

## Melissa Suma crowned Aurora's 2016 Teen Idol



**By Brock Weir**

Aurora's Melissa Suma has always had an affinity with pop music, but things recently changed.

As she began learning more about jazz, she soon realised she was already incorporating jazz influences into her original song writing.

It's something the 14-year-old has started to embrace and when she stepped onto the stage on Canada Day as one of eight finalists in the Aurora Teen Idol competition, she blew judges away with her rendition of Feeling Good, a jazz standard popularized by Nina Simone.

Her song selection made her stand out from the crowd which included Kahlan Crowe, who sang Kelly Clarkson's Piece By Piece.

Additional members of the top eight included Madison with Rachel Platten's Fight Song, Emma with Adele's Someone Like You, Stephanie, who chose When We Were Young, another selection from Adele's songbook, Leah with Abba's The Winner Takes It All, Alexandra with The Writing's On The Wall, and Nikita with John Lennon's Imagine.

All eight took to the stage at Lambert Willson Park at 6 p.m. sharp for the final round of Aurora's Teen Idol competition, a popular Canada Day tradition in Aurora. Occasionally interrupted by sudden downpours, the singers were unflappable as they went through their performances, which were evaluated by professional judges.

Stephanie, Kahlan, Melissa and Madison ultimately rose to the top with Kahlan nabbing the first-runner-up spot and Melissa the crown.

"I am really excited," Melissa told *The Auroran* after her name was announced by Mayor Geoff Dawe and receiving her sash from 2015's Teen Idol Louisa Barbosa. "Last year was my first year in this competition. My parents said I have been singing for such a long while that I should try some competitions. I think this [win] is such a good opportunity to grow my experience as a singer and meet new people."

Melissa, a student at Richmond Hill's Holy Trinity Catholic High School, has been singing since she was two-years-old. There are plenty of opportunities to sing at school, she says, and while she is keen to get started learning piano and guitar to broaden her musical talents, she is currently taking singing lessons and enjoying the fruits of her hard work.

‘I have always been singing around the house for fun; even when I was little, I was just making up silly songs,’ she says. ‘I have been working on some of my original songs and I am hoping to be able to record an album sometime soon.’

In the meantime, however, you will have many opportunities in and around Aurora to hear Melissa perform. Among her duties as Aurora's Teen Idol is performing the National Anthem and other songs at a number of community events, including the Town's Concerts in the Park series, which kicks off this week.

For judge Philip Trow, although each singer was technically sound, there was just something about Melissa's performance that wowed them. In fact, that ‘something’ was very identifiable.

‘We're looking for people who have done their technique so they know the technical aspects of singing, but they can sell the song as well,’ he said, following the competition. ‘It was pretty clear who knew exactly what she was doing. Being 14, to have that kind of maturity in her presentation was very encouraging because it means that if she pursues it as a career, she is already that much further ahead.’

‘She has got lots of technique, but if you have an idea of what you're trying to say and have the technique to say it, it is amazing. All of the singers were good, and all of the singers were at different levels in technique and in their ability to get the song across. Some are quite young in knowing what they are trying to say. They have heard it done, they have got some technique, but they aren't really speaking from the soul. It was clear Melissa was feeling the song.’