

Shake off the winter blahs with Winter Blues this week



By Brock Weir

This has been the coldest, snowiest, and generally most unpleasant winter many Aurorans can remember ? but if you're looking for a way to shake off the winter blues, this is your week.

Blues will be on the lips ? and in the ears ? of people across town this week as the third annual Aurora Winter Blues Festival kicks into high gear.

Organizers were on hand last week at the Aurora GO Station, saxophones in hand, and fedoras on head, to spread the good word that for Aurorans ? and music lovers everywhere ? the best way to shake the Blues off is to let the Blues in.

The sax reeds barely had time to dry before they were put back in action on Friday. Just a few days earlier, organizers got an otherwise staid Council meeting clapping and the blood pumping as Aurora Winter Blues Festival co-founder Jamie Macdonald, made his jazzy pitch.

?I know it's budget time right now, but are the winter blues getting' you down?? he asked. ?Are you starting to get that hurtin' feeling? I think we've got something that will soothe your soul. There's nothing better than that good ole' Devil's Music to drive away that winter blues and bring warmth into the soul right down to your dancin' toes.?

Festivities get underway with a special Blues Bash this Thursday, March 6 at the Aurora Cultural Centre beginning at 6.30 p.m. Featuring live performances from ?Big? Bob Hammond and the Dundas Blues Band, featuring The BluesBros, the kick-off is a proper salute to the two charities which will benefit from proceeds raised through the Aurora Winter Blues Fest ? Blue Door Shelters and CHATS (Community and Home Assistance to Seniors).

The Blues Bash will also feature a performance from participants in the Festival's ?Youth in Music? program, live painting of music legends ?to the beat? by artist Adubi Akinola, the ?Council Critters? featuring Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and Councillor John Abel, live and silent auctions, door prizes, and good food.

?It's all about the music, but it is about the cause as well,? said Mr. Macdonald. ?We really want everyone to have fun, but recognize the causes as well. It will really be intermingled with live music and we want to get people up on the dance floor as well.

?Part of our mandate for youth music is to provide more venues to showcase youth bands and youth talent as well. Working with The Arts [Music Store] youth will partake in the evening, and we're recognising local music as well.?

The music and fun continues in earnest on Friday and Saturday with the official Aurora Winter Blues Festival at Theatre Aurora.

Running on Friday from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., Henderson Avenue will be rocking to the 'old school, raw electric blues' of Daddy Long Legs, Bill Durst, and J-W Jones. The party continues on Saturday night, also from 7 ? 11 p.m. with 'Harmonica Knights' along with Jerome Godboo, Paul Reddick, and Mark 'Bird' Stafford, who will come together for 'Harp Blowoff.'

If Theatre Aurora isn't your thing, you will also be able to find the Aurora Winter Blues Festival elsewhere through the end of the week with young blues musicians taking over Jonathan's Restaurant and King Richard's English Pub on Friday and Saturday, and workshops held at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday, including a free ukulele and voice workshop, and a harmonica workshop with Stafford and Darren Pool.

Tickets for Thursday's Blues Bash are \$40, and Friday and Saturday's Festival Nights are \$42 a ticket each night. Tickets and further information can be found at www.awbf.com.