

Pigeons Playing Ping Pong Rock Domefest With 1-Song Set, Horns, Side Projects, & More [Video/Photo]

[Mikala Lugen](#) | Wednesday, May 23rd, 2018



Pigeons Playing Ping Pong rocked out the ninth-annual **Domefest** on May 17th to May 19th for three nights of non-stop groovy tunes under the cloudy skies of Bedford, Pennsylvania. The festival saw its biggest crowd yet, made up of a sold-out crowd of 1,500 funky flockers, that overtook the muddy grounds of **Fort Royale Farm** for a weekend of boot-stompin' jams.

The festival grounds opened at 9 a.m. on Thursday morning, and the festival began to quickly fill up with spirited flockers as the day went on. This year at Domefest, music was stationed at three different stages named the "Dome Stage," "One Drop Stage," and the late-night "Bamboo Eater Stage." Attendees made their way down to the music through the brightly decorated woods and bridge as Albany-quartet **Formula 5** kicked off Domefest at 5:15 p.m. on the Dome Stage with their electric-groove song, "Blue."

Boston boys **Strange Machines** appeared onstage at 7 p.m. and got fans to get down to the **Blackstreet** track, "No Diggity." Progressive-funk

band **Shwizz** kept up the energy on the adjacent One Drop Stage, playing three separate 30-minute sets throughout the night, keeping it classic with a **Beatles** cover. **The Magic Beans** greeted their first set of the weekend at 9 p.m. with “Hanky Panky,” and heated up the stage throughout their hour and 40-minute set, throwing balls back and forth to the dancing crowd. Lead vocalist **Scott Hachey**’s glasses started fogging up as they slipped into the hot **Prince** cover “I Wanna Be Your Lover”, and the band ended with a bass solo by bassist **Chris Duffy** in “Here on Out.”

Greg Ormont, Jeremy Schon, Alex Petropulos, and Ben Carrey appeared onstage at 11 p.m., adorned in flashy fuzzy hats for Throwback Thursday. Ormont started his banter commemorating the history of Domefest, remembering how far Domefest has come since its first year when Schon founded the event their senior year of college at the University of Maryland. The crowd broke into unison singing “Happy Birthday” to Schon before the band started off the weekend with their fun “Time to Ride”. They went into a fan-favorite “F.U.” before Ormont and Carrey played Timon and Pumbaa onstage in *Disney*’s “Hakuna Matata”.

To fit the theme, the band went into the 2011-closeted, relaxed tune “Where Are We Going” to then completely take the crowd off guard in an amazing **Sublime** medley of “Badfish” > “54-46” (**Toots and The Maytals** cover) > “Caress Me Down” that decorated the versatility of Ormont’s vocals. The band threw it way back to the good ol’ days and sweetened fans with one of their first-written songs, “Candy”, and segued into a silly rendition of “Gettin’ Jiggy Wit It.” The righteous “Dutchmaster” made its first debut since 2011, honoring **Mike Rudman**, a longtime fan since Pigeons days as a college band who’s been chasing the song for years. Ending the night strong with “Ocean Flows”, the crowd brought the guys back onstage for a heady encore of “Zydeko” > “Tale As Old As Time” > “Zydeko”.

Setlist: Pigeons Playing Ping Pong | Domefest Night | Bedford, PA | 5/17/18

Set: Happy Birthday, Time to Ride, Havana > Spacejam > The Hop > F.U., Hakuna Matata > Burning Up My Time > Where Are We Going*, Fun in Funk, Sublime Medley” > Offshoot, Candy^ > Gettin’ Jiggy Wit It > Dutchmaster#, Ocean Flows

Encore: Zydeko > Tale As Old As Time > Zydeko

Notes: *Last time played 10/05/2011 | “Badfish, 54-46, Caress Me Down mashup | ^Last time played 5/09/2012 | #Last time played 7/13/2011

Progressive rock piece **The Mantras** finished off the first night at the late-night Bamboo Eater Stage, kicking off their 1:15 a.m. set with their 2013 track “Before My Time,” and playing **Pink Floyd’s** “Brain Damage/Eclipse” and the **Beastie Boys’** “So Whatcha Want” and “Fight For Your Right.”

Flower Power Friday was deemed the second day of Domefest and was definitely the wettest and muddiest day of the weekend, turning the festival grounds into a mud-puddle slashin’ adventure. Attendees were able to participate in various holistic workshops throughout the weekend, including Friday’s Appreciate Life speech by **Deemster Porn** founder **Nick Heller**. The day was jumpstarted by fellow Baltimore boys **Headless Robot** at 1 p.m. followed by flutist **Mateo Monk** and Philadelphia innovative rock trio **Flux Capacitor**. Female lead vocalist **Erica T. Bryan** of **West End Blend** gave Domefest a full dose of soulful funk starting at 4:30 p.m., playing hornful hits “Say Hey!” and “Attitude” and ending their set with the **Sly & The Family Stone** track, “I Want to Take You Higher.”

Pigeons’ bassist **Ben Carrey** showcased his side livetronica project, **Schwa**, with electrical engineer and accompanying guitarist **Owen Murphy**. Carrey looped different electric and bass beats while throwing in a mix of electric drums while Murphy shredded his guitar projecting a layered dance combo. A steady rain came down as **Joe Hertler & The Rainbow Seekers** rose onstage at 6:15 p.m. and opened their colorful set with “What It Feels Like to Drown”. The Michigan guys rocked the stage with their 2017 album *Pluto* hits “American Color,” “Find Me”, “Crimson Line”, and “Catalyst.” They completed their set with an excellent funky rendition of the **Thundercat** cover “O Sheit, It’s The X” while frontman Hertler danced in his rainbow-feathered cloak to the closing song “Old Love”.

Colorado rock trio **Cycles** took the One Drop Stage three separate times for their 30-minute sets, steadily showcasing their heavy **Primus** influence as bassist **Tucker McClung** slapped rippling bass grooves with guitarist **Patrick Harvey** and drummer **Michael Wood**. Cleveland quartet **Broccoli Samurai** introduced their new bassist **Randy Nicklas** and amped up the crowd with their fiery “Cockstruck” and popular cover of the *Rick and Morty* theme song.

Rain ping-ponged on our ponchos as Pigeons strode onstage at 10 p.m. for their first set for Flower Power Friday. Dressed in colorful tie-dye and flowery printed outfits, Ormont exclaimed into the mic, "Hold onto your knickers!" before jumping into "Upfunk" and the *Pizazz* single "Too Long." The guys took us on a rock 'n' roll ride in the psychedelic sequence "Poseidon" > "King Kong" > "Purple Haze" > "King Kong" while lighting master **Manny Newman** led us to a full peak with his spot-on lighting drops. The rainy weather slowed Ormont's powerful voice, resulting in a remarkable leading singing debut by Petropulos in **Jefferson Airplane's** "White Rabbit", propelling the crowd in a fiery, screaming cheer of "Let Gator Sing!" The band pulled West End Blend's **John Mundy** on trombone and **Mike Bafundo** on trumpet for extra spice on their last remaining songs, including a powerful arrangement of "Schwanthem" > "Colors of the Wind" > "Schwanthem."

"White Rabbit"

[Video: [swin_dle](#)]

After a 30-minute set break, the guys returned to the stage, ready to trip us out to the flower power. Not a lyric or word was said throughout the hour-long second set as they jammed the deep-grooved bass in "Whirled." Ormont was able to save his voice and put his full focus into propelling the improvisation-jam with leading guitarist Schon to create a truly epic and memorable night, ending with an intense performance of "Avalanche" for the finishing touches.

Setlist: Pigeons Playing Ping Pong | Domefest | Bedford, PA | 5/18/18

Set One: Upfunk, Too Long > Totally, Poseidon > King Kong > Purple Haze > King Kong, White Rabbit^ > Schwanthem* > Colors of the Wind* > Schwanthem* > Fortress*, Doc*

Set Two: Whirled%

Encore: Avalanche

Notes: ^Gator on vocals, last time played 3/06/2013 | *w/ West End Blend horns | % 60+ minute version

While it continued to pour, Magic Beans let us dance in the rain until 4 a.m. with a “Night Games” sandwich consisting of “Mission” from their newest album *Casino Cabaret*, “Dr. Bubbleman”, and the **Talking Heads’** “Life During Wartime.” The four dancing beans ended Flower Power Friday with their crazy dance songs “Jabu Jabu’s Belly” and “Saddle Hands”, as the domies went to rest their pedals for a couple hours before the Saturday’s sun rose.

The people of Domefest shined themselves up for Super Shiny Saturday, and the sun finally shined through to dry up the grounds. Carrey hosted a poem sharing workshop, while lighting engineer **Manny Newman** gave attendees a behind-the-scenes look at how he dazzles up the stage. Baltimore natives **Squaring the Circle** sparked up the final day at 12:30 p.m. followed by Mateo Monk. Dressed in matching blue jumpsuits, Ohio funk band **Ernie Johnson From Detroit** took the main stage at 2:15 p.m. and provided hornful jazzy tunes to the crowd before **Backup Planet** strode onstage for their hour-and-15-minute set consisting of high-energy jams from their two most recent albums *Reactions* and *Element*.

Still recovering from a scrambled voice, Pigeons’ frontman performed as his solo act, **Scrambled Greg**, without saying a word! Holding up signs that read, “I’m Scrambled Greg, I’m going to save my voice for tonight, so I’m just gonna jam,” Ormont showcased his guitar musicianship with his own jam session. He started into a little tap dance before putting on Jamaican-attire and drummed on the bongos. The psychedelic-comedian guru played a funny track “Deep, Obvious Thoughts with Greg” and then went into his non-speaking character of a mime on stage.

Scrambled Greg

[Videos: Rob Seymour/[Jonathan Bowen](#)]

Hartford, Connecticut group **McLovins** rocked the main stage at 5:45 p.m. and played their lyrical “We Go Wild” while slipping into their upbeat track “Anxious.” Fans sang along as they performed **Tom Petty’s** “American Girl” and **Nirvana’s** “Heart-Shaped Box.” Baltimore trio **Deaf Scene** played three, 30-minute sets throughout the night, dressed in sequined shirts and debuting a new song. **Mungion** owned their 7:45 p.m. set, performing tight transitions between rock, bluegrass, and jam songs where they showcased their high-energy personas. Their natural charismatic approach to music was shown through their playful a capella comedy song “Banana Man.”

Mungion (Full Set)

[Video: [Ben Factor](#)]

For Super Shiny Saturday, Greg, Jeremy, Alex, and Ben strode their way onstage clad in robotic, silver hooded shirts. Fans were pleasantly greeted with a healthy, mighty voice from Ormont thanks to nature's finest medicine, honey, and after starting off with the instrumental "J-Town", Ormont recited the lyrics to the popular "Melting Lights." They slipped into a rendition of *Moana's* "Shiny," furthering featuring Ormont's healed chords before they went into the playful "Penguins." The band continued playing fan sing-a-long favorites including "Henrietta" and "Porcupine," and ended the first set with the strong-willed "Fun in Funk."

To start up their last set of the weekend, Ormont stated the second set is "where you let it all hang out" as they drove right into the fast "Funk E. Zekiel" followed by a strong drum solo by Petropulos. They proceeded with *The Lion King's* "I Just Can't Wait to be King," and went into a grilled cheese sandwich of "Say Cheese," where Ormont sang a hysterical ode to cheese and announced his dislike for feta cheese, cooked to perfection inside "Walk Outside."

"Say Cheese"

[Video: [Fipi Maceda](#)]

As if the night couldn't get any better, the guys went into a sentimental progression of "Dome People" and tranced us with "Su Casa" before striking the opening chords to "Horizon", and the Flock family exchanged thousands of hugs. To round out the sparkling night, a solid cover of **Pink Floyd's** "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" was placed inside the spacey "White Night."

"Shine On You Crazy Diamond"

[Video: [swin_dle](#)]

Ormont finished off the set with his crazy blue eyes bursting full of energy in "The Liquid". As the Flock hollered for another set, the guys returned and concluded their last Domefest set with the tropical tune "Julia," mixed with the *Super Mario* theme song, Schon coming to the center stage to jam out full-force and celebrate the most successful Domefest yet.

Setlist: Pigeons Playing Ping Pong | Domefest | Bedford, PA | 5/19/18

Set One: J-Town > Melting Lights > Shiny > Penguins > Funkijam > Skipjack, Henrietta, Porcupine, Couldn't We All, Dawn A New Day

Set Two: Funk E. Zekiel^ > Drums > Just Can't Wait To Be King, Walk Outside > Say Cheese > Walk Outside, Dome People > Su Casa > Horizon, White Night > Shine On You Crazy Diamond* > White Night, The Liquid

Encore: Julia > Super Mario > Julia

Notes: ^Unfinished | * First-time played

Asheville-based dance rock band **The Fritz** rocked the domies until 3 a.m. with their Talking Heads' cover "Life During Wartime" and **Elton John's** "Bennie and the Jets". Cleveland trio **Vibe & Direct** closed out Domefest 2018 and played until the sun rose up at 6 a.m., playing jam hits "Just a Taste (JAT)", "Queens and Kings", and slipping in a teaser of Gene Wilder's "Pure Imagination" from *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*.

As the sun rose to a warm and sunny 80 degrees on Sunday, the Flock family woke up and looked at the hanging pallet sign that read "Celebrate, Celebrate, Celebrate the people you love." The love was imminent throughout the weekend with the loving energy surging throughout the festival grounds as the Flock family helped those stuck in the mud get on their way. It's truly inspiring and admirable to see the band put all of their energy and work into this festival every year. The success of Domefest wouldn't be complete without Schon and Ormont's dedicated work to the festival, as well as the volunteers and Zero Waste Event Productions, who aimed to divert 90% of the waste from Domefest and lighten our carbon footprint.

Domefest is a special event where Pigeons Playing Ping Pong can work and party with their biggest fans for a weekend of fun and games and, of course, epic jams. Flock on Flockers! See you next year at the 10th annual Domefest!