

?Natural Women? excited to be part of Concerts in the Park series

Lockdown after lockdown has taken its toll on live music. Musicians who often thrive in front of a real audience have had to make do with virtual venues, but as things begin opening back up, they are looking forward to finding their audience again.

Natural Women, a tribute to music icons Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight and Chaka Khan, is thrilled to appear before Town Park audiences next Wednesday, July 22, as part of Aurora's Concerts in the Park Summer Series.

Fronted by Jillian Mendez, Natural Women was founded about two-and-a-half years ago and, as such, had a limited window to perform for crowds before the pandemic hit.

?It's fantastic that we finally have an opportunity to play for an audience that we don't have to imagine in our minds,? says musical director Bryan Humphreys, who will also appear at the bandshell on drums. ?Natural Women [celebrates] three of the most influential female artists in the soul and R&B genre. It's highlights from their careers, going right back to the early stages up to and including some more recent hits that they have had. It's kind of like a retrospective in a way. We're focusing on those singers in particular because you don't often hear people doing shows where they're featuring those three women in particular, especially Gladys Knight. We feel that she is maybe the unsung hero, if there is such a thing among those three.?

As they look ahead to the concert, Mr. Humphreys says he wants the concert to be a bit of a break from the challenging realities of our new normal.

?I want audiences to leave feeling they have gone back in time to the extent that they just forget about anything to do with lockdowns, emergency declarations and anything like that,? he says. ?We want to transport them away from all that, even if it means having to be in your chair most of the time.

?We're really anxious just to get out there and play and feel that relationship between the band and audience because it has been a while since the group has had a chance to do this. We're dying for that. It has just been so long since we've had an opportunity that this is going to be great.

To be a part of it, pre-registration for a space at Town Park is required and this can be done by visiting aurora.ca/summerconcerts. Showtime is 7 p.m.

By Brock Weir Editor/Local Journalism Initiative Reporter