

## Two groups vie for 2013 music festival



By Brock Weir

The Jazz Festival has moved to Newmarket and the Aurora Live! music fest proposal imploded just before it was set for approval, but 2013 might not, after all, be the year the music died.

Just a week after the Town decided to wash their hands of the possibility of a music festival in 2013 and focus their energies on next year, two groups have surfaced to make a pitch to resurrect a festival for this year.

The first group is led by Farley Flex, the former Canadian Idol Judge and one of the names behind Lucid Community Development, the group which made the ultimately aborted bid for Aurora Live. Working in conjunction with producer George Roche, Mr. Flex was one of a group that included Canadian Idols Brian Melo and Theo Tams, So You Think You Can Dance Canada's Miles Faber, former broadcaster Christine Bentley, and other notables who brought forward the initial idea for Aurora Live.

Those plans quickly unraveled when the many members of the group decided to go their separate ways from Mr. Roche, citing philosophical differences in business plans.

Mr. Flex, Mr. Melo, Mr. Faber, Ms. Bentley, and the other former members of Lucid are coming forward this week to pitch 'Celebrate Aurora? A Summer Festival?', which they hope will be held July 27 and July 28 at Machell Park. Working under the banner of R.E.A.L. Celebration Group, Mr. Flex said the festival would include 'local and non-local talent, vendors and other attractions for the enjoyment, engagement and benefit of the community.'

'We're bringing music, we're bringing kids' stuff, and we're bringing all the core elements that a festival needs to have,' Mr. Flex told The Auroran. 'We're going to have as heavy an Aurora involvement from a talent standpoint and we're pretty excited about that and the opportunity to include folks from the community, and some guests of course.'

In the aftermath of Lucid's implosion, Mr. Flex said he was interested in the possibilities of putting something together for 2014 but wouldn't rule out making a pitch for 2013, pending on what Council's decision was last month. Council ultimately decided to scrap plans for this year while spending their energies on getting something secure for 2014.

'Everything we see is from a partnership standpoint, but if one element goes awry or has a different perspective on whether it should happen or not, that partnership is weaker,' said Mr. Flex. 'We're looking at all the pillars of the community coming together and saying that 'we love what this opportunity presents, we love the fact that you're including our young people, you're giving opportunities to local service and charitable organizations' and everybody is looking for a good time.'

Looking ahead, Mr. Flex said his presentation this Tuesday will be all about getting Council to give the nod on his permit

application for the park and show that they can contribute to the event and the wider community. While it is too late this year to implement his REAL School model, one that would give local kids a flavour of every aspect of the entertainment business both on stage and behind the scenes, he said he has had discussions with the two local school boards to say this opportunity could be available for kids through the festival and they would have opportunities to be involved.

‘You don’t want anybody to be alienated for any reason, so you have got to open up the doors for partnership and involvements,’ said Mr. Flex. ‘We’re the ones executing, so we will make executive decisions on that, but in terms of what we offer the Town, it is whatever participation means collectively then that is what we’re looking for.’

The second group expected to come forward to vie for a 2013 Music Festival this week is Habachat, a local social media company. Habachat is taking a slightly different angle to things and instead pitching a ‘cultural event focused on music and the arts’ for July 26 and 28 at Town Park.



Habachat’s Tim Newnham and Debbie McGrath are also making a pitch for a music festival the same weekend, this time at Town Park.

Habachat’s Debbie McGrath said her company is ‘all about creating community’ and a music festival is just the ticket for that. Their vision is a festival that would be mostly focused on music, but with some other artistic aspects thrown into the mix, including visual artists.

‘When we heard [Aurora Live] fell apart, we thought, why not put in a bid to resurrect it because it is kind of in line with what we want to do and it is just good fun!’ Ms. McGrath told The Auroran. ‘I had never gone to the previous music fest because it is jazz and I am a country girl, but I just think it needs to be wider than just jazz and open wider to be based on showcasing Aurora talent, all talent, and not just one family’s talent. Let’s see if we can make that happen!’

They’re not, however, trying to make it happen blind to and without any concern for the pitfalls that have befallen the previous two proposals and said if the event has a liquor licence, which they hope, they think fencing is a given. Whether or not they get the permit, however, is something they are unsure about. Their previous efforts with the Town were unsuccessful, she said, with Habachat initially pursuing a permit for an outdoor ‘tailgate’ event in February called ‘ChiliFest’ which would have been a ‘celebration of Canadian winter’, complete with outdoor football broadcasts. Although unsuccessful with their bid, they are keen in their mandate to have something that will serve to promote exclusively Aurora businesses.

‘I want to make sure whatever anybody does that they keep the money local,’ she said.

‘I don’t want to live in the past and say the people who manned the Jazz Festival were right or wrong or what the Town did was right or wrong, because you hear both sides of the story and then there is the truth,’ said Ms. McGrath. ‘I think we need to just re-set and start again.’