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EDITOR'S PICK

Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer to judge Battle of the Bands

By Dave Rogers drogers@newburyportnews.com Jul 25, 2019



DAVE ROGERS/Staff photo Musician Michael Carabello, who performed with Santana, will be among the judges Friday night at the High School Battle of the Bands, which opens Yankee Homecoming.



NEWBURYPORT – Yankee Homecoming's High School Battle of the Bands contest has long been recognized as one of the citywide celebration's signature events.

But this year's competition, which begins Friday at 5 p.m. on the Waterfront Park stage, is destined to be extra special considering the person leading it is a member of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Between prepping for performances with legendary guitarist Carlos Santana, teaching drum students at his Amesbury studio and music production, Newburyport resident Michael Carabello is again helping with the High School Battle of the Bands.

As a member of Santana, Carabello played congas and other percussion instruments on the jam band's first three albums. He later recorded or played with Miles Davis, Stevie Wonder, Jimi Hendrix, Steve Winwood and The Rolling Stones. Along with the rest of his Woodstock-era Santana bandmates, he was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1998.

Last summer, in his first year with the Yankee Homecoming event, Carabello served on a panel of judges. But his involvement this year has been turned up all the way to 11 after being named chairman of the event.

Carabello is one of three judges along with Daily News reporter and musician Jack Shea and Mary Barba of the West Newbury School of Music and On The Fringe Studios.

"I'm very, very honored," Carabello said from his Cedar Street studio. "I like seeing these young kids competing."

As for what he'll be looking for from the seven bands signed up to compete, Carabello said there are a few things.

First, he'd like to see how each band works together and whether the rhythm section (bass guitar and drums) is tight. He's also interested in how the band interacts with the crowd and whether the audience is sustained and engaged.

"I want to see how much fun you're having on stage," Carabello said.

In addition to hearing something new, he said he'd also like to see bands express a particular style or signature.

"If you don't have your own signature, you're not going to go far," Carabello said.

First prize is a free recording session at On The Fringe Studios, an on-air interview at Evolverment Radio where one song can be played, being named an opening act at the Yankee Homecoming Waterfront Concert Series, a paid performance during the Yankee Homecoming parade and \$100.

Second and third prizes also include \$100 and paid performances on the Yankee Homecoming Market Square stage.

This year's Battle of the Bands features a new category, acoustic/solo, consisting of one or two performers, which was added after one of the participants in last year's event tried to compete as a solo artist, according to Carabello.

First prize for the acoustic/solo category is \$100 cash and a paid performance on the Market Square stage. Second prize is a gift certificate.

Yankee Homecoming's High School Battle of the Bands is Friday from 5 to 9 p.m. on the Waterfront Park stage and is free to the public.

More on the web: Yankeehomecoming.com.

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