

MusicAurora launches three-festival mandate

By Brock Weir

Music lovers filled an Industrial Parkway South warehouse transformed into Aurora's premiere music venue on Saturday night for the formal launch of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival and its new parent MusicAurora.

Over 200 revellers filled the warehouse of Almac Industrial Systems for the invitation-only party headlined by award-winning singer Angel Forrest and featuring The Cara Lea Band.

It wasn't just a party to set the tone for February's month-long program all leading up to the Aurora Winter Blues Festival on February 24 and 25, but the true launch of the newly-formed collective MusicAurora, which aims to bring three music festivals to Aurora and be a hub for local talent.

MusicAurora really is an umbrella organization and we're rolling three festivals under MusicAurora the York Simcoe Youth Music Festival, the Aurora Winter Blues Festival (AWBF), and the newly-launched summer music festival, said AWBF co-founder Jamie Macdonald. It is going to give us huge economies of scale and will mean bigger and better things coming to the Town of Aurora moving forward.

This year, the sounds of summer will ring out from Town Park thanks to the relaunch of the Aurora Music Festival, which debuted last summer at Highland Park.

A passion project of John Abel, the Councillor was on hand Saturday night to give the new festivals a boost.

The summer festival will be in August and will feature Youth in Music and some great headlining acts, said Councillor Abel.

We're looking forward to seeing you all on the long weekend in August at fabulous Town Park.

In the meantime though, the attention of MusicAurora is focused squarely on the Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

The fun kicks off Saturday, February 4 in the showroom of Highland Automotive with the AWBF Blues Bash, headlined by the All-Star Jam Band. Featuring great music, door prizes, a live and silent auction, and lots of food, the event also serves as a showcase for CHATS (Community and Home Assistance to Seniors) and Blue Door Shelters, two local non-profits that will once again benefit from festival proceeds, along with the AWBF Youth in Music Program.

Continuing from February 4, Aurorans can take part in several pop-up music performances in various locations around Town, as well as enjoy programs organized by Festival partners the Aurora Cultural Centre and Royal Canadian Legion.

On Friday, February 10, the Aurora Cultural Centre hosts the Friday Night Blues Party featuring Diane Brathwaite and Chris Whitely. The following weekend, on Saturday, February 18, Groovestra will blow the proverbial roof off the Royal Canadian Legion at the Raise the Roof Rhythm & Blues Dance, which will also help support the Legion's fundraising efforts for a new roof.

Then, the following Friday, February 24, the AWBF kicks into high gear with the first night of the Festival proper.

Starting at 7.30 p.m. at St. Andrew's College a first for the Festival, which previously used Theatre Aurora as a base Masters of the Blues takes the stage, featuring the Downchild Blues Band with special guests the Spencer MacKenzie Band.

The Aurora Winter Blues Festival concludes Saturday, February 25 at 7 p.m., again at St. Andrew's College, with Lady Plays Guitar featuring renowned musicians Sue Foley, Suzie Vinnick and Cecile Doo-Kingue.

Tickets for the February 4 Blues Bash are available online from the Festival website, www.awbf.ca, as well as from CHATS and Blue Door Shelters. Tickets for the February 10 and February 18 events are also available online as well as from the Aurora Cultural Centre and Royal Canadian Legion respectively. For a full roster of activities, and tickets to the February 24 and 25 Festival, visit the website.