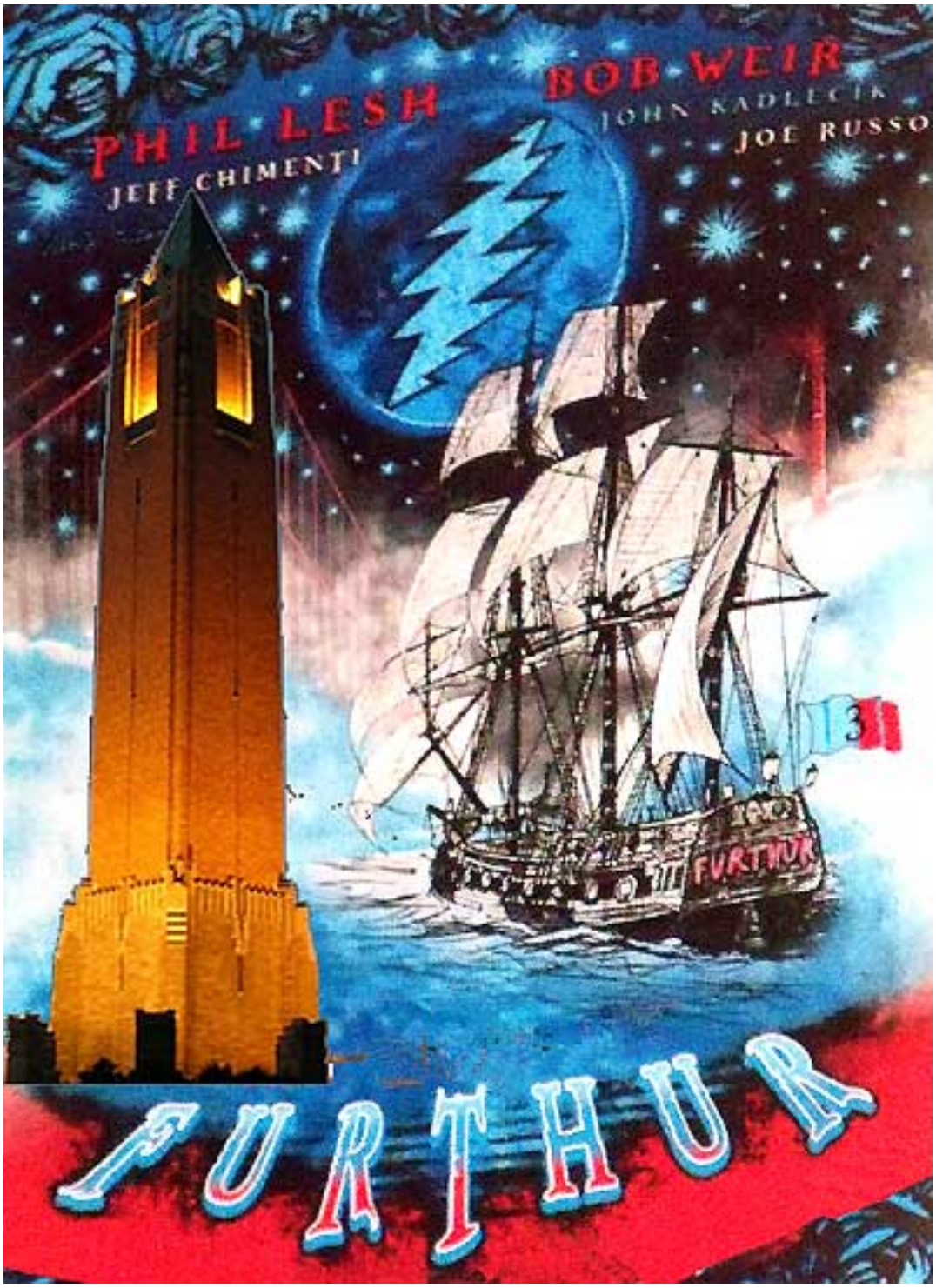
Upon Furthur Review: The Dead remains animated in the music of Furthur. Furthur is Phil Lesh and Bob Weir from The Grateful Dead along with Jeff Chimenti, John Kadlecik, Joe Russo, Sunshine Becker, Jeff Pehrson. http://FURTHUR.jonesbeach.com

Bob Weir and Phil Lesh will soon float again at Jones Beach the scene of many memorable, gravity-defying Grateful Dead moments. They never stay away for long. This time, original Dead members Weir and Lesh are bringing with them a not-so-secret weapon. John Kadlecik, known for performing Jerry Garcia's guitar and vocal parts in the Dead tribute band Dark Star Orchestra, will be part of their current band, Furthur. Despite his resume, Kadlecik wasn't hired to play exactly like Garcia. "John is John, not Jerry," Weir told The Denver Post recently. "When we auditioned him, we were looking for him to speak his own voice. Bit by bit, he's stepping into the role of himself. It takes time to transition, but we're not looking in him for somebody to emulate Jerry."

Furthur, which was founded in late 2009 by former Grateful Dead members Bob Weir and Phil Lesh, can't be accused of being a Grateful Dead cover band. Sure, there are similarities between the two groups. The format is the same, with two sets, plus an encore. Furthur also leavens its shows with songs from the Dead's repertoire. And as they used to deploy when they were members of the Dead, Lesh drops his patented bombs on bass and Weir dishes his snaky and inimitable riffs on rhythm guitar.

But there are sharp differences, and skeptics who are convinced it's a nostalgic act are missing the bus, er, boat. For starters, Furthur continues to reignite compositions from the Dead's psychedelic songbook that the Dead had shelved decades before the band's demise in 1995, following the death of lead guitarist Jerry Garcia ("Caution/Do not stop on the Tracks" "The Eleven," "Viola Lee Blues"). What's more, Furthur is cultivating its own catalog of tunes that is evolving nicely ("Colors of the Rain," "Seven Hills of Gold") . So-called Jerry ballads ("Wharf Rat," "Standing on the Moon"), which in the past were left for quiet contemplation, have morphed into face-melting jams while songs the Dead normally sandwiched between other songs, Furthur now plays individually, giving such tunes a different DNA than in their previous permutations. Furthur drummer Joe Russo plays a more aggressive style than former Dead drummers Mickey Hart or Bill Kreutzmann and lead guitarist John Kadlecik brilliantly channels Garcia's riffs while simultaneously programming his own crinkly sound on guitar into the process. Backup singers Sunshine Becker and Jeff Pehrson sprinkle the shows with beautiful harmonies. Furthur is also performing an eclectic mix of cover songs that has enthralled fans. The band has been busting out some of the chestnuts from Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones and The Beatles, among other members of rock royalty.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