

Singer Bernadette Connors looking forward to near 'homecoming' at Concerts in the Park

Bernadette Connors, a popular mainstay of the local music scene, will enjoy something of a homecoming next Wednesday, July 31, as part of Aurora's popular Concerts in the Park Summer Series.

A native of Georgina, who is now living in the Hamilton area, Connors has been hailed by the Town for her 'authentic style' that 'defies industry norms, showcasing her dynamic vocals and heartfelt lyrics.'

'Her album, Monarch, produced by John-Angus MacDonald of The Trews, captures the essence of a small-town community spirit,' say Concerts in the Park organizers. 'With a unique Canadiana sound and top-notch musicianship, Bernadette delivers a captivating and ageless musical experience.'

These are qualities many Aurora residents have, well, experienced as Connors got her musical feet wet performing at local bars, music events such as the dormant Aurora Winter Blues Festival, and more. Through that lens, Connors is looking forward to revisiting some of her musical roots as she takes the stage at Town Park.

'Before [former Aurora Deputy Mayor] John Abel passed, he used to say, 'Bernadette, you're the adopted daughter of Aurora' and that meant the world to me,' says Connors. 'When I think of Aurora, I think of the community I have met through that relationship with John and performing in the community and seeing friendly faces. It's really about community and seeing people I love.'

Music has always been very important in the life of Bernadette Connors. She felt music was an emotional outlet from her teens to the point she realized singing and song-writing is, 'How I discover and cope.'

She aims to be 'open and truthful' in her lyrics and that, in turn, helps connect with audiences.

'The interesting thing is I never thought I gave off a lot of energy until I learned more about myself and discovered I had an intensity about me, and singing was how I coped with my intensity all my life. More and more people would come out and say, 'That song really hit home for me.''

One such song on her album, Blame Me, sparked a music-lover to reach out and thank her for sharing the piece. Blame Me, Connors explains, is about being in a relationship with a narcissist and sharing that helped the listener feel empowered in her own life.

'I find I get a lot of clarity when I write songs about something I'm reflecting on,' she says. 'For example, my single History is all about kind of understanding what anxiety is and how I can use tools in life to let it go. Singing with a lot of power helps me with that. It feels like a great release and I am constantly kind of diving in to learn about myself and that comes out in my song-writing.'

Despite some of the heavier topics that might come out of this kind of reflection, Connors says she's preparing an 'upbeat' set for the Concerts in the Park performance which will have audiences up on their feet 'rocking out and dancing.'

'I want them to feel not just uplifted but a release,' she says. 'I think society now could use that, especially in these times. My dad used to say, 'Music is so powerful and it can lift people.' In the Great Depression in the 30s, Swing music became really big for a reason: people needed that. I believe society needs to feel lifted and released!'

Concerts in the Park take place each Wednesday night from 7 - 9 p.m. at Town Park through to the end of August.

Vendors for food and other goods begin setting up at 6 p.m.

Concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged.

For more on the 2024 Concerts in the Park lineup, visit aurora.ca/summerconcerts.

By Brock Weir