

20 must see highlights for the 20th Anniversary of Orangeville Blues and Jazz Fest

By **Sam Odrowski**

The 20th Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival is returning to the downtown core from Friday, May 31 to Sunday, June 1.

Organizers of the three-day celebration of live music have pulled out all the stops to create something special for the festival's 20th year.

The Citizen recently sat down with the festival's director Larry Kurtz and he shared a list of his 20 must-see things at the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival.

In no particular order, here are 20 events, acts, and offerings that Kurtz says festivalgoers have to see:

Blues Cruise on Broadway

Over 250 classic cars will take over Broadway, along with bands in various pop-up locations on Friday. The TD Broadway Stage, Opera House and TD Main Stage will all be open for the evening. This event is sponsored by MacMaster Buick GMC, Orangeville Chrysler and Orangeville Volkswagen.

Broadway Ramble

For all of Saturday, Broadway and Mill St. will be closed to vehicles and open to pedestrians. Broadway businesses will offer sidewalk sales to further enhance the downtown shopping experience. Live music will be featured all day long with bands playing on the street, in addition to the official stages.

Blues and Bikes

Over 500 motorcycles will line Broadway and Mill St. for the Blues and Bikes event on Sunday, sponsored by Barrie Harley Davidson. With Orangeville situated in the heart of bike country, the event is sure to attract hundreds of bikers from around the region. There will be a custom Show and Shine as well as specialty vendors to accompany the bikes.

Opening Remarks

Opening remarks will be shared from 12 to 12:30 p.m. to kick off the New Orleans Jazz March. Orangeville Mayor Lisa Post, Dufferin/Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, other dignitaries, and those involved with sponsoring or organizing the festival will share speeches.

New Orleans Style Jazz March

The Ghost Town Blues Band will lead an upbeat parade through downtown Orangeville in N'Awlins style, starting at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday. The parade will be supplemented by local musicians who will be marching alongside the Ghost Town Blues Band.

TD Broadway Stage

The TD Broadway Stage is free for the public to enjoy all weekend long. On Friday the stage will feature some of the best local talent in the area, but throughout the weekend there will be several high-level blues acts performing. The Orangeville District Secondary School Band, which hasn't played at the festival since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is making a return to the stage on Sunday at 12:30 p.m.

TD Main Stage

While Broadway is a happening place during the Orangeville Blues and Jazz weekend, all of the top-level talent performs at the TD Main Stage in Alexandra Park. This year's lineup is packed with more big names than ever before for the 20th edition. Tickets are \$10 per day or \$20 for a weekend pass. Don't miss out!

Opera House

When purchasing a ticket for the festival, you don't only get access to the TD Main Stage in Alexandra Park, you can also see world-renowned acts at the Opera House (87 Broadway). Attendees can enjoy a quieter, soft-seated, air-conditioned venue to enjoy live performances from some of the best in the industry. This venue has a jazz focus.

Harps of Gold

Four blues artists who have mastered the harmonica are taking over the TD Main Stage for a rare show. Steve Marriner, Paul Reddick, Jerome Godboo and Orangeville's own Larry Kurtz will perform under the name Harps of Gold on Sunday at 3 p.m. The four masters of their craft will be feeding off each other's energy to create a truly improvised performance where anything can happen.

Nick Moss Band

Saturday night's headliner, Nick Moss Band featuring Dennis Gruenling, was just recently named the 2024 Blues Band of the Year. Nick is a master on the guitar and Dennis is a world-class harmonica player. Be sure to catch their set on the TD Main Stage at 9:30 p.m.

Toronto Gospel Choir

The heavenly sounds of the Toronto Gospel Choir will grace the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival's TD Main Stage on Sunday at noon. This upbeat performance incorporates contemporary and traditional gospel music with Caribbean influences.

Heather Bambrick

Canadian vocalist and Jazz FM radio personality, Heather Bambrick, will be performing at the Opera House on Saturday, starting at 5 p.m. The JUNO-nominated singer's shows won't disappoint, with a diverse range of music. Bambrick's sounds range from jazz standards to pop hits or Newfoundland folk music. This is a performance you won't want to miss!

CaneFire

A unique style of music is coming to Orangeville. CaneFire, a Caribbean-flavoured Latin jazz group, fuses sounds together to create an eclectic live performance that will be sure to get people out of their chairs and onto their feet. CaneFire will take over the Opera House on Sunday at 3:30 p.m. for one of the final live performances of the weekend.

Dawn Tyler Watson with Ben Racine Band

Following the Harps of Gold Performance, Dawn Tyler Watson will close out the festival's TD Main Stage, starting at 4:45 p.m. on Sunday. Accompanied by the Ben Racine Band, JUNO Award winner Dawn Tyler Watson will fuse the sounds of jazz, soul, rock and gospel music together to push the boundaries of blues.

Family Friendly Activities

New this year is the addition of several family-friendly activities for kids this year. There will be a bubble show, puppet performances, pottery painting, martial arts demonstrations, a recycling challenge and art projects.

Food Trucks

There will be no shortage of food options at the festival. Food trucks will be set up along 2nd St. near the intersection with Broadway all weekend long.

There will be a variety of carnival-style foods like funnel cake, kettle corn, deep-fried Mars bars, deep-fried cheesecake, beaver tails, blooming onions, mini donuts, and ice cream. Other more traditional food truck cuisine includes grilled cheese, mac and cheese, fries, burgers, hot dogs, sausages, pulled pork, beef brisket, and nachos. Some of the more international food options are Trinidadian street foods, souvlaki wraps, shawarma, falafel, hummus, samosa, and pakora.

There will be both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages available, as well as freshly squeezed lemonade, smoothies, bubble tea, sugarcane juice, tropical assorted drink blends, soft drinks and water.

Craft Vendor Market and Farmers' Market

Mill St. will be taken over by vendors on Saturday from 12 to 8 p.m., providing a unique shopping experience to festival goers. Some of the artisan items you might find among the vendors include handmade wrist malas and handmade earrings made from ethically sourced wood, stone and crystal, taxidermy bug frames, insect jewellery, and dreamcatchers. The Market on Mill St. will also have more traditional vendor market items like homemade snacks, flowers, coffee, clothing, custom wood products, hot sauces, jams, and jellies. The event is put on by the Hometown Market.

The weekly Orangeville Farmers' Market takes place from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. The Farmers Market will take place along Second St. by the intersection with Broadway. These markets are the perfect place to find unique gifts or rare items while supporting small businesses in the region.

Women in Blues Workshop

The festival's workshops are moving back to the Mill St. Branch of the Orangeville Public Library. They were temporarily relocated to Marion Hall at the Covenant Alliance Church last year as the library was being renovated. There are three workshops this year, all taking place on Saturday.

The first one is titled Women in Blues, hosted by Ken Wallis, who is a blues radio host/writer and president of the Escarpment Blues Society in Hamilton. Wallis' workshop is in an interview format, where he'll have a discussion with an agent or publicist, as well as Cheryl Lescom and Chuckee Zehr. They are two respected blues musicians who are performing at the festival as the Shewolves of London. Catch their performance at the TD Main Stage on Saturday at 3:15 p.m. But be sure to make it out to this workshop first, starting at noon, to learn a little bit more about women working in the blues industry.

Blues Guitar Workshop

Brandon Issak will be running a guitar workshop for attendees of the Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival to enjoy. Stop by and learn from one of the greats. Isaak is an accomplished blues musician, having been nominated for several awards, including two JUNO Awards and a Maple Blues Award for songwriter of the year. The Blues Guitar Workshop starts at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday at the library.

Boogie Woogie Piano Workshop

Alan Gerber, a man with a music career that spans more than 40 years, will be hosting a piano workshop for the public to enjoy. Starting at 3 p.m. at the library, Gerber will be teaching the 'boogie-woogie' style of piano, which features the more heavily percussive style of blues piano, with a steady rhythmic ground bass of eighth notes in quadruple time, accompanied by a series of improvised riffs.

Visitor Info Booth

Located in the centre of Broadway, an official Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival Visitor Information Booth will be run by volunteers who can answer any questions you may have. Whether it's about the event, where something's located or how the festival works ? the information booth has you covered.