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Jazz Fest Draws Cool Musicians



Alexis P. Suter and her band will perform during Scranton Jazz Festival Aug. 5 through 7.



Jazz master Jimmy Heath will perform with Scranton Jazz Festival Big Band on Aug. 6.

For jazz lovers, August means it's time for the Electric City to turn into the Big Easy.

Scranton Jazz Festival is a late-summer staple in Northeast Pennsylvania, and local veteran musician and festival artistic director Marko Marcinko said the Aug. 5-7 event brings jazz, blues and world beat musicians to downtown Scranton consistently each year.

“It works really well,” Marcinko said. “It really has the flavor of other jazz festivals around the world. It makes you feel like (you’re in) New York City (or) New Orleans.”

The main stage, located in Radisson at Lackawanna Station hotel, 700 Lackawanna Ave., hosts performances during the beginning of the evening. After the main stage closes on Friday and Saturday, local, regional and national up-and-coming and veteran artists perform during the Jazz Walk, which begins at 10 p.m.

Jazz-funk-fusion band the Tizer Trio kicks off the festival at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 5, followed by a set by soul singer-songwriter Alexis P. Suter Band at 8:30.

The entertainment on Aug. 6 begins with Keystone College Jazz Institute Student combos at 5:30 p.m., and New York City-based quintet Jason Miles and the Kind of New Band at 6:30 p.m. The Jost Project performs jazz renditions of classic rock songs at 7:30, then Scranton Jazz Festival Big Band, featuring jazz master Jimmy Heath, goes on at 8:30.

Festivities on Aug. 7 begin with a jazz brunch in the morning at Carmen’s Restaurant in the Radisson at 11:30 a.m., with a performance by Tommy Hamilton and the Work in Progress band later in the day at 7 p.m.

Festival headliner Blood, Sweat & Tears, featuring lead singer and “American Idol” alum Bo Bice, takes the stage at 8 p.m., followed by the annual final act of the festival, The Festival Jazz Jam, inside Trax Platform Lounge at the hotel at 9:30.

“If someone is a music lover, then they’re going to get a little taste of everything at the jazz festival,” Marcinko said.

The Jazz Walk takes place at various venues downtown, such as Adezzo, 515 Center St.; Ale Mary’s at the Bittenbender, 126 Franklin Ave.; Backyard Ale House, 523 Linden St.; the Bog, 341 Adams Ave.; POSH at the Scranton Club, 404 N. Washington Ave.; and Trax patio at Radisson at Lackawanna Station hotel.

This year’s jazz walk features different artists and acts, including a CD release party for College Music Journal Jazz charts-topper Organik Vibe Trio at Bar Pazzo, 131 N. Washington Ave., on Friday night. Between developing a menu of complementing food and drinks with the Radisson and ensuring the quality of the sound production, staging and lighting, Marcinko said the festival aims to keep the tried-and-true formula, but also kick it up a notch.

“It’s familiar but, yet, if you want to do things that are a little bit more elevated, you can,” he said. “We try to bring it up to a higher level.”