

NEWPORT FOLK FESTIVAL 2018 – THE FULL GUIDE

This year marks the 53rd year of the prestigious **Newport Folk Festival** (July 27th to 29th), which every music lover must attend at least once in their life. This is easier said than done, of course, because NFF sells out in about 2 minutes when tickets go on sale in late November. The Festival only accommodates 10,000 people around Fort Adams State Park in Rhode Island, so if you want to go befriend a long-time attendee.

This intimacy and the gorgeous location are just two of NFF's great characteristics. The incredible lineup, the surprise collaborations, the spur-of-the-moment supergroups that form, and the chance to run into one of the artists or bands are others. Oh, the food, drink, vendors, and other novelties (such as the cave at the back of the court) are pretty awesome. NFF, though, is notorious for conflicts, which happens when trying to squeeze in about 23 performances a day within an 8-hour time slot (the main part of the festival runs from 11 AM to about 7:30 PM).

To assist with your planning, we've drafted another **Newport Folk Festival 2018 Guide** to assist you with your planning and the inevitable dilemmas on who to see. Unlike past years, we've squeezed all three days into one overview, but we'll break it down to their individual day as well. A Spotify playlist is also available.

The NFF 2018 app, though, is still the place to see the entire schedule ([download options here](#)). In addition, we highly recommend that you connect with the Festival on social media to get all the latest news, developments, and updates on who is unexpectedly performing.

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#)

Newport Folk Festival 2018 – Day One

Each day of the Festival always commences with the **Open Mic (10:00 AM, Museum)**, at which time aspiring artists get to strum a few tunes before the main festivities commence. Could a future NFF headliner be performing in front of our eyes? Or are you one wishing to stand on the Fort or Quad Stages in front of a few thousand music lovers? You'll have to get to the Festival early either way to discover new talent or showcase what you have. It's also a good idea to come early...

...to hear the gorgeous harmonies and the indie dreamy genius of [Darlingside](#) (11:00, Harbor). Given that the four-piece are from nearby Cambridge, Massachusetts, expect them to put on the best show of their lives. Furthermore, expect to hear something old (they started off as an indie-folk band) to something refreshingly new and inventive (think Vampire Weekend going folk)...

...while singer-songwriter [Johnny Irion](#) (11:00, Museum) will deliver some classic folk- and country-rock. Most people will know Irion from his work with his wife [Sarah Lee Guthrie](#), but earlier this year Irion released his debut solo LP, *Driving Friend*, which featured members of

Dawes, Wilco, Nicki Bluhm, and The Gramblers. This alone displays the respect he has earned in his nearly three-decade career, and those who see him will be rewarded with moving and intimate stories...

...but [Tuck & Patti](#)'s (11:00, **Quad**) story might be the Festival's most moving moment. For over four decades, the married couple have been performing together, and to this day they continue to experiment and expand their sound. Folk, blues, R&B, rock, and jazz, they've done it all, but they're mostly known for their innovative take on jazz with William Charles "Tuck" Andress perfecting his *soft virtuosity* approach and Patricia "Patti" Cathcart Andress serenading audiences with one of the most captivating voices in all of music...

...and captivation will be in order when [Fantastic Negrito](#) (11:20, **Fort**) arrives. The Massachusetts native now Oakland resident rose to indie stardom when he won NPR's Tiny Desk competition in 2015 and since then Xavier Amin Dphrepaulezz has been blowing the minds of concert-goers with his blazing mix of blues, R&B, soul, and rock as well as his politically- and socially-charged lyrics. This show is the Festival's wake-up call...

...and [Courtney Marie Andrews](#) (12:00, **Museum**) is the first of many artists that people will be talking about long after the Festival concludes. A long-time favorite of ours and a seasoned musician whom Ryan Adams has praised, the 27-year old Andrews has already released six albums! Her latest, [May Your Kindness Remain](#), rekindles the magic of '70s country and country-rock, and it should be recognized as one of the year's very best, just like how her previous record, *Honest Life*, was in [2016](#). Discover why audiences in Europe have embraced her...

...or alternatively discover the worldly talents of Mali's [Sidi Touré](#)'s (12:05, **Harbor**) music. You don't need to speak nor understand French. All you need is an open mind and be willing to stand, dance, and clap, as the Bamako-based artist and his band deliver their inventive brand of songhaï blues. If you have no idea what this is, then go see the quartet and be mesmerized by exquisite guitar work while shaking your hips to the Afro-beat rhythms...

...but if the fiddle is your thing, then [Amanda Shires](#) (12:15, **Quad**) should be the choice. Don't expect, however, a classic performance. Instead, prepare for a roots-rock / rock 'n roll show that will make you think the hour is 10 PM and not just the start of the afternoon. Her fifth album, *To The Sunset*, is set to be released on August 3rd, and it promises to be a rollicking effort. Don't be surprised if Jason Isbell & the 400 Unit show up...

...and expect a few surprises when [JD McPherson](#) (12:35, **Fort**) takes the stage. The celebrated blues-rocker / rockabilly revivalist is no stranger to NFF, and a few of his closest friends will be performing during the three days. As such, anticipate a few guests to show up, but keep your eyes fixated on the Oklahoma native because he and his band will have the audience in a jubilant mood. He'll also get them fired up with some not-so-light banter, which is another part of NFF's appeal...

...and [Erika Wennerstrom](#) (1:00, **Museum**) is one to never hold anything back. The Heartless Bastards front woman possesses one of the most unique and incredible voices, which adds to the intensity of her songs that range from intimate, personal tales to observations of the state of the

world. Her solo debut album, [Sweet Unknown](#), though, is Wennerstrom's the most emotional, heartfelt, and uplifting output, where she shares tales of redemption and strength. It's a bit of a shame that she's in the Museum because her voice could fill up the entire State Park...

...while Kate Stables and her band [This Is The Kit \(1:30, Harbor\)](#) will leave people hushed with their spellbinding indie-folk. Their last album, *Moonshine Freeze*, was 40 minutes of attention-grabbing music, where every blissful note and immaculate lyric left listeners in suspended motion. Her presence at Newport Folk Festival is also one of achievement, as it wasn't until her third album, 2015's [Bashed Out](#), and after more than a decade of constant touring that brought her into indie limelight...

...which is an experience that outlaw country artist [Tyler Childers \(1:25, Quad\)](#) knows far too well. While Childers is still relatively young (still just 27-years old), he's been active for nearly a decade and his debut album, *Bottles and Bibles*, barely registered on music charts and across the blogosphere. Undeterred, he continued to ply his trade, releasing two EPs and constantly touring. Eventually, [as predicted](#), people started to know his name, including Sturgill Simpson, who would produce Childers' breakthrough sophomore LP, *Purgatory*. Now, Childers is one of country music's shining stars...

...standing alongside the incomparable [Margo Price \(1:50, Fort\)](#). The Nashville native has been a mainstay at NFF, having performed or supported artists at the Festival the past two years, including [her memorable duet with Kris Kristofferson](#). This time around, however, fellow performers will be lining up to collaborate with country music's new queen, the next Tammy Wynette and Dolly Parton if you will. Yes, indeed, royalty is in the house...

...and speaking of which, [The Autumn Defense \(2:05, Museum\)](#) features two kings of indie rock and Americana. They are John Stirratt and Pat Sansone, who are known for their work with the great Wilco (Stirratt is an original member and was with Uncle Tupelo). Together, they head west and back into time, recreating the lavish sounds of '70s LA rock. Their presence at the Museum will make the old brick building feel like Venice Beach or Malibu, where the few dozen patrons inside will think they're cruising or rollerblading down the grand boardwalks...

...yet nearby a Los Angeles artist will be swooning audiences with his deft instrumentation, sensual voice, and brilliant mix of classic R&B, soul, folk, downtempo, and trip hop. His name is [Moses Sumney \(2:25, Harbor\)](#), who is one of music's grandest and most respected innovators. Somehow, Sumney continues to fly under the radar with mainstream audiences, but mention his name to Sufjan Stevens or Solange Knowles and they speak glowingly about his talents. We highly expect him to be one of the most talked-about artists when the three days conclude...

...and new supergroup [Glorietta \(2:40, Quad\)](#) will also be in the conversation. Featuring Jason Robert Blum, Noah Gundersen, Adrian Quesada, David Ramirez, Matthew Logan Vasquez, and Kelsey Wilson, this collective would seem to be the genesis of NFF Executive Producer Jay Sweet (and maybe it was). As such, they are a natural fit for the festival, and their rollicking country-rock and Americana will have everyone under the big tent up on their feet. Expect several massive ovations ...

...which will also be the case for [Lucius \(3:10, Fort\)](#). For the past four NFFs, Jess Wolf and Holly Laessig have been everywhere. We mean everywhere! They've performed with the full band, sang with Mavis Staples, and backed up Roger Waters during his incredible performance in 2015. This time around, the entire quartet will be at the Fort, and they likely won't be alone. We fully anticipate they'll be joined by several special guests (we suggest starting a pool with your friends) as well as them including some classic folk tunes to go with their upbeat pop fare on their excellent 2016 album, [Good Grief..](#)

...and these two words likely will be uttered by those who stay for the three-hour musical treat, [Hotel Song Swap \(3:30 to 6:30, Museum\)](#). Six extremely talented bands and artists will take the stage for between 20 to 30 minutes, sharing stories and songs related to their lives as touring musicians. Oh, expect them to cover some Townes Van Zandt plus collaborating together on a few numbers. The guests include rock 'n roll outfit [The Band Heathens \(3:30\)](#); award-winning country artist [Jack Ingram \(4:00\)](#); indie chameleon [Butch Walker \(4:30\)](#); living guitar legend and country-rock artist [Paul Cauthen \(5:00\)](#); rising Americana / country-folk singer-songwriter [John Fullbright \(5:30\)](#); and the firebrand rock 'n roll of [Jonathan Tyler \(6:30\)](#). The collaboration potential is off-the-charts and maybe a new supergroup could form out of this...

...which is what [Rachael & Vilray \(3:45, Harbor\)](#) are. Featuring Rachael Price of Lake Street Dive and composer and songwriter Vilray, the longtime friends first met at the New England Conservatory of Music 2003. While their main projects have long been retro-inspired, they're turning the clocks further back and reinterpreting the blues, jazz, and pop of the '20s, '30s, and '40s. As such, expect several audience members to utter the names Gershwin, Billie Holiday, Etta James, and Frank Sinatra and deservedly so because the duo's songs are as timeless...

...as the beautiful music (and magic) created by [Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite \(4:10, Quad\)](#). The duo first collaborated in 2013 and released the Grammy-winning *Get Up!* Five years later, they returned with another record, *No Mercy In This Land*, that will surely garner Grammy attention in 2019. While the two bridge classic folk arrangements with contemporary blues-rock, they've kept the one characteristic common to both genres – capturing today's history through fearless storytelling...

...and this trait explains why [Sturgill Simpson \(4:40, Fort\)](#) has become a living legend within the country scene, especially after he unexpectedly took home the 2017 Grammy for Album of the Year with the transcendent *A Sailor's Guide to Earth*. His music is unlike anything in music let alone country. He can get gritty and dirty and belt out roaring outlaw country tunes. He can dial back the noise and serenade with an intimate and personal story. Then he'll add some doo-wop, orchestral pop, soul, and Motown. And he does all of this within one song let alone an entire LP. He'll go down as one of music's great artists...

...which is a title that should be bestowed upon [The Wood Brothers \(5:10, Harbor\)](#). Like some of their contemporaries, they have avoided using boiler plates and tackling the same old topics. They've instead merged roots, blues, and folk into one unique and evocative sound. Think of a concert at Levon Helm's farm, where any number of artists from across many genres come together for one night to perform. At the end of the evening, they're jamming together and

creating something new and refreshing. That's the power and brilliance of Oliver Wood, Chris Wood, and Jano Rix...

...and in the case of Annie Clark – a.k.a. [St. Vincent](#) (**5:40, Quad**) – everyone acknowledges her genius, including David Byrne. Clark is everything in the proverbial musical kitchen sink – guitar god, songwriter extraordinaire, incomparable composer, and stunning vocalist. She's also no one-trick pony, as exhibited by her synth-driven, latest album, [MASSEUCATION](#). Oh, she's also a talented choreographer, who scripts her concerts right to the finest detail. What she will have in store at Newport is unknown, but given the setting and environment expect her to change things up and possibly ad lib it a bit. No matter how she approaches the performance, she will most likely leave people completely captivated and talking about her show for a very long time...

...just like what [Jason Isbell](#) did back in 2013 and again in 2015. Since those shows, many people have clamored for the former Drive-by Truckers member to headline one of the Festival's days, and he'll get that opportunity with his band **The 400 Unit** (**6:15, Fort**). While they will likely play plenty from their last album, *The Nashville Sound*, don't be surprised if Isbell and company go off the board and cover some politically- and socially-charged numbers. This is Newport Folk Festival after all – it's not merely another music festival but a gathering of the like-minded who wish to positively change the world. There isn't a better artist to end Day 1 than one of America's most gifted songwriters.

Newport Folk Festival 2018 – Day Two

Following the traditional **Open Mic** (**10:00 AM, Museum**), Day Two of Newport Folk Festival 2018 kicks off with some crowd-pleasing bluegrass Americana in the form of Boston's own [CAAMP](#) (**11:00, Harbor**). Imagine Hozier dropping in on a The Head and The Heart rehearsal and that's essentially what you get with Taylor and Evan's project. Or in other words, the duo will likely be one of the Festival's unlikely stars who will be asked to return in two years time...

...which is the time elapsed between [Kaia Kater](#)'s (**11:00, Museum**) sensational album *Slow Burn* and her debut appearance at NFF. The Toronto-based banjo expert and singer-songwriter gives bluegrass and indie-folk a dark, mystical appeal, which makes the Museum the perfect setting for her Appalachian folklore. Come and take notes and photos because a little bit of history will be made this morning, specifically a young woman making a permanent mark on the Festival and leading people to draw comparisons to Gillian Welch, Ruthie Foster, and Abigail Washburn...

...while Philadelphia old-school rockers [Low Cut Connie](#) (**11:10, Quad**) will be compared to everyone from J. Roddy Walston and the Business to Okkervil River. And you know what that means – a jolly good time will be had under the big tent with plenty of hand clapping, dancing, and screaming and shouting. But the sextet will do more than entertain, they will also amuse and provoke with their tales of long road trips and struggling to get through life's many obstacles. They are, in a sense, an American band through and through...

...and [Curtis Harding](#) (**11:30, Fort**) is the artist who is the new flag bearer of retro R&B and soul. He is the heir to Charles Bradley, Sharon Jones, and Lee Fields, which he emphatically proved on his remarkable 2017 album, *Face Your Fear* (which was [one of our 50 Favorite Albums of 2017](#)). Now Harding won't dress up in the bright, silky attire that the late Mr. Bradley once donned, but like The Screaming Eagle of Soul he'll bring you back to the '50s, '60s, and '70s when the genres were at their artistic heights. He'll also get you on your feet and moving...

...whereas [Bedouine](#) (**12:05, Harbor**) will make you feel wistful with her arresting dream-folk. The project of Syrian-born Azniv Kornejian, Bedouine's story is one that personifies the American Dream – a young woman and her family immigrating to the USA and doing things they could never have imagined before. She translates some of her experiences and emotions on her gorgeous [debut album](#), which was celebrated by *The Independent* newspaper in the UK, *The Guardian*, Mojo, and Uncut. Now NFF goers will get to be charmed and dazzled by one of 2017's [hidden gems](#)...

...and this label should also be reserved for singer-songwriter [Zane Campbell](#) (**12:05, Museum**). The country-bluegrass-folk artist is like the bridge between the past and the present, bringing together the classic music that once filled the Smokey Mountains with more modern takes of folk and even touches of punk (at least in his songwriting, where he's unafraid to get political). As you sit and listen to him, you might quietly hope that the Cohens will make a sequel to *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, with Campbell responsible for the soundtrack...

...while the criminally underrated [Hiss Golden Messenger](#) (**12:15, Quad**) has been writing the soundtracks to our lives for more than a decade. Led by M.C. Taylor, the folk-rock outfit from North Carolina have delivered one memorable album after another, including 2017's *Hallelujah Anyhow* and their 2016 masterpiece *Heart Like a Levee*. If their performance at the 2015 edition and Deer Tick's post-NFF show are any indications, their performance should be one of the most energetic and explosive of the Festival. The big tent won't be able to contain them...

...and thankfully NFF scheduled [Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real](#) (**12:30, Fort**) for the big stage because his combination of country-rock and roots-rock is boisterous. Actually, that might be an understatement. Their set will feel like a party both in the field and on the stage. With respect to the latter, expect the Lucius ladies to be singing backup (they did on their 2017 self-titled album) and other guests to join them. For instance, we could use the Deer Tick and Middle Brother lads showing up...

...and who knows who might make a presence at [Nicole Atkins](#) Digs Other People's Music (**1:10, Museum**). Anyone who has followed the New Jersey native's career knows that she's a throwback, creating retro soul and pop for the most part. She'll showcase this side on Sunday, but on Saturday she will be covering some classic tunes. Exactly what, we have no clue, but if we had to guess we would imagine maybe some Billie Holiday, Fiona Apple, June Carter, and Woody Guthrie. Yes, she is that versatile...

...as is [Daniel Norgren](#) (**1:15, Harbor**). Most pigeonhole the Swedish artist as a folk musician, but he is so much more. He is an innovator who makes bold, breathtaking, and cinematic soundscapes. He definitely can craft a stunning folk tune, but he's at his best when he channels

his inner José González and Sam Beam and casts a spell upon all those listening. There won't be anything more beautiful to hear during the three days than Norgren's intimate songs...

...and there won't be anything as outrageously fun and ostentatious (we say this as a compliment) as [Tank and The Bangas' \(1:25, Quad\)](#) set early in the afternoon. The winners of the [2017 NPR Tiny Desk contest](#), the New Orleans collective have developed a reputation for their energetic shows and a style that has no definition. Funk, pop, soul, hip hop, and blues, they are a kaleidoscope of sounds and emotions. One moment, they could be banging out catchy tunes à la Sly and The Family Stone and the next moment front woman Tarriona Ball turns into Mary J. Blige, Macy Gray, and Lauren Hill – and all within one song. Get a seat early because the tent will likely be overflowing...

...whereas the front barrier at the Fort will be overwhelmed with fans of [Valerie June \(1:50, Fort\)](#). It's hard to believe that it has been almost a decade since June first appeared on music fans' radar with her exceptionally unique voice and style, which blends folk, Americana, soul, gospel, and blues. Anyone who saw her in 2014 at NFF will still remember the powerful yet intimate performance she gave at the Quad. This time around, however, she gets to grace thousands of fans at the grandest stage of them all...

...on which the underrated and underappreciated [Laura Veirs \(2:15, Museum\)](#) will hopefully one day perform. This way, more people can discover the talent of one of the 21st Century's great singer-songwriters. Every single one of her albums is excellent, including the recently released *The Lookout* and our personal favorite, 2010's *July Flame*. For fifty minutes, Veirs will send those in attendance through the rabbit hole and into her brilliant and imaginative world, where the grandest stories and fairy tales come to life...

...and the past 18 months has been exactly that for [Phoebe Bridgers \(2:25, Harbor\)](#). She teased people with her talent in 2014 with a couple of singles and covers and again in 2015 with Ryan Adams-produced EP, *Killer*. It was in 2017, however, that saw the LA-based artist truly break through. Her debut album, *Stranger in the Alps*, was beyond beautiful. It was [a piece of masterful art and literature](#) that ended up on a few "Best of" or "[Favorites](#)" lists. Like how her friend Julien Baker did back in 2016, we fully anticipate the audience and everyone walking by to be silent when she takes the stage and in complete awe of her quiet power...

...and the star power that makes up [Beneath The Sacred Mountain: A Cosmic American Revue \(2:40, Quad\)](#) will equally leave mouths agape. Curated by [Matthew E. White](#) and [Phil Cook](#), we're not exactly sure what to expect. We do know that the Spacebomb house band will be on stage. We can also guess that this set will delve deep into the history of American music, possibly a mix of Americana, folk, bluegrass, and possibly psychedelia. There probably will be plenty of special guests joining these two great songwriters and producers, which translates to unforgettable memories to be created...

...just like every [Shakey Graves \(3:10, Fort\)](#) performance. Better known to friends and family as Alejandro Rose-Garcia, the Austin native will grace the big stage for the first time (not including the times he participated in the big collective shows), and there's no question that he's ready for it. For that matter, he probably should have been on the Fort a few years ago and an argument

could be made he should be on later. Expect there to be a lot of movement on and off the stage, as Rose-Garcia should be joined by a supporting band, a host of guests, and performing as a one-man band, which is how it all first began. What will be interesting to observe is how he translates his 2017 album / double EP – *Shakey Graves And The Horse He Rode In On (Nobody's Fool and The Donor Blues EP)* – to the big stage, as it was a low-key and intimate affair. Then again, maybe he'll focus on the rocking *Can't Wake Up*. But given this is Shakey Graves, we know he will deliver one of this year's marquee sets...

... while back inside, one of NFF's finest friends [JP Harris](#) will be curating a collaboration explosion called **Outside Folk (3:30-6:15, Museum)**. Gifted guitarists and great songwriters from across multiple genres – folk, rock, country, Americana, blues, psychedelic – will team up to cover classics and possibly share new tunes they've created (or spontaneously crafted on the spot). There will be plenty of storytelling and lots of laughs to go long with the great music. Scheduled performers include: [Jonathan Tyler & Ramsay Midwood \(3:30\)](#); [Matt the Electrician & Chris Smither \(4:05\)](#); [JP Harris & Patrick Haggerty of The Autumn Defense \(4:50\)](#); [Lula Wiles & Valerie Mindel \(5:30\)](#). Hopefully someone will be recording this....

...and hopefully the cameras will be on when country-folk-Americana singer-songwriter [Colter Wall \(3:40, Harbor\)](#) takes the stage. The Saskatchewan native checks all the boxes when it comes to describing a "throwback" artist – low-key, husky vocals, stories about life on the road, and always with his trusty guitar. The closest comparable we can think of is the legend John Prine. Colter has that kind of talent. The type of talent that one day people will be comparing new, young artists to him...

...although it seems [Jenny Lewis \(4:05, Quad\)](#) has long been the standard to which indie artists are held. There are plenty of reasons for why the former Rilo Kiley front woman has been adored by fans and critics. She's not one to stay stationary, effortlessly moving between indie-pop, country-pop, indie-rock, Americana, alt-country, and orchestral pop throughout her career. There's her bedroom-style vocals to go with her intimate and personal style of songwriting. And then there is her presence on stage, where the lights and all eyes become fixated on her. Lewis hasn't released anything new since her excellent [The Voyager](#) album in 2014, but there are rumors she's working on something new. So maybe she will offer some surprises...

...but for [Courtney Barnett \(4:40, Fort\)](#) she won't surprise anyone anymore. This isn't a critique of the Melbourne singer-songwriter, label owner, producer, and all-around one awesome individual. Instead, it is an acknowledgement that her hard work of the past five years – two albums, a collaborative record with Kurt Vile, a double EP, and constant touring across the globe – has finally paid off. She is recognized as one of the world's most gifted lyricists and greatest live performers. Every record she's released has exceeded excellence, including her latest, [Tell Me How You Feel](#), which will most likely be on many of 2018's "Best of" or "Favorites" lists. The last time she played Newport (in 2016), the Quad almost exploded. How the Fort will hold up is a question we cannot wait to have answered...

...and another question we would like to have answered is why did it take NFF so long to bring [Hamilton Leithauser + Rostam \(5:00, Harbor\)](#) to Rhode Island. Well, we know schedules don't always line up, and it's better later than never at all. This super-duo featuring two of indie's and

NYC's finest artists is like ice and lemonade – the perfect combination for a summer's evening. Their first album together, *I Had A Dream That You Were Mine*, is literally made of dreams. It is an eye-popping and imaginative affair, so expect to see the audience at the Harbor paralyzed and entranced...

...yet laughter will emanating on the other side of the Fort Adams when [Cheech & Chong](#) (**5:30, Quad**) entertain the crowd. Will they sing and dance or do a stand-up comedy routine? Will they smoke a joint or four while performing? How many bongos will they have and how large will they be? With the famed comedic duo, expect than unexpected and come ready to have your belly aching with laughter. This should be one of the more unforgettable occasions of the Festival...

...and likewise whomever the **Unannounced (6:15, Fort)** artist/band is. We have heard rumors (such as one of the great folk-rock quartets of all-time), but it could also be more simplistic (e.g. Uncle Tupelo reuniting or Wilco performing given how many of the band members are at Newport). Or maybe Jay Sweet will do a stand-up routine, belt a few tunes, or allow Matt Vasquez to bury his belly into the NFF Executive Director's face once more (you had to be at the Blues Café two years ago to understand this). Whoever shall grace the main stage, it sure will be a landmark event, which is saying something for a Festival filled with them.

Newport Folk Festival 2018 – Day Three

Like Friday and Saturday, Day Three commences with the popular **Open Mic (10:00 AM, Museum)**, which allows aspiring musicians to strut their stuff and receive some pointers. Once upon a time, Mt Davidson and his band mates– a.k.a. [Twain](#) (**11:00, Harbor**) – were dreaming of touring the world and performing at one of the most prestigious festivals in the world. Here they are, proving that dreams do come true if one puts in the thousands of hours of work and releasing one of 2017's most stunning albums in *Rare Feeling*. You'll be moved by his music, stories, and incredible voice...

...and on this Sunday morning the presence of Michael Trotter, Jr. and Tanya Blount-Trotter's project [The War and Treaty](#) (**11:05, Quad**) will elicit different emotions. Specifically, they will lift everyone's spirits and clean our souls with their roots and gospel blend. It will only take about 30 seconds for everyone under the tent to feel their power and succumb to it, allowing the duo to take us to the musical promised land. Get ready to shake your hips, clap your hands, and build up a little sweat...

..which certainly will be on order during **The Sunday Groove Featuring Preservation Hall Jazz Band** (**11:15, Fort**). Over the past five years, the great New Orleans collective have become NFF's house band with their booming and energetic brand of jazz and engaging personalities. This time slot, meanwhile, has been reserved for them the last four years. If the past is any indication, Pres Hall will guide the procession on a fifty-minute cardio workout with 86-year old saxophone and clarinet player, the always smiling Charlie Gabriel, leading the way...

...but if you prefer something low-key and more intimate than [Kiki Cavazos](#) (11:30, Museum) is a must-see. It's not just because the confines of the Museum will be more relaxing, but the Montana native will take you back to the 1920s Mississippi delta with her throwback bluegrass and folk style. Harmonica, steel guitar, and a classic voice that has an air of Patsy Cline, and Cavazos will be one of the artists that festival-goers will be telling their friends all about long NFF is over...

...while [Jen Cloher](#) (12:05, Harbor) needs no introduction. Well, the long-time Melbourne-based artist really should not because she is only one of Australia's best and most decorated singer-songwriters. She can rock hard with the best of in the industry or tone things down and turn into Joni Mitchell. Which version she will reveal on this afternoon is a mystery, but she is guaranteed to grab everyone's attention with her music and deeply personal and emotional stories. For those first discovering Cloher, they'll get to understand why *The Guardian* called her 2017 self-titled album "a slow-burning masterpiece from a first-class songwriter"...

...and one of 2018's masterpieces is [Khruangbin](#)'s (12:15, Quad) *Con Todo El Mundo*. An early favorite for album of the year, Laura Lee (bass), Mark Speer (guitar), and Donald "DJ" Johnson (drums) infuse the sounds of the Middle East with groovy and dreamy Western psych-rock textures. Vocals are limited in their music, but there is no need for them when the music is as mesmerizing and enchanting as what the London-based trio create. They are, in other words, the snake charmers of the music world, transfixing and captivating all those who get close to their exotic sounds...

...whereas Michael David Rosenberg – a.k.a. [Passenger](#) (12:30, Fort) – serenades his audiences with moving dream-folk tunes and moving folk-pop ballads. Despite his fame, the former busker remains a humbled individual, often engaging the crowd and telling light-hearted, personal stories. People come, however, for his songs, which often take on the tone of a fairy tale and other times a myth coming to life. In some respects, his own life is a myth that is now the hallmarks of a legend...

...whereas the worldly traveler [Becca Mancari](#) (12:35, Museum) is an unknown legend for now. For those who have already had the privilege to hear her sing and experience the journeys and lessons that fill her stories, they know that the Nashville-based artist has the chance to be as popular and influential as Sharon Van Etten, Lucius, and Beach House. This isn't just name-dropping – Mancari combines all these great artists' gifts into one individual, crafting widescreen, dreamy soundscapes and emotionally moving tales. The Museum isn't big enough to hold her expansive sound, but seeing her in this intimate setting will be an experience to behold...

...and likewise when the Tamara Lindeman-led outfit [The Weather Station](#) (1:15, Harbor) gather on the adjacent stage. Their participation at NFF is a long-awaited and much-deserved one, as the Toronto-based band have been wowing critics for a decade. Their 2017 self-titled album was their breakthrough, as it [was celebrated around the world](#). *Exclaim!* called it "Lindeman's loosest, most confident album yet, but it may also prove to be her most deeply psychological". As Lindeman reveals her soul on this Sunday afternoon, expect an appreciative audience to honor her with continuous applause and salute her for her perseverance and achievements...

...while on the other side of the wall guitar fanatics and Wilco fans will be assembling to see [Nels Cline's Curtis Rogers Memorial Resonator Excursion \(1:30, Quad\)](#). Details on this special event are scant, but the guess is that Cline will be armed with a couple of dozen guitars and joined on stage by other guitar gods. Together, they'll jam for nearly an hour and tell stories about the first time they picked up a twelve-string. Well, that's what we think will happen. It's also possible this will be a show-and-tell performance, where Cline shares his huge collection of quirky guitars. Goes without saying that such an event is one to see ...

...as is the [Cordovas' \(1:40, Museum\)](#) performance. Although they come from the Nashville, don't shrug them off and think they're just another typical, Music City band. There are few – if any – groups who sound like the quintet. Their blend of Americana, roots-rock, and classic rock with hints of psychedelia will have old-school Deadheads smiling just as much as their hipster grandkids, which describes Newport Folk Festival's demographic. In other words, this is one of the shows on the program that will bring older and younger music fans together...

...and so will [The Lone Bellow \(1:50, Fort\)](#). After shooting to immediate indie stardom with the release of their self-titled debut album in 2011, the trio, unlike other Americana and indie-folk bands, have not rested on their laurels. They continue to evolve as musicians and songwriters, wading into darker and more mystical environments to complement their uplifting and boisterous anthems and melodic ballads. As a result, they've become favorites of the Festival collectively and individually, which means a few surprise appearances (cough *** Brandi Carlile *** cough). It also means their performance will at times feel like one big campfire sign-a-long and other times a family gathering with arms linked together...

...meanwhile, [Nicole Atkins' \(2:25, Harbor\)](#) second performance of the Festival will feel like the '40s, '50s, '60s, and '70s. This isn't because she'll be covering other people's songs, like she'll do on Saturday. On the contrary, she'll be sharing all original music, which has been influenced by pop-noir, classic country-folk, vintage soul and R&B, and neo-psychedelia. Her show, as such, will be like seeing ten performances all at once, especially if she plays a lot from her excellent 2017 album, [Goodnight Rhonda Lee](#), which landed on several year-end lists (including [our own](#)). To truly appreciate her talent, however, one must see her live...

...which also holds true when it comes to the king of "dad country" [Jonny Fritz \(2:45, Quad\)](#). Previously known as Johnny Corndawg, Fritz is another of a long line of Newport favorites thanks to his quirky and imaginative take of alternative country rock and support from Deer Tick, Dawes, and Alabama Shakes. At one point, he and his talented band will take you to the barn dances that filled up each weekend in the deep south and another moment he's swinging a rollicking tune made for the saloons of the Wild West. But people gravitate to Fritz's music because he is one of the great storytellers of his generation. He's one part Seth MacFarlane and another part Spike Jonze, where his imagination knows no bounds ...

...whereas [Toots and The Maytals \(2:45, Quad\)](#) have long been breaking new ground with their summertime reggae. Entering their sixth decade as, this is the one opportunity to see living legends on stage and be reminded what it was like to live in Jamaica in the '60s and '70s. The massive collective, however, have not stayed stagnant nor have they relegated themselves to being a legacy band. On the contrary, they've expanded their approach to infuse funk, Motown,

and vintage soul elements, making some of their songs sound like they were born in Harlem or Detroit. That said, they're still a reggae band who will bring the sweet grooves and heat...

...just like [Gary Clark, Jr.](#) (**3:15, Fort**) will be on the big stage, but he does these things with his fiery blues-rock. One of the 21st Century's great guitarists – if not preeminent guitarist – Clark, Jr. has been compared to every great. Hendrix, Santana, Vaughn, Beck, Page, Berry, Prince, you name it and he's been mentioned alongside them. The Austin native, though, isn't a one-trick pony, as he's become a gifted songwriter in the Buddy Guy mould. From social and political issues to sharing his own personal struggles and demons to discussing faith, Clark, Jr. covers it all. He is, as such, the complete package...

...as is folk, country, and bluegrass artist [Charlie Parr](#) (**3:40, Harbor**). One of the great finger-picking guitar players of his generation and a songwriter from the John Prine school, the Minnesota native remains one of music's most underappreciated and underrated artists. But those in the know realize that the self-described "hobo" has the rare gift of occupying an immense stage and commanding everyone's attention. And he does this while seated, picking at his guitar, and sharing his stories about an ordinary guy's life in the ever-changing land called America...

...and [Joe Purdy](#) (**3:50, Museum**) is an all-American singer-songwriter who likewise prefers his emotional and powerful stories to do the talking. There aren't many special bells and whistles in Purdy's music (maybe the occasional strings accompaniment) nor overdriven guitars, which speaks to his special talent. His 2016 album, *Who Will Be Next?*, is considered [to be an American classic](#), as he tackles issues of racism, hate, and violence in the US. The record is comparable to Dylan's *When The Times They Are A-Changin'*, one that captures history through music and will long be remembered as one of the decade's most important and necessary...

...and should Brittany Howard of Alabama Shakes, Becca Mancari, and Jesse Lafser continue to perform as [Bermuda Triangle](#) (**4:10, Quad**), they, too, could go down as one of country and folk music's most celebrated and revered trios in history. Unlike their own projects, the threesome create low-key and intimate songs that are focused on gorgeous three-part harmonies and stories about being a woman and a stranger in today's USA. While their tunes have a solemn vibe, there should be at least three memorable, jaw-gaping moments, just like there were when the last time a powerhouse, all-women trio last graced the Quad Stage (case/lang/viers)...

...while the powerhouse that is [Brandi Carlile](#) (**4:45, Fort**) will deliver unforgettable moments throughout her set. Her latest album, *By the Way, I Forgive You*, [has been applauded far and wide](#), and her performance on [Jimmy Kimmel Live!](#) left several mouths agape. Much of the same should occur on this late Sunday afternoon with thousands of people standing, clapping, and paralyzed in utter enchantment, particularly when she sings, "The Joke", which is one of the songs of the year. This is a show not to be missed...

...although movie buffs and NFF historians will want to catch a viewing of [Two Trains Runnin'](#) (**5:00, Museum**). Presented by newportFILM, the documentary presents how famous blues musicians from the 1930s ended up playing in the 1964 Newport Folk Festival. The film is sure to be a tear-jerker, highlighting the difficulties it was for many artists, particularly African-Americans, to be heard and seen. *Two Trains Runnin'*, however, is more than just a musical

journey or movie. It is also one that depicts the progress America has made and the challenges it still confronts today...

...which are subjects [Langhorne Slim and The Lost at Last Band](#) (5:05, Harbor) are unafraid to address in their music. In addition, the Americana phenomenon from Nashville is open in sharing his own struggles and personal demons, but Sean Scolnick does it in a way that is either uplifting and energizing or intimate and relateable. He's not the preaching type, although when he takes the stage he does have the presence of the most eloquent and powerful orator. A presence that no individual can detach themselves from...

...unless they happen to be watching [Glen Hansard](#) (5:35, Quad). The Irish singer-songwriter is a living legend on both sides of the pond, dating back to his time with The Frames and then later The Swell Season. Although he's mostly associated with folk music, Hansard showed on his last album, *Between Two Shores*, that he can create vintage rock 'n roll. As such, he just might break out a guitar solo and go electric à la Dylan. Here's also hoping for a few surprise collaborations (like Brandi Carlile and/or Brittany Andrews showing up for "Drive All Night")...

...which will be plentiful at the closing set, [A Change Is Gonna Come](#) (6:15, Fort). The title is adapted from Sam Cooke's posthumous hit of the same name. The legendary soul, gospel, and R&B singer wrote the song following Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind", the latter which described a racist incident that Cooke experienced at a Shreveport, Louisiana hotel. So this final concert will involve dozens of artists who performed throughout the three days as well as unexpected and unannounced guests, and led by Jon Batiste with The Dap-Kings they will cover the great protest songs of the past. There is no better way to end one of the greatest festivals on the planet – bringing everyone together on and around a single stage to promote positive change. And this is what makes Newport Folk Festival so special and why ten thousand people from across the globe return each year.