

Ladies strumming up for Winter Blues Fest

By Brock Weir

Considering her upcoming performance in Aurora on Saturday night, musician Suzie Vinnick turns to unlikely quarters ? Tibet. ?I always think of those moments of the Tibetan monks who paint sand pictures and they blow away in the wind,? says Ms. Vinnick, who is spearheading ?Lady Plays Guitar? the grand finale of the Aurora Winter Blues Festival this Saturday, February 25. Following Friday night's headlining performance of the Downchild Blues Band, part of an evening dubbed ?Masters of Blues,? Lady Plays Guitar brings together three distinct and acclaimed Canadian female artists, each approaching their styles of music differently, but bound by the common threads of blues and guitar.



Lady Plays Guitar features The Sue Foley Band, the Cecile Doo-Kingue Band, as well as Ms. Vinnick and her band. ?It is going to be a heck of a lot of fun with Sue and Cecile, for sure,? says Ms. Vinnick. ?Stylistically, we're all coming from slightly different places, but the core of the blues will be the string going through it. We hope people will have a fun night, leave with a smile on their face, and feel they have been well-entertained. I am excited too because in the finale the three of us are going to get together to play a few tunes.?

That doesn't happen very often, hence the blowing sand.

Ms. Vinnick is collaborating on the Festival's Grand Finale with Aurora Winter Blues Festival (AWBF) co-founder Jamie Macdonald. Mr. Macdonald wanted to put together a night showcasing female guitarists and he knew just who to turn to. And so did Ms. Vinnick.

Sue Foley, she says, is an artist she has known since she was a teen growing up in Saskatoon. She first encountered Ms. Foley at an open stage blues jam in a local bar when Ms. Vinnick herself was just beginning to learn how to play.

Cecile, on the other hand, is a relatively new artist to Ms. Vinnick, having first heard her about four or five years ago. In 2015, she had the opportunity to hear Ms. Doo-Kingue perform in the Winter Blues Review and ?she was so much fun and super-talented as well and I knew she would be a neat addition to the show.?

?When I was growing up in Saskatoon, I think every kid gravitated towards musical things,? says Ms. Vinnick. ?I don't think I really

conceived I was going to do music for a living, but it was an intuitive thing that drove me to it. Even in elementary school, I started playing the guitar at the age of nine and by high school at 13 I picked up the electric bass in the stage band. We had an amazing music program at Holy Cross High School and it kept me really busy.?

But, it wasn't all about the blues. At home, she was often listening to bands like Led Zeppelin and Super Tramp, musicians often considered rock but with distinct blues influences.

?There were many female artists who came through who stuck in the back of my mind as an aspiring Canadian musician,? she says. ?I don't consider myself solely a blues musician, but it encompasses a lot of the musical work that I do. It is such an expressive style of music and it comes from a place of struggle. Blues came out of people suffering and doing things against their will and people would sing to help pass the time. People might think, 'I don't want to listen to the blues, it's depressing,' but it is a piece that helps you express yourself and sing about the joys too. It's cathartic.?

For tickets to Lady Plays Guitar, which takes place this Saturday at St. Andrew's College, Friday night's Masters of the Blues, or for information on the Saturday guitar workshop the Ladies will be holding in the community, visit www.awbf.ca.