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By REBECCA BENNETT | 0 comments



The annual Katy Rice Harvest Festival is returning in full force.

The festival sold out all 325 booths, including 27 food booths, two months before the event, according to organizers from the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce.

From carnival rides to live music and plenty of traditional festival food fare, the big event offers something for newcomers and longtime Katy residents of all ages.

Tried and true favorites The Houston-based Beatles tribute band The Fab 5 will make its fifth appearance at the festival. The group will serenade audience members with a variety of '60s hits from Motown to the Rolling Stones.

Unique entertainers, vendors head to Katy Rice Harvest Festival

Submitted photoHouston-based Beatles tribute band will return to the festival again, entertaining crowds with a variety of '60s music hits.



"This music actually touches people from ages 7 to 70. It's such a great period of music that you can reach a wide range of demographics," said Joe Baiardi, bassist, guitarist and lead vocalist for the ensemble. "They will enjoy that it will take them back to a time of innocence and great music."

Since 1990, The Fab 5 has recruited top-notch musicians to join the ranks of its rotating roster, performing at various festivals, corporate events, weddings and even opening up for the likes of The Beach Boys and Foghat. The band's success can be attributed to the level of musicianship found in the band, Baiardi said.

"As far as why we do it, all of us love that period of music and you know, replicate it note-for-note just like the original recordings, whereas many bands just go through the motions," he said. "What sets us apart from everyone else is it's so close to the actual recording, [the audience is] kind of mesmerized, so to speak, as far as the vocal medleys and all that stuff. It's a true tribute to the music."

Due to the mixture of music The Fab 5 will play at this weekend's festival, they will be dressing in typical '60s mod clothing, as opposed to their Beatles-worthy attire, which includes colorful military uniforms like those worn by the British rock band in their Sgt. Pepper's Lonely

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When: 10 a.m. to midnight Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday

Where: Historic Downtown Katy, Avenues B and C, 2nd and 3rd Streets; Designated shuttle parking on F.M. 1463 near the Leonard E. Merrell Center

Admission: \$7 per day for adults and children 10 and older; complimentary admission for senior citizens (over 65 years old) and military, law enforcement and fire department personnel with identification. Website: www.riceharvestfestival.org

Hearts Club Band days. The band members each take on a different iconic Beatles persona during such performances.

"I'm left-handed and play the bass, so I'm kind of destined to be the Paul of the group," Baiardi said.

For the youngest members of the audience, who might not instantaneously associate "Paul" with "McCartney," The Fab 5 are ready to introduce the newest generation to an older, classic genre of music.

"It definitely affects younger people and opens up a whole new genre music of younger people who might not have lived then — who have heard the music from their parents," Baiardi said.

The Fab 5 will jam out from 10:30 p.m. to midnight Saturday on the Katy Stage.

Cajun Country visitors
Natives of Lafayette, La., and now Texas transplants, the members of Bayou Roux take Lone Star State musical favorites like country and blues and spice them up with

some festive Cajun flavor.

"We started in 1992, and we were a very traditional Cajun band with a fiddle and an accordion," said bassist Ted Lee. "After living in Texas for a while, we decided people didn't want to hear four hours of that."

Once the eight-member band began writing their own music and a few Texans joined in the mix, they realized that their sound had evolved over the years. Lee said he would describe Bayou Roux's current music as "zydepop," a play off of "zydeco," the name for the traditional Creole folk music that originated in southwest Louisiana.

"It's pretty happy music and it's enjoyed by everyone from little kids to grandmas," Lee said. "We get dancers where there normally aren't dancers. We'll get dancers in a museum."

The band will play tunes off their latest album, HeyDay, which was included in the 2009 Grammy Nominations List for the Cajun/Zydeco category, and even unexpected covers of hard rock band Van Halen. This weekend marks their third performance at the Katy Rice Harvest Festival.

"I really like the crowd. It's a family-friendly festival," Lee said. "The crowd is very diverse in age, and they're always excited."

Bayou Roux will head to the stage equipped with a mixture of instruments as eclectically cohesive as the gumbo base from which they get their name. With an accordion, two guitars, a drummer, keyboard, trumpet player and saxophonist, the band will transport Katy to the Deep South from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Saturday on the Katy Stage.

Battered and fried to perfection

No town festival would be complete without indulging in a few guilty pleasure fried foods. Vendor Sandra Bunch and her family-owned food trailer will kick up the flavor — and calorie intake — a notch with her unique "Donut Burgers," burgers that replace the traditional bun with two glazed doughnuts.

"It's a burger with all the fixin's, with the bacon, the cheese and whatever you want. Oddly enough, people want this burger with everything — jalapenos, onions, I mean, everything," Bunch said. "It sounds really odd, but a lot of people come back and are like, 'Oh my God, it's so good!'"

Want dessert with your doughnut? Don't worry; the Bunches have you covered.

Fried Oreos, fried Nutter Butters, fried Twinkies and fried PB&J sandwiches are also available, composing the "bucket list" of foods.

"You have to try it at least once. You might come back for more," Bunch said. "You might kick the bucket after eating it ... we like to make jokes about it."

All the "bucket list" goods are dipped in funnel cake batter, fried and then sprinkled with powdered sugar to make a sweet treat you can't find anywhere else, which is part of their appeal, Bunch said.

"It takes you back to your younger days when you didn't care about calorie counts or anything else," she said.

Cool scienceCocktails are fun for more than just adults these days. Take out the alcohol and pour fruit juice on the rocks — dry ice, that is — and you have a science experiment-worthy refreshment that kids will love. Volcano Splash Houston, which has been serving up the colorful drinks around the city since January, will be making its first appearance at the festival. "We have a demonstration. We demonstrate to the kids what dry ice is and how it works," said owner Gwenlyn Lew. "The kids love it. Everybody leaves with a smile and is excited about it." The Volcano Splash Houston staff dress up in doctor and nurse costumes to set the mood as they pour out cherry splash and ice berry blue drinks that emit a dry ice-induced fog. "It smokes like a volcano. It smokes for five to 10 minutes," Lew said.

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