

Leah Daniels looking forward to hometown love at Aurora Music Festival



By Brock Weir

Fresh off being named Female Artist of the Year at the Country Music Association of Ontario last month, singer Leah Daniels is looking forward to receiving some hometown love ? or close enough ? when she takes the stage June 25 at the inaugural Aurora Music Festival.

Ms. Daniels, a native of Uxbridge and a favourite of the annual Wild, Wild West Hoedown, is a feature performer at the Highland Park event, which will also feature The Road Heavy, local youth talent, and headliner band The Good Brothers.

While she says she's excited to leave her mark on what is hoped by organizers to become an annual event, she is also excited to have something of a homecoming next Saturday.

?I am looking forward to having a lot of family and friends in the audience,? she says. ?I don't always have that ability if I am doing a show that is further away, so it is always awesome to do something that is closer to home!?

Growing up in a musical home, not pursuing a career in music was never an option Ms. Daniels considered. It was just something inside of her, she said, and when the time came to choose her career path after high school, there certainly wasn't a fork in the road.

She performed and entered competitions wherever she could, formed bands, and studied musical theatre and jazz at Sheridan College, and it is there she met many of the musicians currently in her band.

?Finding Leah was almost the hardest part,? she says of developing as a country artist. ?In developing your craft, you often imitate your favourite artists and that is exactly what I was doing. I was imitating Shania Twain, and I loved Celine Dion's voice, so I started imitating her, but it wasn't until I started writing my own music that I would discover my own voice. I wasn't writing for a specific genre, but it wasn't until a friend listened and said these could be country songs that [I realised] they totally were! That is how I decided to focus in on the country genre.?

Evidently it was a good fit. Although someone once told her that if there was something else she wanted to do, that she should do it because the career of an artist is a challenging, 24-hour-a-day job, she knew she was on the right track. This was only driven home further when she picked up her award from the Country Music Association of Ontario.

?The timing was perfect because I had just released by latest single, Your Kiss Is Killing Me, to the radio the week before,? she says. ?When the award happened, it was perfect because it definitely helps build that momentum. My job as an artist is to take people to another place for a little bit while I am performing so they can forget about their worries and the stresses of their jobs, and that kind of thing.

?I am trying to think of all those things when trying to craft a set list that is fun and takes them on an emotional journey. I hope people [at the Aurora Music Festival] come away feeling inspired and happy, and they have kind of forgotten about life for a little bit, that I was able to take them in completely and capture them on this musical journey together.?

To join Leah and the rest of the Aurora Music Festival on this journey, tickets for the June 25 event, which runs from 12 noon to 9 p.m. are now on sale. For more, visit www.auroramf.com.