

Top Canadian talent takes over Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival

Written By SAM ODROWSKI

The sweet sounds of blues and jazz filled the streets of Orangeville over the weekend as the community gathered, danced, laughed and sang their hearts out.

The 21st Annual Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival returned to the downtown core over the weekend, featuring more than 50 touring blues and jazz bands, who were mostly Canadian.

Bands took over stages on Broadway, Alexandra Park and the Opera House, from May 30 to June 1. Some of the top brass that made up the lineup includes Harry Manx, Robi Botos, Steve Strongman, Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne, the Maple Blues Band and Lachy Doley.

Despite cold and windy weather, the event was well attended, with slightly less people than in 2024, when the festival set an attendance record of 40,000.

"People dressed up for it, and obviously there wasn't as many people as last year, but it was a lot better than I thought it would be," said Larry Kurtz, festival founder and musical director. "I'm quite pleased with how it went."

Kurtz said a great energy and atmosphere filled Orangeville's downtown for the duration of the festival.

The Blues Cruise Car Show on Friday and Blues and Bikes Show and Shine on Sunday filled Broadway and Mill Streets with interesting and unique vehicles for patrons to browse.

A new beer garden near the TD Broadway Stage was introduced this year and well received by festival-goers.

Kurtz shared some of the high points he saw during the festival.

"Musically, for me, there's tons of highlights. Having Harry Manx perform [on the TD Main Stage] on Sunday and then having our Saturday night headliner from Australia [Lachy Doley] jump up on stage and join him - that was unplanned and very cool. Seeing two headliners playing together, jamming out on the main stage, it was fun to watch."

Kurtz also lauded bands from the region who performed.

"Looking at the level of talent locally that we had, it seems like we stepped up our game this year. Everybody did really well. All the local bands - they were really well received. Having the [Joyful Sound Gospel Choir] in the Tweedsmuir Church this year for the little Saturday Service - that was cool."

The Orangeville Blues and Jazz Festival has been receiving attention from organizers of other notable festivals, as it continues to grow and feature talented artists on its lineup each year.

"We had people visiting from the Ottawa Blues Society, there was a big gang of them who came all the way from Ottawa. They were having a great time. We also had people from other festivals and event organizers all praising our festival, saying it's one of the very best in Canada," Kurtz lauded. "People from Windsor, people from Kincardine area, and over in Uxbridge area, all who organize events, came to our event. That was very gratifying to have them come and appreciate what we're doing here."

Looking ahead to the 2026 festival, the planning committee is already rolling up their sleeves and organizing it. The committee always looks to feedback from the community to see what went well and what may need improvement next year.

Kurtz noted the festival's organizers are grateful for the many volunteers and sponsors who make it possible each year.

?Their efforts don't go unnoticed,? he said.