

MIDDLE WAVES PREVIEW

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It's been quiet the past few years as many of Fort Wayne's biggest and most popular festivals were shut down.

Middle Waves Music Festival was among those closed in 2020 and 2021, but it is back in full this year to usher in a fresh wave of sound.

With its return comes a new location, a vendor village, big headlining performers, a community stage with local bands, and more.

Previously held at Headwaters Park, this year Middle Waves will be at Foellinger Theater on June 17 and 18.

"There's still a lot of people that aren't aware of (Foellinger Theater), so we're really excited to potentially welcome a new audience that hasn't been there before and introduce them to this gem," says co-chair Beth McAvoy.

Historically, the festival has been in the fall, but organizers strategically changed the time of year to include as much of the community as possible.

"We really felt like we wanted to make the switch to June to capture some of the college students that are residents of Fort Wayne but may leave in the fall to go away to school," says McAvoy.

Middle Waves depends on this community via sponsorships and ticket sales to continue bringing amazing music to the stage each year.

"Every penny that comes into the festival through sponsors or ticket sales goes to cover the costs for the bands and then the logistics of some of the infrastructure and production needs. We truly are a community organization and event, so we really count on the generous support of the community to make it happen," says McAvoy.

If you'd like to attend the festival but are not able to pay full price, volunteer opportunities may be available for a discounted ticket.

"We rely on volunteers throughout the festival weekend, and if someone is looking to come, but their budget is a little different these days, if you volunteer for one or more shifts, you could get either, potentially a free ticket, or a heavily discounted ticket for helping us out," says McAvoy.

Visit the Middle Waves website to see what volunteer opportunities are available.

To get into the gates to the main stage, there are two ticket options: General admission and VIP.

Tickets do not impact seating, as all tickets will be general seating. Ticket prices increase the week of the festival.

Visit middlewaves.com for full information about ticket options and pricing.

The VIP ticket grants access to the VIP bar, lounge area, as well as a section specially for VIP kids.

Each paid ticket grants free access to one child 12 and under, regardless of general or VIP ticket.

No matter which ticket you purchase to get into the gates, you'll be able to enjoy the lineup of artists from all over the country, including this year's headlining artists Big Boi and Young the Giant.

"I think that the two headliners that we have for this year are the biggest names that we've had," says McAvoy. "I think that's really cool to bring artists to Fort Wayne that may not come to Fort Wayne under any different circumstances."

As in previous years, there will be a section of the festival that is free to the public.

The free community area will have plenty of activities and music for everyone to enjoy. There will be a bar, a vendor village full of goods and food vendors, as well as several sponsorship booths hosting their own activities.

Also part of the free section will be a community stage featuring local bands of all genres.

One local performer bringing his hip-hop artistry to the community stage is Mike Armstrong Jr., known on stage as Mic Strong.

Armstrong is a Fort Wayne native who writes about all topics of life, using the mic to bring personal transparency through his eclectic style of hip hop that explores funk, neo-soul, rap, pop, and R & B.

He was scheduled to perform at Middle Waves in 2020 before the festival was canceled due to the pandemic.

"I'm dominant in hip hop and rap, but I also dabble in other genres as well. I think that's why my brand fits the Middle Waves audience well, because I would say I'm an eclectic artist. I don't put myself in a box," says Armstrong.

He produces content about his everyday life including topics such as co-parenting issues, depression, or even vacation. With the goal to make relatable content that is personal, Armstrong also commits to not using cussing in his music.

“Music to me is therapy. It’s the universal language regardless of your gender, ethnicity, age. It’s something that can connect with people from all walks of life. Music to me is the soundtrack to our lives,” says Armstrong.

Middle Waves will be his longest set and potentially largest audience to date, and he hopes his presence at the festival will be a launchpad for himself and other local hip-hop artists in his pursuit of his dream career.

“I want to give back to the community and do things to spread my wings and give back and shine light on the talents that we have here,” says Armstrong.