



THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

SEE YOU AT THE SHELL

That was not a mistake in your Commercial Appeal earlier this week.

The Overton Park Shell -- oops, the Levitt Shell at Overton Park -- is being readied for concerts featuring top-notch local and national groups working in a wide variety of genres this fall, and admission is free.

There will be some seating for people with disabilities, but for the most part the old seats have been removed and replaced by a grassy hillside that should accommodate some 2,500 blanket-sitters.

The shows will be on Thursdays through Sundays, starting Sept. 4 with Amy LaVere and the following night with Kirk Whalum and New Olivet Baptist Church Choir. And did we mention the shows are free?

You might know the history of The Shell, which gets its new name from the foundation that is providing a large share of the funding for the venue's rebirth. And if you've taken in a performance there you know it's hard to match its ambience and its character. It's simply one of the most inviting places to hear music.

Kudos to the Mortimer Levitt Foundation, the Los Angeles-based organization responsible for the renovation of the MacArthur Park bandshell in L.A. and similar projects around the country, Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects, the firm responsible for the new design here,

and everyone else associated with this project.

At a time when local government is hard-pressed to come up with quality-of-life improvements for every citizen, regardless of economic circumstances, it's encouraging to see private money flowing into such worthwhile projects.

Great cities have great cultural offerings. Outdoor concerts in the summer are often among them. With the proper police presence to discourage crime and unruly behavior, concerts at The Shell could be a real joy.

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