Another successful Maplewoodstock is in the books. The Maplewoodstock Volunteer Committee would like to thank our community for continuing to support our festival, especially this year as the weather was constantly threatening. We often joke amongst ourselves about the Maplewoodstock “weather bubble”. We’ve had a number of years when it rained all around New Jersey during the festival weekend, but somehow it always seemed to miss Memorial Park…and we almost made it again this year.

Maplewoodstock is a labor of love for the 8 volunteers who produce and manage the festival. This is a private event that would never happen without the support of so many. First, we’d like to thank Mayor Dean Dafis and the entire Maplewood Township Committee, especially our liaisons Nancy Adams and Jamaine Cripe. Ms. Adams and Ms. Cripe not only work with us to help us coordinate with all the Township departments who participate, they are also big fans of the festival. Speaking of the Township departments, the committee would like to especially thank the Maplewood Police Department, Department of Public Works, South Essex EMS the South Orange First Aid Squad and the other departments who assist and advise us throughout the planning process. The festival cannot happen without their coordination and participation. We would be remiss if we did not also thank the Maplewood Township Administrator, Liz Fritzen, who is always our first point of contact as we plan each year’s festival. She is definitely the “keeper of the keys”. Also, thank you to the South Mountain YMCA for the use of the Memorial Park Civic House as our “green room”. Laurellie Jacob Martinez’s all-volunteer sign language interpreters, besides being widely entertaining, have always been a wonderful addition to the festival, allowing more individuals to enjoy our community event.

Saturday kicked off with local favorite Essex Funk Collective and kept rocking all the way through to our Saturday Headiners; Red Baraat and CHS graduate and co-founder of the band Twiddle, Mihali.

Red Baraat may not have been known by too many folks at the festival, but they sure do know them now! This Brooklyn base band describe their sound as “merging of hard driving North Indian bhangra with elements of hip-hop, jazz and raw punk energy. Created with no less a purposeful agenda than manifesting joy and unity in all people.” By all accounts they achieved their agenda!

Mihali is well known in our community. Growing up in Maplewood, attending previous Maplewoodstock festivals, and graduation from CHS. He left Maplewood to pursue his dream and co-founded the band Twiddle. He is currently writing and touring as Mihali. He describes his style as “following reggae’s evolutionary ebb and flow with a balance of other musical influences”. He and the crowd got a bit emotional at times as he reminisced about his childhood in Maplewood. It was a poignant way to end the evening.

Throughout Sunday we had our eye on the weather radar. Since we could have been rained on at any moment, we felt we needed to announce the weather policy a few times so that everyone would be safe in case severe weather became an issue. We were so appreciative to see all the folks who turned up despite the threat of storms and stayed all the way through until we ultimately needed to stop the festival around 7:00pm.

Every band that was scheduled to play on Sunday did not let the threat of rain keep them away. It was an awesome day. Including the JB Blues Band whose tribute to Jim Buchanan, one of the founders of Maplewoodstock and previous head of the Maplewood Department of Cultural Affairs, was very moving. Jim unfortunately passed away this past year.

As the last band before the headliners, Q-Tip Bandits, ended their incredible set (you really need to check out this band), we had our eye on the radar. It was telling us that we had some severe weather heading our way and we were in constant communication with our headliners. The featured act, Remember Jones, saw what we saw and opted to cancel his performance. The Louis Cato band, Sunday’s headliner, happened to be nearby and agreed to go on sooner than were scheduled to do so. They got through 2 songs before the lightning came and we needed to stop. Those 2 songs were pretty awesome, though.

We would be further remiss if we did not mention all the art and food vendors who participated. They are an integral part of the festival. And last, but certainly not least, thank you the South Orange Elks for, once again, managing the beer and wine garden.

We are so grateful!

Time to start the planning process for Maplewoodstock 2024. See you next year for our 20th Anniversary Show!

Maplewoodstock Volunteeer Committee; Katie Clayton, Brad Goldman, Tom Kerns, Tarquin Learned, Jim Robertson, Susan Rogers, Jamie Ross, and Gary Shippy.

Maplewoodstock – by and for the community!