

Markham ready to serve up the jazz

Jazz Festival 2000 will feature all forms of the genre, including blues, big band and fusion

BY BRYAN CAIRNS
Correspondent

Picture it: a sweltering night in some New Orleans tavern where trumpets, drums, and brass instruments drown out an enthusiastic, sweat-drenched crowd.

And even though its origins are rooted in the Big Easy, for some, this is the stereotypical image of jazz. Well forget what you think you know about jazz.

Pick up any CD catalogue and check out how diverse this genre has become. Or, better yet, explore the addictive world of jazz at The Markham Jazz Festival 2000 from August 18 to 20.

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"Jazz is improvisational music," explains promoter Lesley Mitchell-Clarke. "In other words, it's based on a melodic line and then the musicians performing more or less become instant composers. They improvise their own melodies on top of an established chord."

This year's festival will feature many types of jazz, ranging from blues and fusion, to acid and dixieland. Kicking the event into high gear with a Friday Aug. 18, 8 p.m. gala concert at the

Markham Theatre is Canadian trombonist, arranger, and bandleader, Rob McConnell. The renowned jazz legend composed an original piece, entitled "The Markham Jazz Suite," which he'll debut alongside his exciting new group, The Rob McConnell Tentent. Tickets can be purchased at the Markham Theatre Box Office.

The musical fun continues Saturday, Aug. 19 at 11:30 a.m. with a parade led by the Silver Leaf Jazz Band, one of the most enduring traditional jazz groups around. These swinging cats will lead the floats and musicians, who will be riding in style in Mercedes-Benz convertibles, from the Unionville Go Station down Main Street until they reach the primary outdoor stage at Toogood Pond Park.

At that time, the Silver Leaf Jazz Band will jumpstart a sweeping afternoon of performers, including international jazz guitarist, Russell Malone. As the evening creeps in, local clubs, restaurants, and pubs will dish out a healthy serving of jazz groups for entertainment.

Sunday morning spotlights a spanking new attraction sure to become a crowd pleaser. In conjunction with the festival, Verve Records will be holding the "Jazz Stars of the Future" competition and awarding first, second, and third-place prizes. The high school level commences at 10:30 a.m., while the college level rages on at noon.

At 2 p.m., spectators can enjoy the



Internationally renowned jazz guitarist Russell Malone is one of many talented artists who will be playing at Markham Jazz Festival 2000 from Aug. 18-20.

sweet sounds of The Dawn Caswell Quintet. Closing the festivities an hour later will be Paul Grosney and his Music Makers as they pay tribute to trumpet player Harry James.

What truly makes this year an international treat is many acts appearing are not Canadian. As usual, music appears to be the common thread which transcends cultures.

"I think jazz is truly a North American art form," says Mitchell-Clarke.

"And it crosses all levels of education, race and those invisible boundaries we sometimes see. Music is a great communicator and jazz in particular really has something for everyone within its forms."

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