

W05 – Critical writing

Amy Poulter and Mike Holtzclaw

The Virginian-Pilot

Free access: <https://pilotonline.com/complimentary>

---

### **Jay-Z at Something in the Water caps a glorious day**

[https://www.pilotonline.com/entertainment/festivals/article\\_eb013394-677b-11e9-9e39-abff2691d9ac.html](https://www.pilotonline.com/entertainment/festivals/article_eb013394-677b-11e9-9e39-abff2691d9ac.html)

VIRGINIA BEACH

As it turns out, the rumors weren't rumors. Jay-Z did appear Saturday night at Something in the Water.

During the Pharrell and Friends set, the world-famous rapper appeared and electrified the crowd. It capped a day of glorious weather and crowd-pleasing tunes.

A day of music that began at 12:30 p.m. ended the way fans knew it would: Pharrell Williams, the master of ceremonies, bringing some of his biggest collaborators out on stage, one by one, for medleys of their greatest hits.

The 95-minute set was like listening to the Billboard Top 20 from the late '90s and 2000s. The special guests, both planned and surprise additions, included Jay-Z; Hampton Roads natives Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott, Timbaland and Fam-Lay; Tyler, the Creator; Snoop Dogg; Diddy; Usher; and Charlie Wilson.

Jay-Z and Pharrell shared a few minutes on stage tackling hits like "Izzo (HOVA)," "La-La-La," and "I'm A Hustler."

Both Missy and Timbaland were rained out on Friday night but stuck around for Saturday's Friends set.

"The last time we saw something like this was Greekfest," Missy said. "Y'all probably weren't even born. This is huge for V.A. (Pharrell) made sure he did whatever he had to do to make sure we were all here today."

As artists shuffled on and off stage quickly, there was one complication: Timbaland's mic wasn't working for almost a full song without anyone on stage knowing the difference.

Before Pharrell wrapped up the star-studded set of rap and hip-hop, he told fans what the festival meant to him.

"Look at all this love out here, all this unity, all these colors. This is a love movement," he said. "I just want y'all to know how hard Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Richmond all worked together to make this happen. Look at what we can do when we come together V.A.

"I ain't trying to be corny but y'all know how it makes me feel," he said, before closing the set with his most-recent hit, "Happy."

Hours before that set, Kristie Roseboom of Virginia Beach had reflected the hopes of many in the crowd when she kicked her sandals off and watched the stage from about halfway into the VIP pit. She was waiting for J Balvin to start his set at 6:15 p.m., but that was not the only person she was waiting for.

"I'm staying right here, because when Jay-Z shows up, I'll be able to see him just fine," Roseboom said. She said she believed he was there because it would be weird for the superstar rapper to not be included in Pharrell's festival, given their close working relationship.

"And Beyoncé, she just did that song with J Balvin, so it makes sense for her to be here," she said. (Beyoncé did not make an appearance.)

The festival has been a success, she said, and has given her a renewed love for her hometown. What Pharrell has been able to organize and give to the community here is tremendous, she said.

Here's a look at the other acts on Saturday.

### **Travis Scott**

The setting was too perfect to continue. The sun had just set and darkness hit the beach, letting beams from the stage cover the crowds in bright white and red light.

But Scott didn't hit the stage first, a DJ did. He did his job and kept the crowd happy, blasting hits from Kanye West, Kendrick Lamar and Lil Nas X. But after 35 minutes and no sign of Scott, some fans were visibly confused.

"Where's Travis? His set ended a few minutes ago, but he's still not here," one fan asked another.

At 9:06 p.m., the DJ was pulled off to the side of the stage and notified Scott was finally ready.

"Let's do this," he told the crowd before the rapper busted through the side stage to front and center.

Scott quickly jumped into "Stargazing." Most of which, Scott's silhouette could be seen in near total darkness. But then, flames blast from the edge of stage, pushing a wave of heat across the crowd.

Continuously bouncing from one side of the stage to the other while flames continued to push up from the ground in front of him, Scott ripped through "Carousel," a track that features Frank Ocean, and his verse from 2 Chainz's "4 AM."

"It's crazy being here. I used to hear about this place on old mix tapes," Scott told the crowd.

But there were a couple of moments in which sound monitors at the back went out and jumbo screens quit working. People in the rear couldn't hear anything.

Yet by 9:30, Scott had breezed through "Mamacita," "Butterfly Effect" and "No Bystanders" before he ended with the mega-hit "Sicko Mode."

He may have been late, but he crammed a lot into what ended up being a 25-minute set.

## **SZA**

It's hard to say what was more endearing about SZA's time on stage: her mother standing on the side of the stage, cheering harder than any fan could, or the fact that she covered "Kiss Me" by Sixpence None the Richer.

It also could've been the moment where she described going to a high school party, even though she doesn't get down like that, and a boy she was interested in ignored her. Or when she stopped and prayed to God to watch over festivalgoers after she thought someone passed out.

Whatever it was, the combination of the glow of a setting sun and stage lights made for a magical mist as it hit the stage fog, and SZA belted her way through it — and a good number of her biggest hits.

In addition to the '90s cover, she sang "Supermodel," told the crowd to quit worrying about their day jobs with "Broken Clocks" and gave her all to her biggest hit, "Love Galore."

"It's surreal to be here," she said between songs. "I skipped school in high school to see Pharrell on 'Good Morning America' and my mom drove me. She let that happen."

There were a few moments where she struggled to readjust her top, and she wasn't trying to hide it.

"Can you believe my mama let me come out here like this?"

## **J Balvin**

The sun was soon setting and, with it, the temps dropping a bit, but J Balvin brought the heat for his set.

It might just because there isn't really a better setting to see the Colombian singer than on the beach, but he made the Oceanfront feel like a tropical island getaway, complete with Reggaeton air horns and neon colors all around him.

Like his Coachella set last weekend, the visuals above J Balvin and his dancers were Friends With You animations, including a character or two that depicted him.

All it took was blasting "I Like It," a song he wrote with Cardi B and Bad Bunny last year that became a huge summertime jam, for all those unaware of his discography to start dancing along.

Pharrell walked through the stage for a brief moment as J Balvin started into the song two wrote together, "Safari," but J Balvin performed the song alone.

It was the same scenario with his hit "Mi Gente," a song that features Beyoncé. She was absent for the moment on stage, but fans didn't seem to mind, and continued swaying and moving along to the beat.

### **A\$AP Ferg**

Harlem rapper A\$AP Ferg opened his set by telling the crowd that this was his first trip to Virginia Beach, but he had heard about it from his late father — who ran a boutique that printed shirts for many of the early stars of rap and hip hop.

"My dad told me all about being on the beach with Teddy Riley," Ferg shouted to the crowd, with frequent profane punctuations. "He said the girls would be out here in bikinis and everything."

Ferg's arrival on stage brought perhaps the loudest ovation of the afternoon. He and his Mob came out riding bicycles while a DJ spun beats and grooves.

His set also came with the first production glitches of the day. While rapping about swag surfin', a video from the Virginia Department of Health kicked in on the giant screen overhead, encouraging the crowd to drink plenty of water. Ferg rolled with it, throwing several bottles of water out to the crowd and reminding them to hydrate often.

Ferg and the A\$AP Mob went backstage while techs checked monitors and microphones. When they came back out, he rapped through a dozen or more songs that turned the now-packed audience into a sea of bodies jumping up and down to the beat.

As he rapped, the crowd sang along, and when Ferg called for an impromptu mosh pit in the sea of people, his fans happily obliged.

During his last song, "Plain Jane," which went triple platinum, Pharrell popped up on the side of the stage, getting right in the middle of Ferg's crew, who were still on bikes and live-streaming the set from their phones.

"Pharrell made it cool to dress weird and be yourself," Ferg told the crew. "He made it cool to be a nerd."

Then, just as he came in, Ferg hopped on his bike and rode away.

### **Mac DeMarco**

Mac DeMarco — the Canadian indie rocker born as Vernor Winfield McBriare Smith IV — took the stage at 3 p.m. and mellowed things out a bit by opening with "On the Level."

Tossing his microphone from hand to hand like a lounge singer and taking drags on a cigarette, he crooned: "Man, I never had a choice, never had a chance, never had a voice — on the level."

When the song ended, he strapped on an electric guitar to the great delight of the crowd. Pointing to hotel guests looking down from their Oceanfront balconies, he announced that the next song was dedicated to "the sky guys on the rooftop," and launched into "Salad Days."

## **Rosalía**

We tried to warn you weeks ago: If you missed Rosalía's set, you would miss out.

The Barcelona-born singer prowled onto the stage Saturday, flanked by backup dancers in white jumpsuits. As she seamlessly moved from straightforward singing into more operatic vocals during "Pienso En Tu Mirá," the bass coming off the singer's blend of flamenco and pop pulsed through the sand and into your ribcage.

She's well-known back at home in Spain and across Europe, but her global career is just getting its wings — thanks to Pharrell.

"It's an honor for me to be here today in front of you," she told the crowd during a break between songs. "Pharrell was the first artist in the U.S. who invited me to make music with him ... He was so generous, such a creative person. Thank you P, wherever you are."

As fans cheered, some even shouting "te amo" at the singer, she dove into a track she and Pharrell wrote together, a song rich with traditional Flamenco rhythms and instrumentation.

During "Catalina," which she sang alone with minimal help from music and without backup singers, she became visibly emotional. But the moment didn't last long, and she kicked the energy back up with "Con Altura," a single she released recently with J Balvin, who didn't join her for the song even though he was on the festival schedule for 6:15 p.m. today.

She wrapped up her set with one of her most well-known tracks on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, "Malamente." Her flock of dancers surrounded the singer and held her arms out to her sides as if she were on a cross.

The set was likely to make new fans of those who hadn't seen Rosalía before.

## **Amber Mark**

Amber Mark hit the stage right at 1:15 p.m., as scheduled, with her song "Lose My Cool." Next up, Mark belted into "Put You On" as she strutted across the stage, wearing all black and classic gold hoops while fuchsia lights pulsed behind her.

Then it was back to the slow, soulful grooves as the New York City singer started into "All the Work," a song detailing her wasted efforts at struggling to make a past relationship work.

Right before the singer started her set, Virginia Beach City Council member Aaron Rouse offered an official, though informal, greeting to the crowd after Saturday's opening set by Radiant Children.

After thanking hometown host Pharrell Williams for "supporting Virginia Beach, and coming home and bringing all your friends," Rouse encouraged those in attendance to tap into the positive vibes of Something in the Water.

"This is our chance to explore the differences in our humanity — what makes us great, what makes Virginia Beach great," Rouse said. "So have a great time. Network. Make new friends that will last a lifetime. And don't forget that Virginia is for lovers."

Radiant Children, an R&B/soul trio, started the day of music at 12:30 p.m. The London-based band was initially scheduled to open the festival on Friday, but were moved to Saturday.

The band immediately launched into their set, which is named similarly to the old saying, "Life's A Beach." Lead singer Fabienne Holloway told attendees it was the band's first show in Virginia.

It's hard to tell who was more excited, the band, which was getting a second chance at the festival stage, or the crowd, who were finally going to see the first act on day two of the festival.

After finishing up "Mariposa" and diving right into "Go Left," Holloway told the crowd, "If anyone wants to change their job or relationship, this is your sign."

---

### **For Something in the Water finale, Anderson .Paak pays tribute to fallen friends**

[https://www.pilotonline.com/entertainment/festivals/article\\_0346b122-677c-11e9-8361-3745c3454044.html](https://www.pilotonline.com/entertainment/festivals/article_0346b122-677c-11e9-8361-3745c3454044.html)

#### **VIRGINIA BEACH**

The lineup on the third and final day of the Something in the Water festival did not match the firepower of Saturday's show, but an enthusiastic crowd danced the day and night away.

Rain hit around 8 p.m. to chill things out a bit, calling up memories of the first day of the festival, when thunderstorms forced a cancellation.

But it turned quickly, just as Friday's storms turned to gorgeous weather Saturday and allowed for 12 hours of music, including a legendary Pharrell and Friends set that included Jay-Z, Tyler the Creator, Missy Elliott, Timbaland, Snoop Dogg, Diddy and Usher.

Here's a look at Sunday's performances.

#### **Anderson .Paak and the Free Nationals**

Anderson .Paak, with a Grammy win and a new album, "Ventura," that debuted this month at No. 2 on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop chart, took on the responsibility of giving the festival a proper finale in a 50 minute set. He met the challenge.

Rain and dropping temps may have caused some to leave a little early, but those who stayed behind were sent off right. Paak alternated singing and weaving all over the stage with working behind a drum kit.

As white beams of light spread across the sea of fans still hanging out on the beach, .Paak told the crowd it was amazing to see so many "black and brown people," because he doesn't typically have that experience at festivals.

He was one of the few performers to take a political turn with his selections, reveling in his song "6 Summers" — a track that talks about a possible Trump love child and the need for gun law reform — and the crowd ate it up.

During "Am I Wrong," fans were told to get low, and they did. So .Paak kept the jams coming.

Wrapping up just after 10 p.m., he ended the night with a tribute to Nipsey Hussle, the rapper who was killed last month, and Mac Miller, a rapper who died of a drug overdose last year.

.Paak collaborated with Miller on the 2016 song "Dang!" — and he sang that as his closer.

The final image of the night was a photo of the two deceased performers displayed on the giant screens above .Paak, until it all faded to black.

And then it was over.

### **Chris Brown**

He's got a song about some girls not being loyal, and he sang it, but on Sunday his fans were true blue. They stayed on the beach through chilly rain and begged organizers for more music when Brown's mics were cut.

The Tappahannock native was scheduled to start at 8:10, but didn't hit the stage until 21 minutes later, and did as much dancing and running around on the stage as possible.

Fans screamed and sang along as he tore through his catalog of hits, and he brought Trey Songz, the Petersburg native, to the stage for "Chi Chi."

He treated fans to expected classics like "Loyal" and "Ayo" before his mic was cut around 30 minutes into his set.

"If this was me five years ago, I'd go back there and beat that (guy) up. But I'm trying to do better," he said as fans booed.

But he was given a few more minutes and squeezed in two more songs. His fans stayed faithfully through his set, and many headed for the festival gates when he left.

### **Charlie Wilson**

Of all the festival performers, Charlie Wilson is the only one old enough to collect Social Security benefits. But you wouldn't suspect it if you watched the 66-year-old R&B star dance his way through a 45-minute set on Sunday evening.

Wilson had made an unbilled appearance Saturday night as part of the "Pharrell and Friends" set – singing "You Are" along with the host and Snoop Dog. In 2011, that song held the top spot in Billboard's Urban Adult Contemporary charts for three months. On Sunday, he opened with it – just Uncle Charlie and his band, horn section and backing singers.

Wilson worked through a long list of hits, solo numbers and songs from The Gap Band, like "Burn Rubber on Me." When he wasn't singing, he was urging the crowd to make more noise ("That didn't sound like Virginia Beach – that sounded like Los Angeles!") and scatting about his 24 years clean and sober after going from "rags to riches and riches to rags."

The sun was setting as he performed, and he had the audience turn on their cell phone flashlights, creating a lovely star-filled image. He performed most of the set in a sparkling blue suit and gold shoes. Late in the set, he noted that he didn't have time for as many wardrobe changes as usual, but did switch to a black-and-silver striped jacket.

Rain began to fall toward the end of his set, but the crowd continued singing and dancing even as Wilson led the band off stage, conga-line style.

### **Teddy Riley and friends**

For the second time in a less than 24 hours, Virginia talent showed up and showed off.

Like Pharrell did on Saturday, Teddy Riley packed his set with as many familiar faces and classic hits as he could and had the beach looking more like a dance floor than any artist had all day.

Riley started off by taking the spotlight and shining at the keyboard while singing some of the biggest pop hits ever to exist, and he had a hand in all of them. "Remember the Time," "My Prerogative," and "Just Got Paid." Riley adopted Virginia Beach as his hometown, leaving New York to establish a recording studio on Virginia Beach Boulevard when he was 23.

Coko, a Virginia native from the group Sisters With Voices, jumped on stage and powered through "I'm So Into You," "Weak" and "Right Here." It was almost hard to hear her over the crowd belting out the familiar '90s hits, but Coko played into it and kept asking fans to help her through the jams.

You can't expect to see a friends of Riley set and not see Blackstreet, the band he formed in 1991 after creating New Jack Swing music. While it probably didn't surprise fans to see the group, it didn't top them from jumping and dancing all over the place while they crushed the songs that made them famous, "Don't Leave Me," and, of course, "No Diggity," though a malfunction caused the first 15 or so seconds of sound for the song to fail.

Having no idea, Blackstreet danced like never before and all the crowd could hear was the scratch of a DJ's needle. But once the sound kicked in and fans realized what song it was, there were screams of excitement.

There was more, but even just the highlights were enough for the short set, such as the moment when Lil Duval came through and proclaimed in song that fans were living their best life.

The friends sets will be hard to top if Something in the Water returns next year, but if any artist can find, write or make enough music to fill such sets, look no further than Riley and Pharrell.

### **Pusha T**

Pusha T looked out at Virginia Beach and transported the crowd to another shore – "gonna give you the 'Daytona' experience," he vowed.

Drawing heavily from his Grammy-nominated "Daytona" album, the hometown rapper delivered a 40-minute set that had thousands of voices singing along to songs such as "If You Know You Know" and "Come Back Baby."

After beginning "Hard Piano," he brought the music to a stop and then re-started the song because he wanted the crowd to better appreciate what he called "the hardest first line of 2018" – an utterly unprintable couplet about a woman who "finds love in the camera" and then commits adultery with a custodian.

With sign-language interpreters providing energetic translations, he pushed his way through song after song before ending by praising Pharrell and thanking his hometown for years of support.

Williams and Chad Hugo of the Neptunes nurtured the Clipse – a gangsta rap duo of two Bronx-born, Virginia Beach-raised brothers – Gene "Malice" Thornton and Terrence "Pusha T" Thornton.

"You've been here with me," he said. "You supported me with Clipse, with the mixtapes – and now we're at Something in the Water. Look at us!"

### **Jhené Aiko**

Aiko kept the mood light, and that's probably a good thing.

It's hot on the beach and it's starting to impact some fans. When a cloud hid the sun for no more than 30 seconds, fans pointed and cheered.

Meanwhile, Aiko talked about the backstory to one of her songs.

"It's probably the sleaziest story I have to tell," she said. "It started on Pico Street in L.A. ... it ended at a Comfort Inn."

She ended her time on stage by paying her respects to Nipsey Hussle, a California rapper who was killed last month, by playing the rapper's song "Dedication" and rapping parts for fans.

Like DRAM, Aiko spent a good amount of her set talking to directly at fans about the beauty of Virginia Beach and how she'd never performed so close to the ocean before, She asked fans to take care of one another.

"Every stranger next to you is going through some stuff. Let's be kind to each other. Take care of each other."

## **DRAM**

It took until the fourth act of the day for a performer to lunge into the crowd. Big Baby DRAM was up to the task.

It was during the last song of his set – his No. 1 rap and R&B hit "Broccoli" – that DRAM climbed down off the stage, then clambered over the barricade to dance amid his jubilant fans.

The 30-year-old Hampton High School graduate mused about how incredible it was to be performing at a major festival just down the road from where he grew up.

Introducing "Cha Cha," the song that broke him to a national audience, he said: "I was in my mom's house, sitting on the edge of a twin-size bed, when I sang this song into a \$100 mic. And it changed everything."

Throughout the set, he urged audience members to affirm their love for their mothers and to chant "Spread peace."

When his microphone went silent, and a replacement did the same, he urged the crowd to chant "Kill the engineer," but he did it with a smile on his face.

Performing in a black T-shirt bearing the message "Heaven Hath No Fury," he wore his 757 pride on his sleeve.

"Where Hampton at?" he asked the crowd, to cheers. "Where the News at? Suffolk? Where Portsmouth? Where Chesapeake? Where Norfolk at? Where my Beach at?"

When he asked how many attendees were from out of town, he told them, "You're on our turf now!"

## **Leikeli47**

"Nothin' like the sound of V.A.," rapper Leikeli47 shouted into the mic, rocking a yellow bandana balaclava and a matching Norfolk State University sweatshirt — kudos, it's hot out here today. She and Pharrell must have that opinion in common.

She's from Danville, but that's about as much personal info you're going to get about rapper Leikeli47. She doesn't use or give out her legal name, and she always wears a mask.

Her music pushes past the boundaries of run-of-the-mill, female-fronted rap. It's a blend of hip-hop, hardcore rap, dancehall, reggae and more.

On Sunday, she showcased a bit of each flavor.

She played tracks off both of her albums, 2017's "Wash and Set" and "Acrylic," released last year, including "No Reload" and "Girl Gang," and even proved a bit of her vocal abilities by singing the chorus on a cover of INOJ's "I Want to be Your Lady Baby."

The crowd isn't as filled in today as it was at this point Saturday. Perhaps fans wore themselves out last night. But Leikeli47 did not. She played a full set Saturday night at the Sony Stage, but that didn't stop her from spitting bars and twerking on stage before ripping into "Miss Me" on Sunday.

### **John-Robert**

The gates opened a bit behind schedule today and the first act hit the stage just after 1 p.m.

Backed by King Garbage, the 18-year-old Virginia native kicked off the afternoon with a mellow, 6-song set and the crowd was probably bigger than his hometown.

John-Robert got his start as a social media phenomenon, and live performances are somewhat new to him. He laughed nervously as he introduced himself and his first song, "Adeline." The single just hit streaming services and YouTube this month.

There were a couple familiar faces in the crowd, he said after the song.

"I've got a couple of middle school teachers here. It's really cool when they care what you do outside of the classroom. You get to do cool stuff like play festivals."

The set was short and sweet, literally. John-Robert played a slew of songs about former and hopeful love interests, like in "Good Company," where he dismissed vanity in religion and croons about a girl he likes to spend time with.

Toward the end of the song, which isn't available online yet, he pushed the limits of his vocal range and the crowd snapped to attention.

The enormous stage at Something in the Water is a long way from house shows in the Shenandoah Valley – but 18-year-old John-Robert made that journey on Sunday.

"I don't really know what to think about this," the young guitarist from Edinburg, Va., said afterward, while accepting warm greetings from concertgoers along the boardwalk. "I guess if I can make a festival stage feel like a house show, that's a win."

John-Robert said he was flattered that Pharrell Williams picked him out of a list of potential SITW performers from Virginia. He has been playing guitar for about four years, and writing prolifically almost as long.

"When it was announced that I was going to be here, I got a lot of nice phone calls, very sincere, from people saying they were proud of me. That's nice. It sort of validates what I'm doing, because sometimes I'm self-conscious about telling people I'm a musician. This definitely helps."

---

## **With Something in the Water, Pharrell keeps Virginia talent in the spotlight**

[https://www.pilotonline.com/entertainment/festivals/article\\_e1c75386-5618-11e9-b725-1f87af6cc641.html](https://www.pilotonline.com/entertainment/festivals/article_e1c75386-5618-11e9-b725-1f87af6cc641.html)

Something in the Water is happening in two weeks. Details on the performance schedule are scant, but the deck is stacked with Virginia talent.

Created by Virginia Beach native Pharrell Williams, the festival lineup has just over 30 music acts. About a third are Virginia-raised.

"It's time for Virginians to be acknowledged on that level," Williams told a Pilot reporter last month when the lineup was released.

Williams graduated from Princess Anne High School and was performing with Chad Hugo, another Beach native, before the duo dubbed themselves the Neptunes and started producing hits for other artists, including Mary J. Blige, Jay-Z, Clipse, Daft Punk, Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake and more.

Under the name N.E.R.D — which stands for Nothing Ever Really Dies — Williams, Hugo and Shae Haley released five albums, with their latest being a self-titled, 11-track blend of rap and rock featuring artists like Kendrick Lamar, Rhianna and André 3000 of Outkast fame. Last week, organizers announced that N.E.R.D will perform at the festival.

Williams is responsible for the earworm single "Happy," which he produced and recorded for the "Despicable Me 2" soundtrack in 2013. In conjunction with the song's release, Williams unleashed a 24-hour music video for the uptempo, sunshine-laced track.

So, who else is from Virginia, and what kind of grooves can you look forward to? We've got you covered if you're unaware.

### **Missy "Misdemeanor" Elliott**

A Portsmouth native, Elliott should be no stranger to your ears. It was nearly impossible to turn on the radio in the late 1990s to early 2000s without hearing one of her hits, whether it was her own songs or ones she produced for artists like Aaliyah, Destiny's Child, Janet Jackson and Whitney Houston.

Elliott taught us how to "Lose Control," "Work It," and be "Supa Dupa Fly" by way of infectious rhythms and bass-heavy beats. Her music videos were well-known for their experimental nature, including her 1997 hit "Sock It 2 Me," in which Elliott et al donned Mega Man-like outfits while storming through the solar system.

She's listed under Pharrell and friends on the lineup, and no performance date has been added to her information page. We can only hope the two share a song or two, because you'd be hard-pressed to find a better way to celebrate Hampton Roads hip-hop.

### **D.R.A.M.**

Born Shelley Marshaun Massenburg-Smith, Big Baby D.R.A.M. is a Hampton native known for his Grammy-nominated track "Broccoli." If you've heard it, you know it's not a song about vegetables, but another leafy green often rolled up and smoked.

Since then, the Hampton High graduate has released a few additional songs on an EP titled "That's a Girls Name." The three-song release features D.R.A.M.'s infectiously happy melodies over which he playfully sings and raps about old crushes and sundresses.

D.R.A.M. will perform on April 27.

### **Pusha T**

He might have been born in Brooklyn, but the rap giant was brought to Virginia Beach as a newborn and stayed here well into adulthood. For the festival, he's scheduled to return to the Oceanfront on April 27.

He and Pharrell go way back. The two began working together in the 1990s when Pusha — legal name Terrence LaVarr Thornton — and his brother, Gene a.k.a. "Malice," formed their hip-hop act The Clipse.

In their 2002 music video for "Grindin," Williams kicks it off with a message to viewers: "I just wanna let y'all know the world is about to feel something that they never felt before." He was right. The single reached the top ten of Billboard's Hot Rap Songs chart and No.30 on the Hot 100.

Pusha T split from Clipse to focus on his solo career in 2010, finding success after being featured on Kanye West's 2010 release, "My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy."

His 2018 release, "Daytona," was nominated for Best Rap Album at the Grammys.

### **Timbaland**

A native of Norfolk, Timothy Mosley a.k.a. Timbaland was added to the festival's lineup last week. The rapper/producer/singer-songwriter graduated from Salem High School and went on to create music for an ever-growing list of talent, including Williams and N.E.R.D, Missy Elliott, Aaliyah, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Kanye West, Justin Timberlake, Michael Jackson and Drake. Some of that music, including Timberlake's multi-platinum "Future Sex/Love Sounds," was recorded right here at Thomas Crown Studios, formerly owned by Timbaland.

He has been nominated for 21 Grammys and has won four — three for tracks with Timberlake and one for Beyoncé's "Drunk In Love."

Timbaland has also released three albums of his own, the last of which was released in 2009 and included the radio hit "Carry Out" featuring Timberlake.

## **Dave Matthews Band**

The presence of the Dave Matthews Band might surprise some fans, especially those who grabbed tickets for the hip-hop heavy festival. But, as most locals likely know, the jam band known simply as DMB was born in Charlottesville in 1991.

They're Grammy winners, they've sold more than 38 million CDs and DVDs and toured tirelessly since busting into the mainstream in the mid-1990s.

The band plays Virginia Beach regularly, and as any fan can tell you, no two DMB shows are the same. Matthews and company are known for performing variations of their songs live and, at times, stretching them out into 20-plus-minute jam sessions.

DMB is on the festival schedule for Friday, April 26.

## **Chris Brown**

This Tappahannock native is known for two things: making music and headlines.

Known for hits like "Run It," "Kiss Kiss," and "With You," Brown's career got its start when he was 13. He was thought by some to be the next Michael Jackson, but his music was briefly dropped from airwaves in 2009 when he was arrested after a violent fight with then-girlfriend and pop icon Rihanna.

He's kept himself in the news since with either his talents or tirades.

Brown wasn't initially included in the lineup, but was among a handful of artists added about a week later. The R&B slash pop artist isn't yet listed on the website either, so you'll have to check back for his festival time slot.

## **Masego**

He might just have the shortest bio on the festival's page, but it's quite telling of what the Jamaican-born, Newport News-raised musician is all about

"Lover of women. Player of instruments. Sex symbol. Sonically sweet sadness. Equally sensual and charming. Gemini. 6'6. Low key comedian. World traveler. Lover of twerk videos and Ted talks," the blurb underneath his picture reads.

Born Micah Davis, he's crafted a style of music unique to him. He calls it "trap house jazz." Davis wails on his saxophone, singing and rapping over hip-hop and jazz-fusion beats. He bridges the generational gap from diehard jazz enthusiasts to modern hip-hop heads.

Didn't catch him when he played open mics along Granby Street? Check him out on April 26.

## **Leikeli47**

She's kind of a mystery, mostly because she's never disclosed her real name and always sports a variation of a balaclava. It's to keep people more focused on her music, she's often said in interviews.

Her music combines elements of hip-hop, hardcore rap, dancehall, reggae and more, and they're sometimes rolled into one song. Leikeli47 is steadfastly cementing her talents as a musician and producer. Already, she's worked alongside co-producers responsible for some of the brightest stars in rap and pop.

Born in Virginia but currently based in New York City, she's slated to perform on April 28.

### **John-Robert**

This 18-year-old is from a tiny town in the Shenandoah Valley called Edinburg. When he performs on April 27, the festival crowd will be at least 25 times the population of his hometown.

According to his festival bio, John-Robert Rimel started attending open mics at the age of 9. Like many before him, he recorded videos of himself playing guitar and singing cover songs by top 40 pop musicians and uploaded them to YouTube.

Last year, the teen uploaded his first original music videos, the most recent a track called "Adeline." The video features Rimel and his guitar at the bottom of an empty swimming pool, the words "7 FEET DEEP" displayed in the tile work above his head. Below the video, a four-word description of the song: "Wrote this for closure."