

# Asbury's next big thing?



David Spelman > photo by Vasilios Sfinarolakis

## Sonic Garden Collective holds first festival on Sept 29-Oct 4

ASBURY PARK – Way back in 1999, before it was tough to get a parking space in downtown Asbury Park, the first issue of the triCityNews rolled off the presses.

Downtown Asbury was a ghost town back then. No matter. We bluntly proclaimed that it would rise from the ashes, fueled by those with an artistic and creative bent. That's exactly what happened.

But we always knew the real battle wasn't to trigger the revitalization. That was the easy part.

The desperate struggle now is to keep the place from becoming just another corner of Monmouth County suburbia, with all the conformity that brings. For the barbarians are at the gates, and now that Asbury has caught on, we are threatened with a flood of ignorant suburbanites who would destroy what we built. That was always the threat.

(Ignorant suburbanites does not refer, of course, to those suburban residents sophisticated enough to vote this November. Particularly those who live in the 11th Legislative District. Those voters are perceptive, dedicated and intelligent people. Fine folk.)

Anyway, the triCityNews has always used its power to keep Asbury real – and eastern Monmouth County for that matter. That means pushing the alternative and creative wherever we can find it.

That will preserve what's been built in Asbury Park – to be enjoyed by everyone. Particularly those from the rest of suburban Monmouth County, who (truth be told) are the people who've brought Asbury back, along with the rest of us already here and those who migrated from urban areas, such as New York city.

Most everyone who now enjoys Asbury comes with an open mind, and a sense of wonderment at what's happened – no matter where they're from. The offbeat and alternative is still the main attraction. Turns out even Monmouth County wanted that. Our job is to make sure that doesn't change.

So with that introduction it's time to put a spotlight on David Spelman, the type of guy who the triCityNews has always worked to attract to Asbury. A resident of Ocean Grove with his wife Mary, they've both been around Asbury from the beginning of the rebirth.

Spelman is a curator and music producer working in

recordings, films and live events. Best known as the founder and artistic director of the New York Guitar Festival, he's also acclaimed as an artistic advisor and guest curator for music festivals and performing-arts centers in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia.

Now he's founded the "Sonic Garden arts collective" that will be hosting a series of cultural events and performances in downtown Asbury Park from Thursday September 29th through Tuesday October 4th.

This is serious stuff. What Spelman is initiating is among the most promising events we've seen for Asbury Park. If it catches on, it could be big. And it could spin off in all different promising ways for our city.

The series of events at the Sonic Garden festival will include film screenings, artist presentations, and musical performances by Academy-nominated filmmakers, a celebrated illustrator whose cartoons are seen in the pages of the New Yorker, Rolling Stone and Esquire, a Grammy winning musician-composer, and a world-renowned photographer whose work is in the permanent collection of New York's Museum of Modern Art. (Check out [sonicgarden.org](http://sonicgarden.org) for more info. Visit [david](http://david)

## > Asbury's next big thing? Sonic Garden Collective holds first festival on Sept 29-Oct 4 from page 20\_ \_ \_

spelman.com to read more about Spelman.)

"Our inspiration is very simple," Spelman said. "We want to bring inspiration and ideas to the already vibrant mix of cultural offerings here on the Jersey Shore. I'm excited that we'll be providing a chance for audiences to get up-close and personal experiences with artists and musicians such as Vernon Reid, Ralph Gibson and Andy Friedman, and filmmakers Graham Leader and Aaron Schock."

Spelman obviously knows what he's doing. This is the first event for the Sonic Garden collective. So rather than have all these events all over place, he selected one location: The new Café Volan coffee house on Bangs Avenue in the rear of the Steinbachs building. All events will start at 8 pm, and cost \$10.

That obviously keeps it simple for organizing purposes. Basically, Spelman is letting his events do the talking. Great move. These events are a powerful draw. Meanwhile, Café Volan is becoming the anchor of a section of downtown Asbury on Bangs Avenue that's now a center for the creative class, particularly for young people coming to our city and opening businesses.

As for the Sonic Garden collective, we love the description of this budding organization from its website: Based in the micro-urban beach community of Springsteen lore, Asbury Park, NJ, Sonic Garden is an association of musos, writers, architects, baristas, painters, surfers and winos committed to pursuing artistic development through residences, exhibitions, and education programs which foster dialogue across disciplines and barstools.

So mark the Sonic Garden collective festival on your calendar. TriCity readers who love Asbury will be impressed by this program, as well as by Café Volan and everything else new on that block of Bangs Avenue (and also right off the block including Colonel's Kissing Booth on Summerfield Avenue).

The Schedule of events is at right.



"Nighthawks," a print by Andy Friedman and part of the Sonic Garden festival

## Schedule of Events

**DATE: Thursday, September 29, 8 pm**

**EVENT:** Heartworn Highways; a rare screening of the 1975 documentary, followed by Q&A with the film's Academy Award-nominated producer, Graham Leader. **Film synopsis:** Documentary filmmaker James Szalapski explores the more contemplative side of country music as he visits a handful of outstanding singers and songwriters, most of whom have chosen to work outside the confines of the Nashville establishment. Heartworn Highways features performances from Townes Van Zandt, who shows off his farm and discusses the pros and cons of drinking with a neighbor; Gamble Rogers, who demonstrates his hilarious and ingratiating performing style in a nightclub appearance; Guy Clark, who plays several fine songs in his kitchen; David Allan Coe, who discusses his criminal past during a concert at a prison; and the Charlie Daniels Band, as they gear up for a big show in a small town. Heartworn Highways also includes brief appearances from Rodney Crowell, Steve Young, and a young Steve Earle, a decade before he released his first album. While shot in 1975, Heartworn Highways wasn't released until 1981, by which time several of the performers' features had become considerably better known than they were in 1975.

**VENUE:** Café Volan, 510 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712

**TICKETS:** \$10, all admissions at the door, cash only. No advance sales or reservations.

**DATE: Friday, September 30, 8 pm**

**EVENT:** Circo; the New Jersey premiere of the award-winning documentary, followed by a conversation and Q&A with the film's director Aaron Schock.

**Film synopsis:** The Ponce family's hardscrabble circus has lived and performed on the back roads of Mexico since the 19th century. But can their way of life survive into the 21st century? Against the backdrop of Mexico's collapsing rural economy, the ringmaster must choose between his family tradition and a wife who wants a better life for their family outside the circus.

The film recently won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the Hamptons International Film Festival, took top prizes at festivals in Spain, New Zealand, and Sweden, and features an evocative score by the indie-rock band Calexico.

**Film trailer:** <http://www.circomexico.com/trailer.html>

**VENUE:** Café Volan, 510 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712

**TICKETS:** \$10, all admissions at the door, cash only. No advance sales or reservations.

**DATE: Saturday, October 1**

**EVENT:** TBD

**VENUE:** TBD

**TICKETS:** TBD

**DATE: Sunday, October 2, 8 pm**

**EVENT:** Vernon Reid; an evening of short films, video art, live music, and conversation with the Grammy-Award winning guitarist, sonic experimentalist and visual artist. Vernon Reid is a Grammy Award-winning guitarist, composer and boundary-bending artist who began with the downtown New York jazz/funk/punk scene, lead the pioneering multi-platinum rock band Living Colour, and has collaborated with creative spirits ranging from Carlos Santana, Public Enemy, Defunkt, and Malian singer Salif Keita to choreographers Bill T. Jones and Donald Byrd.

He composed and performed Bring Your Beats, a children's program for BAM. He produces artists like James "Blood" Ulmer. He composed the scores for Ghosts of Attica and Almost Home, and was the music supervisor for the Charles Stone film Mr. 3000, starring Bernie Mac. He founded the Black Rock Coalition in 1984 to help combat the pigeonholing of African-American musicians. A talented multimedia artist and curator, Vernon created Artificial Afrika, using animation, computer graphics and public domain media to explore historic, often racist, myths and inventions that continue to define the idea of Africa and its culture.

**VENUE:** Café Volan, 510 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712

**TICKETS:** \$10, all admissions at the door, cash only. No advance sales or reservations.

**DATE: Monday, October 3, 8 pm**

**EVENT:** Andy Friedman; an evening with the celebrated cartoonist-turned-country crooner.

His gag cartoons are seen by millions of people every week in the pages of The New Yorker, and other publications, but the songs written by the "hard scrabble singer-songwriter" (Time Out New York) and "erudite redneck" (Boston Globe) Andy Friedman aren't written for laughs. "Friedman has a mastery of wordy self-loathing that many white dudes with guitars would kill for," says the Nashville Scene. Friedman will discuss his late-blooming and unexpected transition from a mailroom jockey at the New Yorker into a full-time life as an illustrator and singer-songwriter on the road. Also an internationally renowned editorial illustrator, Friedman's ink portraits of cultural luminaries appear in the pages of most popular periodicals, including The New Yorker—where he has been a regular contributor for over a decade, and where he has also published over a dozen gag cartoons under the pseudonym "Larry Hat"—New York Times, GQ, Rolling Stone, New York, Esquire, and scores of other newspapers and magazines around the globe

**VENUE:** Café Volan, 510 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712

**TICKETS:** \$10, all admissions at the door, cash only. No advance sales or reservations.

**DATE: Tuesday, October 4, 8 pm**

**EVENT:** Ralph Gibson; a lecture and image presentation by the world-renowned photographer and filmmaker.

Ralph Gibson studied photography while in the U.S. Navy and then at the San Francisco Art Institute. He began his professional career as an assistant to Dorothea Lange and went on to work with Robert Frank on two films. Gibson has maintained a lifelong fascination with books and book-making. Since the appearance of "The Somnambulist" in 1970, his work has been steadily impelled towards the printed page. To date, he has produced over 40 monographs, his most current projects being "State of the Axe" which was published by Yale University Press in Fall of 2008 and "Nude" by Taschen, 2009. His photographs are included in over 150 museum collections around the world, including the The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and have appeared in hundreds of exhibitions.

**VENUE:** Café Volan, 510 Bangs Avenue, Asbury Park, NJ 07712

**TICKETS:** \$10, all admissions at the door, cash only. No advance sales or reservations.