

Beach Party

**BACK
TO THE BEACH**



**HANG
OUT
MUSIC
FEST**



The second annual, star-studded Hangout Music Fest promises to bring locals and tourists back to the Alabama Gulf Coast

By Margaret Littman

Alex Butler grew up in Mobile, spent holidays on the beach in Gulf Shores, both as a kid and in college. But the 24-year-old is unequivocal: "The most fun I have ever had in Gulf Shores was at the Hangout Fest."

Butler attended the inaugural May 2010 concert series, with friends and family (everyone from his mom to his college buddies) in tow. The highlight, he says, was hearing The Black Crowes play on the white sands behind The Hangout restaurant. "I grew up listening to this music, and here it was on my beach."

That's exactly what Shaul Zislin was going for when he created the multi-act Hangout Music Fest last year. Festival founder Zislin, (who also is one of the owners of The Hangout bar and restaurant and the Surf Style chain of souvenir shops), wants to build a "national brand," a festival that is not just a jazz fest or a country music concert, but an all-genres, family friendly "jam fest" that shows off "the special community" of the Alabama Gulf Coast.

"This is an island getaway; it is a throw back to another time," Zislin says. While there are a few other beach music festivals, none has the national, multi-genre flavor of the Hangout Music Fest, and none features the white sands of Gulf Shores. There are other mega-fests, including Coachella, Lollapalooza and Bonnaroo, but none of those have creature comforts of home that the Hangout offers. Tennessee's Bonnaroo, for example, is almost exclusively a camping festival, with Woodstock-style accommodations. With access to condos with showers and swimming pools,

Zislin says families with children, young adults like Butler, snowbirds and everyone in between can enjoy the music without roughing it. In fact, for 2011 the team is adding even more, such as a sunken pool on the beach for VIP-level tickets, to make it even more attractive. But in a way, every ticket is a VIP admission.

"This is really a VIP festival, but with general admission," Zislin says of the access to real mattresses, running water, swimming pools and other amenities not available at other festivals.

In 2010 the crowds topped 15,000 people a day; Zislin is hoping for 35,000 in 2011. With its five stages of musical acts, VIP-level perks and no new environmental crisis, Zislin thinks the three-day fest may bring in \$20 million in revenues to the Gulf Shores and Orange Beach communities, which, obviously will be welcomed after last year's BP oil spill.

Organizers are confident the festival is going to be an ongoing hit. Zislin says that tickets had been sold to concert-goers in every major city east of Mississippi even before the this year's line-up was announced. The sounds this year will include Cee-Lo Green, home state favorites Drive-By Truckers, Paul Simon, Foo Fighters, Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue, Ween, and many others. Hammocks and shade structures built on the beach help music lovers cope with the heat. The festival goes on rain or shine. ☼

**2011
MAY 20-22
GULF SHORES
ALABAMA**

If You Go

The Hangout Music Fest runs at The Hangout, 101 East Beach Blvd., Gulf Shores, May 20 — May 22.

Three-day music passes run \$159 - \$174; VIP passes, which include reserved restrooms with airconditioning, concierge service, shade areas and more, are \$900. Other ticket packages are available from the website. Applications for Work Exchange Tickets are also on the website, hangoutmusicfest.com. Most Gulf Shores area realty firms offer packages for combined condo rental and festivals tickets. Try these for rooms close to the action, as well as those that offer a little space between you and the crowds: Meyer Real Estate: www.meyerre.com/promo/HMF45 Kaiser Realty: www.kaiserrealty.com/deals_full.php?deal=498

Brett-Robinson: www.brett-robinson.com Sunset Properties: www.sunsetproperties.com

Shuttle buses are available for those who are not staying in walking distance of the fest, but veteran concert-goers say a bicycle makes it easier to shuttle crowds. ☼



★ Gulf Shores