

Lighthouse to headline Aurora 150 bash



By Brock Weir

Lighthouse, a band which has been a mainstay on the Canadian music scene since their founding over 40 years ago, will headline Dance in the Park, as part of Aurora's 150th anniversary celebrations.

The deal was sealed between the band, the Aurora 150 Committee, and the Rotary Club, the hosts of the annual Dance in the Park, last week, and the official announcement was made Monday.

Dance in the Park is presented by the Rotary Club of Aurora and is the traditional start of the Town's annual Canada Day celebration, but the group has partnered with the Town's Sesquicentennial Committee this year to make sure that the festivities are extra special this time around in this, the Town's milestone 150th anniversary.

"The committee is absolutely thrilled that Lighthouse will be the featured headline act at this year's Dance in the Park," says Aurora 150 chair Alison Collins-Mrakas. "Through the hard work of committee members Brian North and Lindsay McGuire and the stupendous efforts of Shelley Ware, the Town's event coordinator extraordinaire, we were able to secure Lighthouse for this year's dance. We cannot begin to say how excited we are about it! I think it will be a dance to remember - how fitting for Aurora's 150th."

Ms. McGuire and Mr. North had been tasked by the committee to find a big name band that would not only headline the event but also appeal to people beyond generational borders. He said they found just what they needed in the multi-award winning band.

"What I liked about them is the fact they are an all-round band with brass and a variety, and something that might appeal to all ages," said Mr. North. "They are middle of the road, hopefully still attracting people from their 20s through their 60s

"They are synonymous with Canadiana and one of the reasons [we wanted a big name band] is to be a draw and keep people in Aurora that weekend. People go away the Canada Day weekend and we're trying to keep people here to celebrate the 150th. The whole day is really run by the Rotary Club. There are going to be various bands playing throughout the afternoon starting at 2 p.m. While it is a Rotary event on that day, what we're trying to do is enhance it and give it back to the Town."

Lighthouse was chosen after looking at several potential bands. Early on, Lighthouse was one that was eyed keenly by the group after some committee members saw them live last year.

The band had its early foundations in 1968 when Paul Hoffert, Skip Prokop and Ralph Cole put their talents together, fusing rock,

jazz and classical influences. Having worked with the talents of Janis Joplin, Peter, Paul and Mary and Carlos Santana, Prokop's drumming is considered one of the highlights of the stage show, along with Hoffert on vocals, and Cole on guitar.

Releasing three albums in 1969 alone, and playing countless stops around North America, they have been awarded several Juno Awards and have the distinction of earning Canada's first platinum album with Lighthouse Live.

The original three are now a 10-member band featuring Dan Clancy on lead vocals, Doug Moore on bass, Don Paulton on keyboard, Chris Howell on trumpet, Russ Little on trombone, Simon Wallis and Steve Kennedy on sax.

"They had the whole crowd up on their feet and the whole audience going and they just made it a fun night," said Mr. North. "Come out and have a great night. How often do you get to see a band like this for nothing?"

Mayor Geoffrey Dawe said he was excited about the announcement.

"I remember seeing 'The Paupers' at St. Michael's College when I went there and they were the precursor to Lighthouse, with the original founders," he said, noting some of his favourite songs of theirs are Sunny Days, Broken Guitar Blues, and 1849. "I am an old rock and roll guy!" he adds with a laugh.

"They are a good band and they put on a good live show."

This year's Dance in the Park will take place in Town Park on Sunday, June 30 from 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. Lighthouse is slated to hit the stage at 9 p.m.

While traditionally the kick-start of the Canada Day Celebrations, the festivities begin a bit earlier this year on the Saturday with what is shaping up to be a youth day with the potential for young artists to show off their talent with an "art jam" and a possible jam session with younger up-and-coming bands in a showcase of youth music.

Canada Day celebration will take place, of course, on July 1, the big day itself and, in addition to the parade and regular events at Lambert Willson Park, the Committee hopes to form a collaboration with the Aurora Historical Society and Theatre Aurora to make sure Aurora's history comes to life as it parades down Yonge Street.

For more information on the Aurora 150 celebrations, visit www.aurora150.ca.