

A Musical Genre-Bender

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville Free Press

Award winning Scottish-Canadian reggae artist Jason Wilson is known for concocting innovative musical pairings, be they genres or artists.

Lion Rampant, his 2014 release with acclaimed English fiddler David Swarbrick, formerly of Fairport Convention, is one such collaboration. Music from the new album will be featured at Wilson and Swarbrick's Nineteen on the Park concert Nov. 8 at 8 p.m.

They will be joined by saxophonist, arranger and composer Pee Wee Ellis, an essential part of the legendary James Brown's band in the 1960s and band leader for Van Morrison for several years. Wilson describes the Stouffville concert as a "folky, jazzy, funky reggae party with a wee nod tae Scotland".

It's a heady combination, but one that starts to make sense when he talks about how his life has influenced his music. Both his parents were born in Scotland and he grew up with a deep connection to his heritage and its musical traditions.

"I'm the first Canadian-born in the family and spent every summer of the first 10 years of my life in Scotland," he said, adding that he has been to his parents' native land about 25 times in his 44 years. And as he points out, reggae has much in common with traditional English and Scottish folk music, telling the stories of Jamaicans who were taken across the 'Black Atlantic' in slave ships.

"I have been putting reggae with a whole bunch of genres for about 20 years. It's in my DNA," said Wilson. "My cousin was in (British reggae band) UB40 for 28 years." Wilson was also mentored by reggae artist Jackie Mittoo, who died in 1990.

Another of his musical heroes is Kate Bush, whose recent comeback concert was rapturously received by reviewers and fans alike. "It was one of her first shows in 25 years, and it was out of this world," he said.

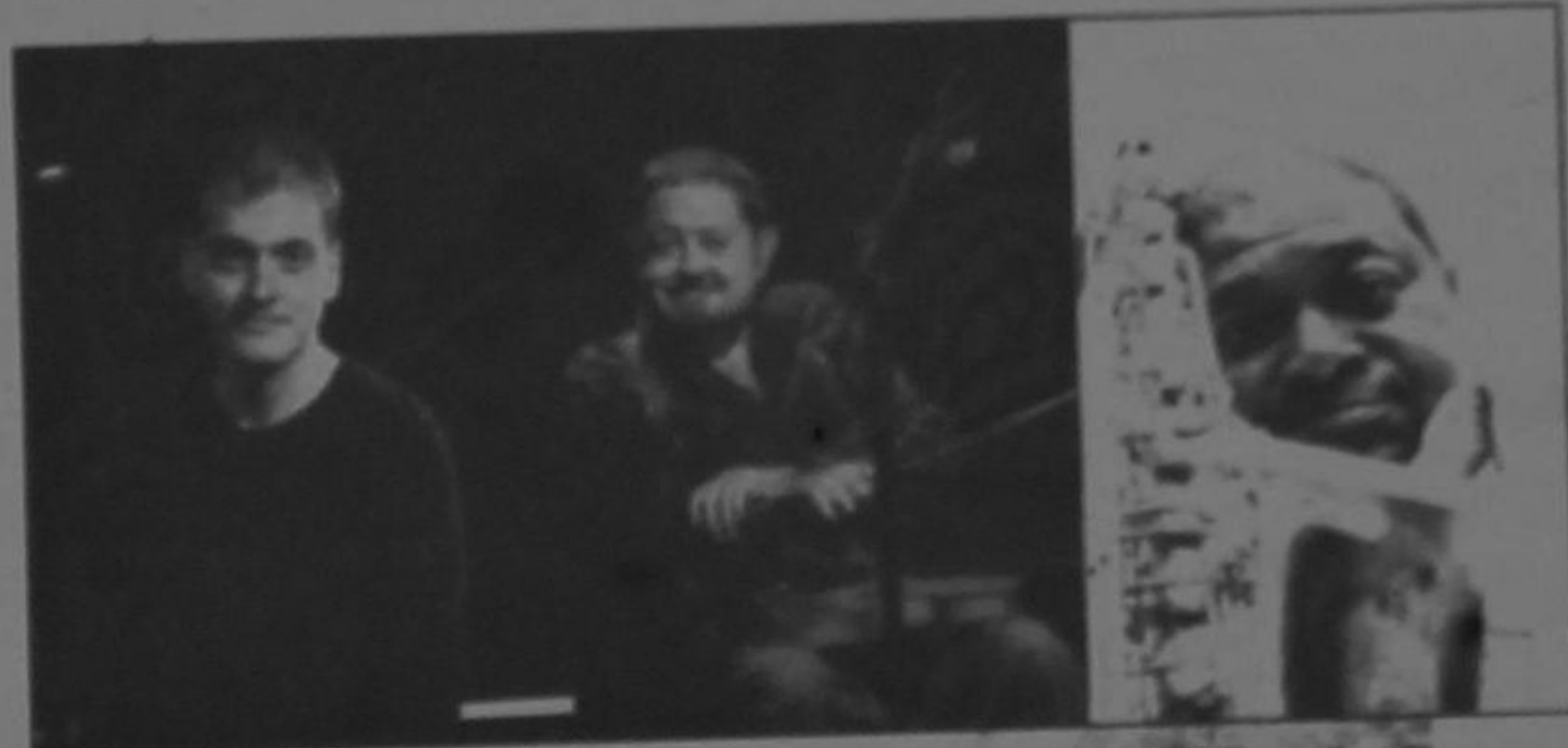
His beautifully integrated version of Robbie Burns' *Red, Red Rose* with Bob Marley's *No Woman No Cry*, which he and Swarbrick will perform at the Nineteen on the Park concert, has a special place in his heart. "One of the most touching emails I've ever received was from a Scottish fellow who got married in Kingston, Jamaica, and that was their (wedding) song."

He has also been immersed in the folk music of Fairport Convention, Richard Thompson and Sandy Denny, and more recently became enthralled by the genius of Thelonius Monk, which led him to incorporate jazz into the mix.

"More than anything I am a curator bringing different things together and it's kind of nice," he said.

Wilson, who lives at Musselman's Lake, is a two-time Juno nominee and Canadian Reggae Music award winner. He has performed and recorded with, among others, UB40, Alanis Morissette, Sly & Robbie and Ron Sexsmith.

For more information on his career and music visit jasonwilsonmusic.com.



Jason Wilson (left), Dave Swarbrick and Pee Wee Ellis will perform at Nineteen on the Park Nov. 8.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum
& Community Centre

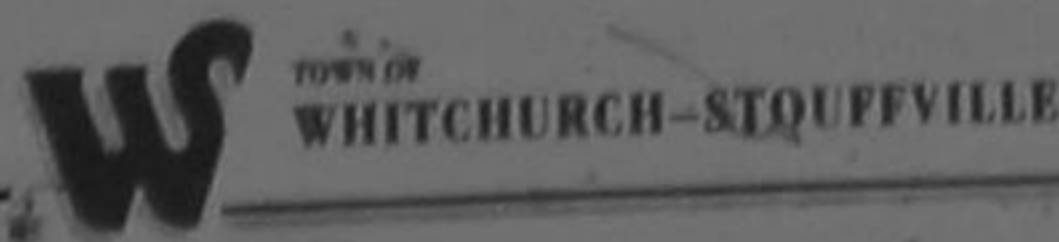
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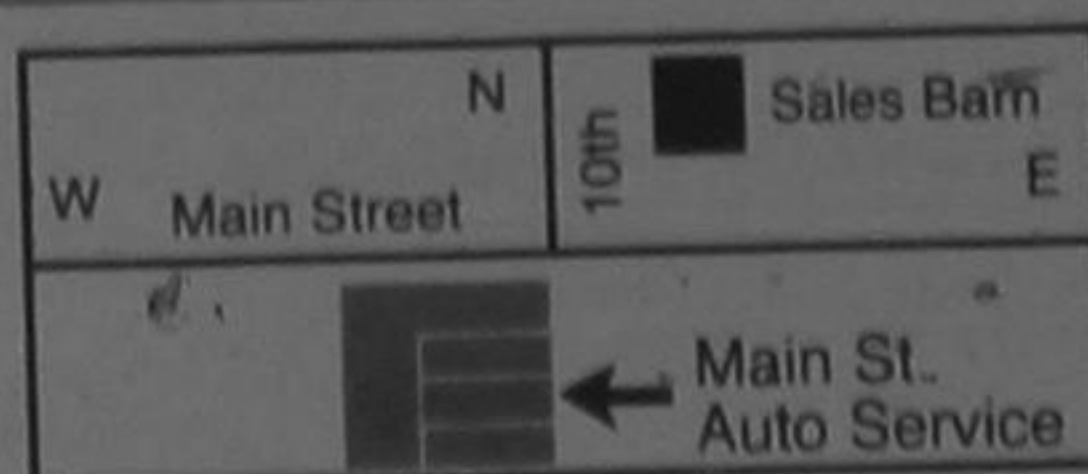
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