

Aurorapalooza returns this Saturday with renewed commitment to music and mental health

The annual Aurorapalooza music festival is set to take over Town Park this Saturday, August 19, and organizers are putting the finishing touches on the fourth annual event that comes into 2023 with more music, new partnerships, and a renewed commitment to raising money for mental health.

Aurorapalooza, an initiative of local resident Joel Gouveia, continues to go from strength to strength, and is doing so this year for the first time as an official municipal event and for the first time with two stages: the Town Park bandshell and a stage inside the historic Aurora Armoury, home to Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute (CFWI).

Set to perform are singer-songwriters Dallas, Cam Kahin, Chèlle, Elles, Frank Mighty, bands Misty Blue, Cigar Club, Yellow Magnolia, The Beresfords, and Lost in Japan.

Proceeds from this year's event will benefit CAMH: The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

"We're going into our fourth year and it's great. We've done a lot of things to grow since last year, starting with a partnership with the Farmers' Market," says Gouveia. "We're doing live music programming [at the Market] starting at 10 a.m., with two local musicians playing in the morning and then they're going to conclude right before the Farmers' Market ends so we can set up for the actual event. The idea is to make it a real music festival because I've always wanted a full day, a multi-day thing, eventually, and this is the next step towards growing it and making it a longer thing."

"To get the community more involved, we've partnered with the Armoury. This year, instead of having just the one stage at the Town Park band shell, we're going to have that as the main stage where it has always been, but at layover times there will be three performances at the Armoury stage, which will be an indoor acoustic stage. There will be music playing at all times so people will just have to shift their attention to the other side of the park, go into the Armoury and enjoy some food, their bar is going to be open, and you can go inside and cool off a little bit."

The roster of talent is growing as well.

In their first year, Aurorapalooza hosted three bands, and this grew to seven in Year 2. Year 3 brought 10 musicians out to Town Park and this year they stand at 13.

"Locally, we have the Beresfords, who are absolutely amazing. We have Yellow Magnolia who has been at the festival before and they bring out such a great turnout every year. Cam Kahin is making a name for himself in the Toronto and Hamilton scenes and I think he's going to really blow up in the next couple of years and Dallas is another really big musician. Frank Mighty is another one of my favourite artists as well and Misty Blue is another local band that grew up in Aurora and surrounding areas."

"Luke Jarvis has never performed live before but I have been following his acoustic sets on Instagram and I think he's really talented and I'm excited to see how that comes and there's also Billy Stirling, who is another up-and-coming Aurora musician who went to Aurora Heights and is a country-folk-rock kind of guy who sings his heart out to great lyrics. Chèlle is an amazing performer and an acoustic singer as well. Cigar Club is from Newmarket, a couple of them are from Aurora, just another great local band and honestly there is a lot of talent this year and it's really exciting. Selfishly, I just want to sit down and watch the festival myself. It's going to be a really amazing lineup and I am really excited for it."

Benefiting CAMH will be the sale of a specially-mixed non-alcoholic drink called Purple Rain, a combination of grape juice and ginger ale, which will be sold for \$4, with \$2 going to CAMH. A portion of ticket sales will also go to CAMH, and 100 per cent of water bottle sales will go to the cause as well.

“\$4,000 has always been my number,” says Gouveia of his fundraising goal this year. “We haven’t really come close in the past, but that would be a great number to hit for the community. I think that would be amazing. This is the only kind of place (in Aurora) where you can watch a full day of music. We have a lot of events that music is implemented into but this is the only real music and arts festival in Aurora. I think if you just really like great music, it’s a great place to be. We have amazing food, cold drinks, and there’s sunshine and good music. Those are my favourite things, so come on out!”

For more on the fourth annual Aurorapalooza, including how to secure your tickets, visit www.aurorapalooza.com.

By Brock Weir
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