

Aurora Ribfest goes country with headliner Jason McCoy

Aurora's tastiest annual event will return this month with a country twist ? as Jason McCoy headlines the opening night of the Town's ever-popular Ribfest.

Ribfest will once again take over Machell Park from Friday, August 22 to Sunday, August 24, and will feature Canadian Country Music Hall of Famer McCoy as the Friday night headliner, with the perennially popular Canadian rock and pop band, The Pursuit of Happiness, headlining the Saturday evening festivities.

The headlining acts were announced by Mayor Tom Mrakas at last Wednesday's Concerts in the Park event, which featured No Sugar Tonight: A Tribute to the Guess Who, Burton Cummings, and BTO at the band shell.

Following the announcement, Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, said regular Ribfest-goers have long-wanted the event to go a little bit country as far as entertainment was concerned.

?For several years now, we've heard from our community that they really wanted a country artist and we're very excited [with our lineup] especially with Jason McCoy recently being added to the Country Music Hall of Fame. He's coming as a solo artist, but he's also the frontman for the Road Hammers ? so we're kind of getting a two-for-one here in a sense!/? says Ware. ?And he seems to be a phenomenal person outside of his great talent and I think that will really be a treat.

?I think Canada has a lot of phenomenal country artists to begin with and they've always had a piece of the stage, but we've tended to go with more of a classic rock alleyway. When you look at this year, we're opening Friday night with country and then on Saturday night, with The Pursuit of Happiness, we've opened up more sounds and genres for the community because events evolve, music evolves, and it's just nice to have a variety while incorporating something new.?

Country will be the order of the day on Friday, August 22, with not only McCoy on stage from 9 ? 10.30 p.m., but he will be preceded by country artist Leah Daniels, a popular Ribfest mainstay, from 5.30 ? 7.30 p.m.

The stage opens on Saturday, August 23, at 11 a.m. with A Tribute to The Chicks (formerly The Dixie Chicks) through to 12.30 p.m., followed at 1.15 by Blue Silver: The Duran Duran Experience; at 3.30 p.m. by Pearl Jamming: A Tribute to Pearl Jam, and, before The Pursuit of Happiness takes the stage at 9 p.m., local sibling duo The Beresfords from 5.45 ? 7.30 p.m.

Ware dubs the brother-sister team as ?York Region's sweethearts.?

The lineup for Sunday, August 24, includes Project Phoenix from 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., Glenn Marais and The Mojo Train from 1 ? 3 p.m., Southern Fried from 3.30 ? 5 p.m., followed by professional rib judging from 5.40 ? 6.30 p.m., and a showcase from the 2025 Aurora Teen Idol, which wraps up the show from 6.45 ? 7.30 p.m.

?Sunday is a really eclectic group,/? says Ware. ?Southern Fried is really southern rock and will cover a whole range from Lynyrd Skynyrd to the Allman Brothers Band, so a nice variety there. We're all familiar with Glenn Marais and the Mojo Train, and he provides a really strong mix. Project Phoenix is a 12-piece R&B-funk cover band and they will be covering Earth, Wind & Fire, Stevie Wonder, the Commodores, Kool & The Gang, and More. They will really keep Ribfest fully energized!/?

This year's ribbers include Billy Bones, Camp 31, Sticky Fingers, and Uncle Sam's, with vegetarian options on site as well.

?Back again, we will have Bullseye Axe Throwing, which is going to be available on-site for Friday and Saturday,/? says Ware. ?We will also have our Children's Zone on Saturday and Sunday. We're also very proud to be able to partner with the Rotary Club for the Beer Garden and we're very excited because I think we've got a really excellent menu between desserts, vegetarian foods, as well as the ribs, brisket, chicken and pulled pork.

?I truly believe that this event is for all appetites, whether it's a culinary appetite or a musical appetite!?

For more information on Aurora's 2025 Ribfest, which is presented by Desjardins for the fifth year running, visit aurora.ca/ribfest.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter