mentality," he said with a laugh.

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PHOTOS PROVIDED

2DEAD BOYZ, the gritty new incarnation of East Coast hip-hop artist Meechy Darko and Zombie Juice of Flatbush Zombies, are coming to Saturday in the Park's Abe Stage on July 4.

# ZOMBIES FROM BROOKLYN

## 2DEAD BOYZ return to life on the Abe Stage

BY EARL HORLYK

**R**umors of the demise of 2DEAD BOYZ have been greatly exaggerated.

Indeed, Meechy Darko (aka Demetri Simms) and Zombie Juice (aka Antonio Lewis) will be bringing their sharp edge of macabre creative to Saturday in the Park's Abe Stage on July 4.

The duo — better known as two-thirds (along with Erick “Arc” Elliot) of the legendary East Coast hip-hop team Flatbush Zombies — is best known for mind-altering atmospherics, vivid lyrics as well as the chaos their audience crave.

In fact, Meechy Darko and Zombie Juice have been representing the Brooklyn borough of New York since the two of them bonded over professional wrestling, “Dragon Ball Z” and mixtapes in the fourth grade.

“That was during the golden age of mixtapes and wild west days of sampling,”

Zombie Juice explained. “Between me, Meechy and Erick were always on the hunt of the craziest, most obscure piece of sound we could find.”

“Yeah, that was long before everyone had every piece of music at their fingertips,” Meechy said, continuing the story. “Erick and I were into movie samples while Zombie was all about the music. Every day, we felt explorers discovering uncharted territory.”

“Man, it was crazy,” Zombie Juice said. “We’d be trading music and burning CDs. It didn’t matter if it was soul, R&B or rap. I even burned a gospel CD or two.”

This experience came in handy when Flatbush Zombies released their debut mixtape entitled “D.R.U.G.S. (or “Death and Reincarnation Under God’s Supervision”) in 2011.

Collaborations with RZA, Juicy J as well

as this year’s Abe Stage headliner Tech N9ne led to releasing Flatbush Zombie’s critically acclaimed debut album “3001: A Laced Odyssey” in 2016.

A subsequent album, 2018’s “Vacation from Hell” also received critical praise as did “Escape from New York,” an ambitious collaboration between Flatbush Zombies and Pro Era and the Underachievers. “Erick started branching out and so did me and Zombie,” Meechy Darko said. “Then, COVID hit and everything stopped.” “Zombie and I missed making music together,” he added. “We also missed being in front of an audience.”

Renaming themselves 2DEAD BOYZ, the duo revealed a connection to Outkast, whose 2 Dope Boyz (in a Cadillac) is considered a hip-hop classic.

“Big Boi and Andre 3000 are legends and they continue to make great music,” Zombie Juice said. “It’s only fitting that

continue to be revered. Unfortunately, there are a lot of guys who came before them. They’re still in the same old houses in Brooklyn, just waiting to be rediscovered.”

Unfortunately, recording companies are making sampling harder to do

“Sampling somebody else’s material used to be creating through a shared memory,” Meechy said. “Recording companies don’t think like that anymore.”

However, recording companies are very comfortable searching for the next big thing. It is sometime at the expense of more established artists like 2DEAD BOYZ.

“No music genre is so quick to toss out members as the hip-hop community,” Zombie Juice explained. “Rap isn’t just young people any more than rock. Nobody is telling Alice Cooper to get out of rock and roll simply because he’s old.”

In fact, Meechy Darko has coined a name for people like him and Zombie Juice.

“We’re no longer the new guys and we’re not quite the O.G.’s” he said. “Guess me and Zombie now get to be the New O.G.’s.”

### DETAILS

**WHAT:** 2DEAD BOYZ

**WHEN:** 7:30 p.m. July 4

**WHERE:** Saturday in the Park’s Abe Stage

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# Saturday in the Park KID'S ZONE

## Kid's Zone 2026

**Kid's Zone Hours**  
12 p.m. - 7 p.m.

**Wristband and Ticket Pricing**  
Saturday In The Park All Day Wristband = \$20  
All Wristband sales end at 6:30 p.m.

Don't forget to have your kiddos wear socks because the inflatables can get hot on the bottom of their little feet!

\*\* No refunds, exchanges or rain checks.  
No exceptions!

**F**ear not, the traditional favorites are here! — inflatables, entertainers, food vendors and activities to keep kids of all ages busy all day long.

### Inflatables

Inflatables will be up in the Kid's Zone to entertain kids of all ages all day long. There will be old favorites such as a rock wall and a bounce house. Be sure to stop up to the Kid's Zone to check out all of the attractions!

### Mr. Twister

A popular performer in the Rivercade/KCAU Kid's Zone each year, Mr. Twister is back once again armed with fun and balloons! For the past 24 years, Mr. Twister has entertained children at Saturday In The Park with his wacky assortment of balloons. Make sure to bring the young ones up to visit Mr. Twister and ask for a FREE crazy balloon sculpture!

### Meyer's Petting Zoo

The Petting Zoo is excited to be coming back again to the KCAU 9 Kids Zone. The Meyer Petting Zoo, a family owned business out of Holstein, Iowa, is bringing a pen full of cute, furry animals. The zoo consists of mainly farm animals. There will be goats, sheep, mini donkey, mini pony and llama. There will be babies for the kids to enjoy. Kids can buy ice cream cones filled with pellets to feed the animals for \$1. Admission is FREE. The petting zoo will be open from Noon to 5pm.

### Color Bee Face Painting

Color Bee Face Painting is excited to, once again, paint faces for everyone in Kids



**ERIC KIEKEBEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL**

The "Dizzy Dragon" ride spins around in the Kids Zone at Grandview Park in Sioux City during the 2025 Saturday in the Park festival.

Zone! There'll be so many fun choices to put smiles on everyone's face.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q. How long is the Kid's Zone open?

A. The Kid's Zone is open from 12pm to 7pm.

#### Q. Can I use cash or checks to purchase a Kid's Zone All Day Wristband?

A. No, cash and checks are not accepted. Only debit or credit cards can be used to purchase a Kid's Zone All Day Wristband.

#### Q. Can I return my Kid's Zone All Day Wristband?

A. No, there are no returns, refunds or rainchecks on the Kid's Zone All Day Wristband.

#### Q. When do Kid's Zone All Day Wristband sales stop?

A. The Kid's Zone All Day Wristbands stop selling at 6:30 p.m. Be sure to purchase a wristband as early as you can so that your child has plenty of time to enjoy playing on the inflatables!

#### Q. Can my child wear shoes on the inflatables?

A. No, shoes are not allowed on the inflatables. Please keep in mind that some inflatables can get warm while sitting in the sun, so make sure your child wears socks so their little feet won't get hot.



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## Abe Stage

From 24

### YNOTLWC LOST WORLD CREATORS

YnotLWC Lost World Creators has been making music for the past nine years, though he only started going live with free-style rap about 18 months ago. With his latest album, "Tattoo Therapy," released last month, YnotLWC has some advice for aspiring musicians. "It's possible to build a real music career online in 2026. Your audience is out there and if you are brave enough to put yourself out there consistently, it's only inevitable you'll be found."

### 2DEAD BOYZ

**WHAT THEY SAY:** 2DEAD BOYZ is the gritty new incarnation of East Coast hip-hop firebrands Meechy Darko and Zombie Juice, of the Flatbush Zombies. Forged from a decade of macabre creativity, 2DEAD BOYZ embodies elements of their Flatbush roots with a sharpened edge. Their debut single "Blood on My Knife" – dropping September 5, 2025 – resurrects the classic Flatbush Zombies formula: mind-altering atmo-



2DEAD BOYZ

spherics and vivid lyrical content. **WHAT WE SAY:** We'd do anything to have cool nicknames like Meechy Darko or Zombie Juice.

### TECH N9NE

Considered the most successful independent rapper of all time, Tech N9ne remains inescapable, generating billions of streams, picking up dozens of RIAA gold and platinum plaques, tallying four Top Five debuts on the Billboard 200, holding the record for



Mega Mike

"most Top 10 albums on the Billboard Rap Chart," and selling out hundreds of shows worldwide. Yet the artist, also known as Aaron Don- tez Yates, has never forgotten his Midwestern roots. His latest LP, "5816 Forest," pays homage to the lime green house at 5816 Forest Ave. in Kansas City that he grew up in.

### MEGA MIKE & THE \$OUND IN\$URGENT

Tireless supporter of Chicago's electronic music scene, MEGA MIKE has become one of the Windy City's most in-demand selectors thanks to his versatility and technical acumen behind the decks. Now based out of Northwest Iowa, he is the director of Underground for Good (UFG), a rave-roots focused event production company, he's been bring-



PHOTOS PROVIDED

The \$ound In\$urgent

ing back the OG blueprint to his old stomping grounds, throwing shows with a phenomenal collective of old and new friends.

The \$ound In\$urgent (TSI) is a DJ from Sioux City, with more than 20 years of experience on the decks, known for vinyl-driven sets blending techno, drum & bass, house, hip-hop, and the classics. The \$ound In\$urgent has performed throughout the Midwest and shared stages with artists such as Lazer Rocket Arm, D.A.D., TreyLane and Ally Brooke.

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# Eats STREET

The Blues City Journal's Guide to a Food Coma.

BY EARL HORLYK

**A**right, picture this: It's July 4th, 90 degrees in the shade and you've been inside of Grandview Park all day long.

You've been to the Main Stage and then, the Abe Stage, left the rugrats at the Kids Zone and bid adieu to the missus as she grabbed your wallet on her way to Saturday in the Park's Arts Alley.

Time for some grub, don't you think?

Thankfully, you hid Andrew Jackson in your left shoe as you made your towards SITP's fabled Eats Street.

There are 25 different food vendors alongside the Main, the Abe and the Kids Zone. What are you gonna eat?

Yeah, that's a trick question because Saturday in the Park is your yearly excuse to chow down.

Where else can you grab some barbecue ribs, an ear of Mexican corn and, maybe, a funnel cake if you're still feeling peckish.

Fella, you have just entered the Blues City Journal's Guide to a Food Coma.

Will you need a truckload of antacid in the morning ... but, today, you will feast.

## THE BARON OF BIRRIA

Eduardo Ruiz has bravado when it comes to birria.

Each day, Ruiz, owner of Big Red Tacos, 1301 Pierce St., will make a braising liquid out of a mix of herbs, seasonings and up to three different kinds of dried chiles.

He then slow cooks beef into the reddish broth for up to six hours, creating a marinated meat that is deeply flavored and fork tender.

This process – called birria – originated in the Mexican state of Jalisco before it became a cult favorite food in Southern California.

But today, he won't be at his 1301 Pierce

St. eatery.

Instead, he and his family will be parking their Big Red Tacos food truck at Saturday in the Park

Growing up in Riverside, California, Ruiz wanted to bring birria – a particular favorite of his family – to Siouxland.

"That was how most people learned about birria," he explained. "It was food made in a backyard on the weekends, and every family had their own recipe."

Always a bit of a backyard chef, he began experimenting with different recipes for birria by using international ingredients.

It was in the fall of 2025 that he decided to open a restaurant in Sioux City's mid-city district.

During a midafternoon rush, he was able to cook six different orders at the same time.

"As long as I have rock and roll playing in the background, I'll be OK," he said. "I always cook to the beat of the music."

What's on the menu?

While the namesake Big Red Taco (meat, cheese, onion and cilantro in a birria-soaked shell) is hard to beat, patrons can also get their birrias inside of a burrito, a torta or on top of nachos.

Now, it is here that things get a little weird.

Birria fixings can also be found on a pizza and even in a Red's Philly Cheesesteak sandwich with plenty of queso.

Want your south-of-the-board birria to have a Far East twist? Big Red Tacos also has a Japanese-inspired Birria Ramen (meat, cheese, onion and cilantro served inside of a Tapatio Ramen cup), a Vietnamese-inspired Birria Pho (meat, rice noodles, green onion, Thai basil and a Sawtooth leaf in a seasoned broth) and a simple-yet-tasty Korean-inspired Birria Fried Rice.

Ruiz said birria-marinated meat is al-



Chef/owner Eduardo Ruiz wraps a birria burrito at Big Red Tacos. Ruiz also uses birria inside of tacos, tortas and nachos. The distinct red coloring comes from a broth that is made with three different types of chiles.

TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

ways be the star at Big Red Tacos.

"There is nothing you can't do with birria," he said. "It tastes great with everything."

## THE HEROS OF GYROS

Greek To Me! has been co-owned by brothers Chris and Tony Antonopoulos since 2011. Now with two storefront locations in Sioux City and South Sioux City, the restaurant's food truck will be present at Saturday in the Park on July 5.

Greek To Me! serves "Greek Food and More," with some menu items including gyros, salads, burgers and Greek nachos. Inspiration to open the restaurant came from a combination of the Antonopoulos' Greek heritage and experience in the food business.

"My dad used to own Harvey's restaurant in Riverside," Tony said. "Myself and my dad were just kind of looking to open up a Greek restaurant that serves gyros and, you know, a fast-food type place."

Greek To Me! will be one of several vendors at Saturday in the Park. The restaurant's food truck, based out of Omaha, will make its second ever appearance at the festival this year.

"The whole atmosphere, everything's awesome," Tony said. "Knowing that we took something that didn't exist and built it up to that, and we're serving gyros at Saturday in the Park, you know, it's the best feeling."

The food truck operates at numerous other events, parties and special occasions. Started by Chris and his brother-in-law, Matt Baughman, the food truck is currently providing food to attendees of the College World Series in Omaha.

"[Baughman] always said he wanted to start a gyro food truck, and this was before he knew about the restaurants, my family,"

Chris said. "I was like, 'Well, hell, me and my brother have two restaurants in Sioux City that are Greek,' and he's like, 'seriously?' so that's kind of how that started."

With Saturday in the Park being one of the largest annual events in Sioux City, Tony is looking forward to once again being part of the festivities.

"Not everybody in this city knows what Greek To Me! is," Tony said. "When we go to festivals where there's, you know, tens of thousands of people, they get to try our food and we get to get our name out there more."

## THE BEST FOOD ON A STICK

Call it truth in advertising: The Corndog Company's Epic corndog is absolutely "epic."

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"Honey is the key," Diego Ruiz explained. "Everybody loves our honey!"

Ruiz, along with his mom Rita Lopez, is the Sioux City franchisee for the Utah-based Corndog Company chain of food trucks. The Corndog Company is just one of the food trucks participating at this year's Saturday in the Park

The Corndog Company also has the Mini Corndog (featuring a one-eighth pound all-beef frank), a Cheese Bomb (made with cheddar, pepperjack and mozzarella cheeses) as well as deep-fried Oreos, Snickers and Milky Way candy bars.

"It's a full meal," Ruiz said. "Once you have an Epic or a Mini, people would like a Cheese Bomb as an appetizer and a deep-fried dessert as a sweet treat."

Former Journal intern Eric Kiekeben contributed to this story.

# SITP FLASHBACK

Where were you one year ago?

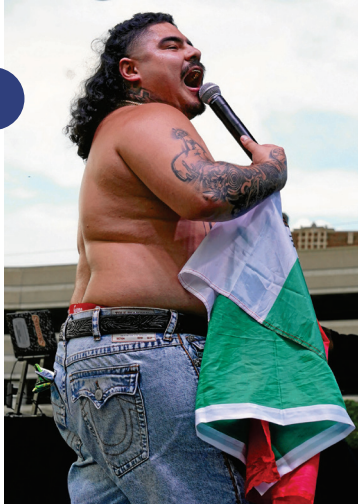
BY EARL HORLYK

**W**here were you at last year's Saturday in the Park? Yeah, we know. We can't remember what we ate last night yet along what we were doing on the July 4th weekend of 2025.

Here's the fast refresher: Teddy Swims was the main stage headliner. Supporting acts included Mavis Staples and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. The Abe Stage had folks like That Mexican OT, Riff Raff and Joey Cool.

Ring any bells? Nope.

Well, here's a photo essay of some of favorite sights from the 2025 Saturday in the Park.



ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

That Mexican OT gets the Mexican flag from the crowd, signs it and performs with it at the Abe Stage during the 2025 Saturday in the Park.



TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Teddy Swims performs on the main stage during the 2025 Saturday in the Park festival.



ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

The Main Stage on the Grandview Park bandshell is shown during the 2025 Saturday in the Park festival.



ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Joey Cool performs at the Abe Stage.



ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Riff Raff holds up the knuckles of his glove, which reads "Riff," to the camera at the Abe Stage during the 2025 Saturday in the Park.



ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Midwest Dilemma trombone player performs at the Abe Stage in Grandview Park.



ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

That Mexican OT smokes the joint that a fan threw on the Saturday in the Park's Abe Stage.

Riff Raff performs at the Abe Stage in Grandview Park in Sioux City, Saturday, July 5, 2025.

ERIC KIEKENEN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL





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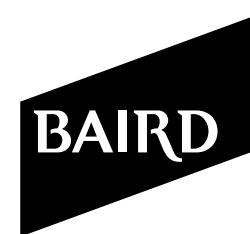
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## Lineup

From 4

A Greenville, South Carolina native, Marcus King's dad Marvin King was a well-known blues guitarist who also played with gospel acts, and his grandfather was a regionally popular musician.

Saturday in the Park headliner Joe Bonamassa said his dad exposed him to Brit rock legends like Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck.

The New Hartford, New York-born Bonamassa is doing his part in championing young American blues artists.

In 2011, he started the nonprofit 501©(3) organization Keep the Blues Alive Foundation. Nine years later, he created Keeps the Blues Alive Records, an independent record label that has supported artists like Dion, Joanne Shaw Taylor and Larry McCray.

The night will end on a high note with a drone show — featuring American made drones — as well as a fireworks show — with firecrackers coming from China(?)

We're OK with that though.

China can produce the things that make the boom-booms while America can supply the awesome beats.



Kris Lager



Joanna Connor



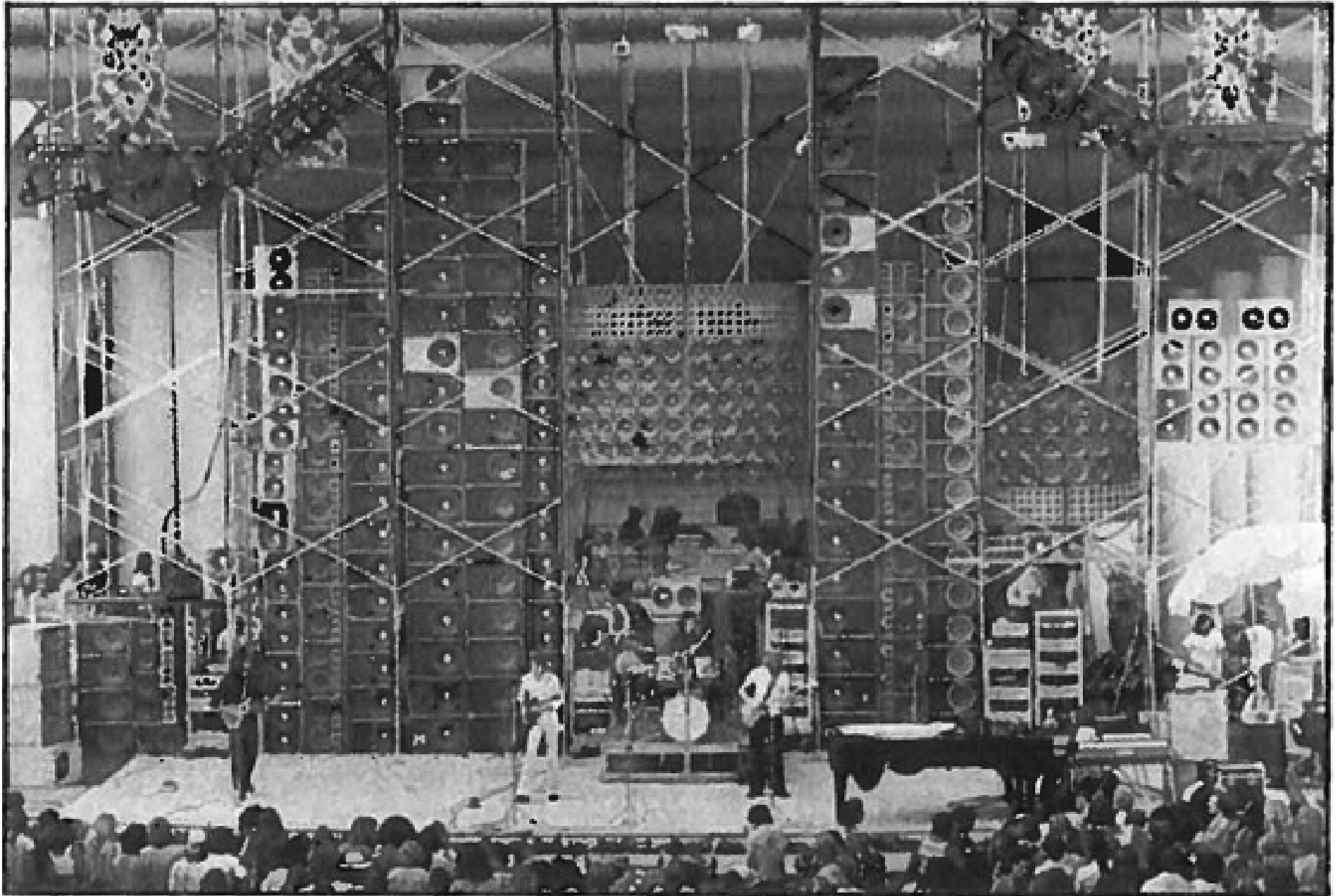
The Marcus King Band

PHOTOS PROVIDED

# 7-98

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# Test your SITP TRIVIA

36 years of Kings, Kennedy Center honorees,  
and miscellaneous space cadets



Aretha Franklin was the headliner in 2015.

PHOTO BY BLANE BOURGEOIS



JIM LEE, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL FILE

B.B. King performs at the 2007 Saturday in the Park festival.

BY EARL HORLYK

**W**ant to make someone feel incredibly old?

Tell them that 1991 was the year the Soviet Union officially dissolved, the long-running sitcom “Home Improvement” made its debut, and the very first Saturday in the Park (SITP) was held at Grandview Park.

For 36 Independence Day weekends, SITP has brought legendary performers, critically acclaimed darlings, up-and-coming groups and regional royalty to light up Sioux City’s historic Bandshell in a free music festival.

Given its illustrious history, here are 15 things every SITP aficionado must know.

**WHO HEADLINED THE FIRST SITP:** Blues musician Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown had the honors. Other 1991 acts included Bad Manners, Buckwheat Zydeco and the Table Rockers.

**WHICH ROYALTY HAS BEEN TO SITP:** Aretha Franklin (“Queen of Soul”) was here in 2015, Tito Puente (“King of the Mambo”) graced us with his presence in 1996, and B.B. King held court in 2007.

**OK, HERE ARE A FEW MORE KINGS:** Christone “Kingfish” Ingram (2025), Elle King (2022), Earl King with the Butanes

(1997), the Stockyard Kings (2016) and T. Wilson King and the Snake Charmers (2023).

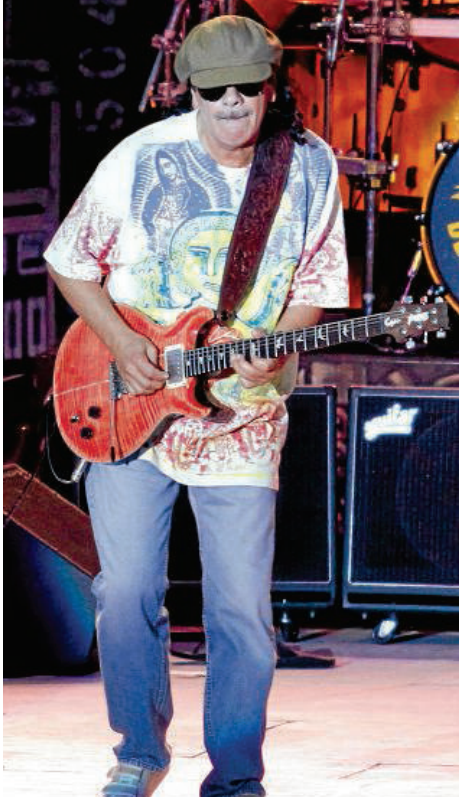
**SITP-ERS WHO WERE ALSO KENNEDY CENTER HONOR RECIPIENTS:** Buddy Guy, Carlos Santana, Mavis Staples, Earth, Wind & Fire and Bonnie Raitt.

**WHO HAS HAD THE MOST SITP ENCORES:** Winnebago, Nebraska-based blues singer Curt St. Cyr, who has performed the festival at least eight times between 1991 and 2005.

**FANCY MEETING YOU AGAIN:** Some repeater acts include the Neville Brothers, Rod Piazza & The Mighty Flyers, and Santana. Trombone Shorty will make his second appearance at 2021’s SITP. He was also here with Orleans Avenue in 2017.

**LONGEST GAP BETWEEN SITP APPEARANCES:** Jazz singer Kellie Hunt first came to SITP in 2004. Her encore occurred 21 years later in 2025.

**DOES SITP RUN IN THE FAMILY:** In 1997, Rita Marley and her Maccabee Band played SITP. Her son, Ziggy Marley (along with the Melody Makers), played the festival in 1999 and 2014. The Allman Brothers Band, with Gregg Allman, was here in 2000. Gregg’s son Devon Allman was here with Honeytribe in 2006.



JIM LEE, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL FILE

Santana performs during the 2010 Saturday in the Park. Santana is among the past SITP performers who are also Kennedy Center Honor Recipients.



JESSE BROTHERS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Earth, Wind & Fire plays on the Main Stage during the 2023 Saturday in the Park.

**DUDE, AREN'T YOU ON A MAP OR SOMETHING:** See Taj Mahal (1996), North Mississippi Allstars (2015), Bangkok Rooster (1994), and Michigan Rattlers (2019). Special mention: Flo Rida (2019).

**WOODSTOCK 1969 ALUMNI**

**SOCIETY:** That would be Santana (1994 and 2010) as well as John Fogerty (as a member of Creedence Clearwater Revival), who played 2021's SITP.



Kelly Hunt perform on the main stage during the 2025 Saturday in the Park festival.

TIM HYNDS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

**JUST A BUNCH OF ANIMALS:** Samantha Fish (2023), The Black Crowes (2005), Counting Crows (2009), Garrett "Possum" Judice and the Couillions (2003), Ratdog (2000) and The Sharks (1991). Extra credit: The Brian Setzer Orchestra (with former Stray Cat Brian Setzer at the helm).



JUSTIN WAN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

George Thorogood and the Destroyers perform at the 2019 Saturday in the Park.



JUSTIN WAN, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Galactic's members from left, Robert Mercurio, Erica Falls and Jeff Raines perform during the 2018 Saturday in the Park.

**MISCELLANEOUS SPACE CADETS:** Galactic (2018), Lazer Rocket Arm (2011) and Blue Moon (1998).

**HORTICULTURALISTS AT HEART:** Tallgrass (2013), The Wallflowers (2003) and The

Zucchini Brothers (2004). Sorry, we will not allow Michelle Branch (2003) to be in this category.

**MUSICIANS WITH NAMES THAT TERRIFY US:** George Thorogood & The Destroyers (2019), Big Head Todd & The Monsters (1997 and 2016), Snakebeard Jackson

(2008), and Walter Wolfman and the Roadmasters (1992).

**BANDS THAT SOUND NAUGHTY BUT PROBABLY WEREN'T:** Mike Campbell and the Dirty Knobs (2024), Bonerama (2011) and Geno Delafosse & French Rockin' Boogie (1998).

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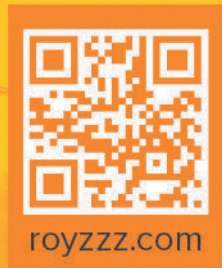
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