

Tom Cruise blockbuster kicks-off Aurora's Movies in the Park season

Tom Cruise's return to form in *Top Gun Maverick* set box office records when it was released last year, and now it's set to be unspooled at Town Park next week to kick off Aurora's Movies in the Park summer series.

Set to take place at Town Park on Thursday, August 3, at dusk, *Top Gun Maverick* will be followed on Thursday, August 17 with *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, on Thursday, August 24, with the classic *The Land Before Time*, and on Thursday, August 31, with *Spies in Disguise*.

"We're very excited to be offering a more mature film to kick off the series," says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, on starting with *Top Gun Maverick*. "We know the sun sets later on August 3, so we knew we would be getting an older audience in attendance, and being an aviation geek myself, we're really excited to get the license for that and to be able to share the need for speed."

With the sun setting a bit earlier on August 17, *Space Jam: A New Legacy* will keep the series going with not just the film, featuring Looney Tunes favourites and NBA star LeBron James, but with themed activities as well. An added bonus planned for each remaining film in the series as well.

"After a two-week hiatus, we'll be back with some jammin' action with *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, which we're all excited for," Ware continues, noting that new this year all screenings will feature a "little extra treat" in the form of movie theatre-style popcorn.

"With movies like *Space Jam*, *The Land Before Time*, and *Spies in Disguise*, all three of those will have pre-movie activities and games prior to the movies and we really do hope people will arrive early and be able to be active with us. Then, when the movie is ready to go, be ready to hunker down for the cinematic view.

"*The Land Before Time* is definitely for a retro feel of days gone by, but it still has so much appeal for people who watched it back in its day, and we know it is also going to create giggles and a heartwarming experience for those who are watching it for the first time. We all know dinosaurs have stood the test of time in terms of appeal and our reaction to it, and this is a classic we wanted to share with the community."

2019's *Spies in Disguise*, featuring the vocal talents of Will Smith and Tom Holland, promises to get audiences' creative juices flowing and kick their sense of adventure into high gear.

"With our movies, we usually end the series with an animated one for the younger crowd, but *Spies in Disguise* has had such great reviews, I really believe it is going to be quite the energetic movie for the whole family."

Planning the Movies in the Park series each year is a fun task for Ware and each season's selection is based on feedback from attendees the previous year. With their feedback, and a roster of films the Town is able to license, she and her team choose the films and immediately set to work devising fun activities as part of the pre-show.

Prior to the pandemic, the Movies in the Park series was something of a "roadshow," bringing the films to different parts of Aurora. Since its re-launch at Town Park, it has stayed at the popular green space, and it is set to stay there for seasons to come.

"There are really good amenities at Town Park with splash pad, toilets, and a place where we can be as green as we possibly can," says Ware. "By having it at Town Park, we're using land infrastructure power."

"This is an experience even if you've done it before because you don't know who you will be sitting beside," she adds. "You don't know what activities you'll be participating in beforehand. We certainly have a lot of fun with the pre-screen movie trailers and trivia and we really try to just make the experience as unique and memorable as possible. It is always really rewarding to see the

connections between the audience and themselves, those who make new friends, especially towards the last movie of the season, you will see schoolkids that come and then they actually reconnect with other school friends they haven't seen over the summer. You get to see those school connections come back to life. It is really a way to connect under the open air with your community in your community with a unique experience, which is also free.?

For more information on this year's program, visit aurora.ca/moviesinthepark.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter