

GUIDE TO OTTAWA

where

Ottawa's own
Rebecca Noelle
performs at
TD Ottawa Jazz Fest
and RBC Bluesfest

FESTIVAL CAPITAL OF CANADA

Summer in the
nation's capital
is just one bash
after the other.

SUMMER 2019

DINING | SHOPPING | ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT | MAPS

Summer in the City



YOU REALLY CAN'T BEAT SUMMER IN THIS CITY, and the magazine you're holding should prove it.

Where to start? Ottawans love the outdoors all year round but they capitalize on the warmer months to host as many outdoor activities, festivals, and parties as they can fit into a calendar. Our music scene has been vibrant for decades — particularly for underground music genres — and now it has taken centre stage as Ottawa evolves into a legitimate music city.

The culinary scene has also exploded over the last few years. We've curated a list of recommendations for the best cuisine the city has to offer in Chinese, Mexican, French, Japanese, Greek, Italian, Indian, Vietnamese, and more. Seeking delicious vegan? Craving pizza or steak? Want to relax in the city best lounges and winebars? Our Food & Drink section is for you.

Just as plentiful are the shopping options. We highlight some of the best stores and boutiques in adesigner art and jewellery, womenswear and menswear, and kid's toys and games.

Music isn't the only thing that keeps the city humming. Our Arts & Entertainment section is one wide umbrella, covering everything from historic buildings and national museums to our many theatres, art galleries, and clubs. There's a lot going on.

The events calendar and recommendation sections should provide you with a complete look of what to see and do while you're here. If you like what we did or feel that something is missing, let us know by writing to online@where.ca.

From a local who loves his hometown, welcome to Ottawa.

All the best,

Joseph Mathieu

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BY SUBSCRIPTION WITHIN CANADA: \$25 PER ANNUM FIRST CLASS ISSN 1701-9591 PRINTED IN CANADA. WHERE IS THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE OTTAWA GATINEAU HOTEL ASSOCIATION WITH EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION IN THE GUEST ROOMS OF ALL MAJOR HOTELS IN THE REGION. WHERE IS A MEMBER OF THE HOTEL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF CANADA. PUBLICATIONS MAIL REGISTRATION NO. 484113. MEMBER OF THE BDA DIVISION OF CCAB, INC.




RAISE THE FLAG

A GUIDE TO THE MAJOR MUSIC FESTIVALS OF OTTAWA

by Joseph Mathieu





EVERY CANADIAN KNOWS ABOUT
CANADA DAY IN THE CAPITAL.
BUT DO THEY KNOW THAT OTTAWA
IS ACTUALLY THE FESTIVAL
CAPITAL OF CANADA?

Every summer weekend is packed with concerts, dances, cultural showcases, and family fun. Arts and culture has become an increasingly big draw for tourists and talent as efforts transform Ottawa into a music hub.

Ottawa has been recognized three times as a World Festival and Event City by the International Festivals and Events Association, most recently in 2018.

The city's biggest festivals and cultural institutions are all in it together. They bring more visitors to the nation's capital, encourage the existing music scene, and help make Ottawa a better place to live.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Every July, RBC Bluesfest can sell up to 300,000 tickets to its 10-day lineup of acts that, in the past, has included Kanye West, Foo Fighters, and Kiss. Mark Monahan, Bluesfest's executive and artistic director, credits the festival's success over 25 years to one major thing: always listening to the fans.

But a question — sometimes earnest, sometimes sarcastic — continues to come up: why keep calling it Bluesfest? Despite its name, Bluesfest has always hosted a mix of genres. This year, local and international blues acts like Sue Foley, Buddy Guy, and TJ Wheeler will grace one stage, while the Killers, Wu-Tang Clan and Alexisonfire slay on another.

Monahan says he saw great interest in the blues shows he once booked as talent buyer of the now defunct Penguin Club on Elgin Street (Chicago blues legend Junior Wells was a particularly big draw). This inspired him to start a blues festival of his own, but with a slightly different slant.

Bluesfest, which began featuring pure blues in Major's Hill Park in 1994, evolved to mimic the success of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Monahan first visited the New Orleans festival in 1997, and it opened his eyes to the possibilities.

"The whole concept was a multi-genre, multi-stage, massive event," he says. "It was really the basis of other music festivals like Coachella, Bonnaroo, and Firefly.

"And the key takeaway was to bring in popular artists, regardless of genre."

ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING

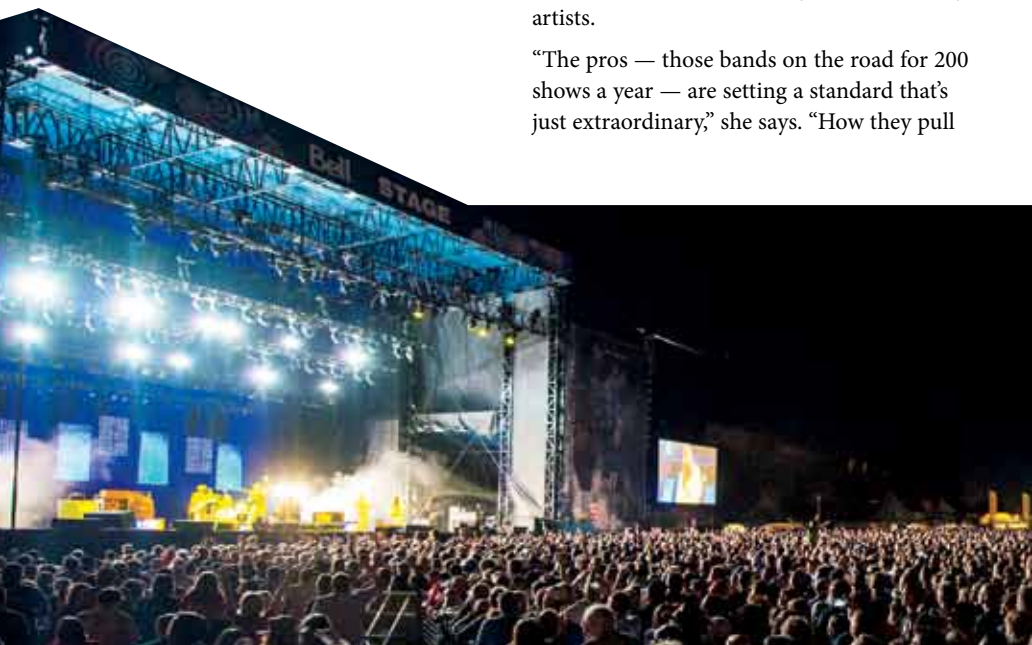
When Catherine O'Grady became executive producer of the TD Ottawa Jazz Festival in 1996, the 16-year-old event was one of the few of its kind taking place outdoors.

"The Montreal International Jazz Festival was outdoors, but most jazz fests were indoors," she says. "Everyone had outdoor components, which were free, but we hosted major works out of doors. I think we were in many ways a prototype that has had to evolve and surpass itself."

More than 241,000 people attended the Ottawa festival last June, when it welcomed over 800 musicians and hosted more than 100 concerts across 11 days. Now in its 39th year, the festival continues to program a wide range of music at city hall's Festival Plaza, the National Arts Centre, and additional venues throughout the city.

O'Grady, who is also artistic producer of the Ottawa Children's Festival that takes place every May, says events like the Ottawa Jazz Festival exist to present amazing world-class works, while also developing up-and-coming artists.

"The pros — those bands on the road for 200 shows a year — are setting a standard that's just extraordinary," she says. "How they pull



it off every night to do something amazing is always impressive.”

Seeing the standard set by those professional musicians inspires younger performers to bring their A-game, O’Grady says. This year, the jazz fest’s TD Main Stage will feature local rising stars, such as powerhouse pop and soul singer Rebecca Noelle and upright-bass-wielding wunderkind Angelique Francis, opening for household names like multiplatinum jazz pianist Norah Jones and New Orleans jazz-funk jam band Galactic.

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CATHERINE O’GRADY

It’s long been a priority for both Jazz Fest and Bluesfest, as well as other major Ottawa festivals like Monahan’s autumnal Cityfolk, to support local artists and ensure the success of tomorrow’s Paul Ankas and Alanis Morissettes. Their stages have supported the next generation of Ottawa musicians that are already making waves: MonkeyJunk, Kathleen Edwards, Souljazz Orchestra and, more recently, A Tribe Called Red, Rita Carter, and Elijah Woods x Jamie Fine.

WHAT MAKES OTTAWA STAND OUT?



TD Ottawa Jazz Festival's Catherine O'Grady:

I’ve been to most major cities in the world and I still believe it’s the most beautiful. That includes London, Paris, Rome, and Berlin. I think Ottawa has so much charm, ease and safety. It’s so easy to just rent a bike and ride along the Rideau Canal. There’s a real sense of friendliness and helpfulness.



RBC Bluesfest's Mark Monahan:

Obviously lots of music. It’s also a city that is easy to get around, accessible by bike and public transit, and most events are happening within walking distance to downtown. There’s so much to do literally within walking distance of all the major hotels, including Bluesfest.



Chamberfest's Roman Borys:

There’s a real buzz going on. Each of our festivals has a certain period during which it is the main event in town. We’re all creating experiences, which combine live music with a social aspect.

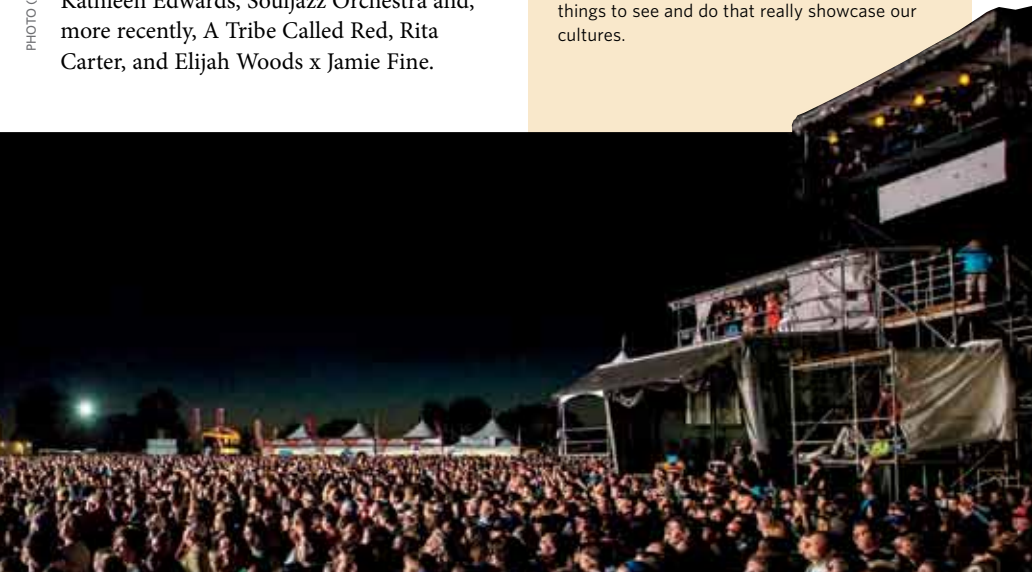


Ottawa Tourism's Jantine Van Kregten:

Definitely the festivals. There’s something going on every day, sometimes multiple things on the weekend. I know it’s a cliché to say there’s something for everyone, but there truly is!

Whether you go to the Children’s Festival in May, or a craft beer festival, or a culture festival like the Lebanese, or Ukrainian, or Latin Sparks, or Summer Solstice Indigenous Festival. There’s just such a huge variety of things to see and do that really showcase our cultures.

PHOTO (BELOW) STEVE GERECKE



AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

Managing a talent development hub is part of Heather Gibson's job as executive producer of the National Arts Centre's NAC Presents series, a multi-genre showcase of Canadian popular music.

"A lot of what I'm trying to do is give the opportunity and provide access for new and young artists coming through Ottawa," says Gibson. "So much of what artists do is about performance, and I think it's natural to develop audiences for live performance too."

Gibson says she feels there's a wealth of Ottawa art available to consume all summer, adding that the festival fabric is strengthened with cultural offerings like Ukrainian Fest, SouthAsianFest, Greek Fest, Capital Pride, and many more.

"I feel like there's a lot of those cultural communities that are coming into their own," Gibson says, "and I think a lot of people underestimate what's going on here."

"I think a lot of people underestimate what's going on here."

HEATHER GIBSON

The Ottawa region is home to more than 100 festivals each year. According to Ottawa Festivals, the not-for-profit organization that has represented and supported all the city's festivals since 1996, those events attract 3.5 million people a year.

"You've got the Jazz Festival, the Dragon Boat Festival, and [electronic dance music festival] Escapade. You've got Canada Day, you've got Chamberfest, you've got Music & Beyond," says Monahan. "These are all folks that are diligently trying to make Ottawa a better place."

Since he first attended Chamberfest as a touring musician, Roman Borys felt like the nation's capital had one of the most engaging and attentive of audiences.

"I think Ottawa is a festival town unlike just about any I know, certainly in this part of North America," says Borys, who tours the world as the cellist of the Juno Award-winning Gryphon Trio.

He took on the festival's artistic direction in 2008 and built on its past success to create a massive celebration of chamber music that stands out among Ottawa's festivals.

"We're all looking to collectively draw visitors to the city," says Borys. "It's good for the local economy, the businesses and the hotels, it's great for the artists that we bring, both local ones and ones from other parts of the world."

In Ottawa, the community of classical and baroque music lovers is large and the passion for choir music high. Each year, Chamberfest welcomes about 110,000 fans, who go to hear a wide range of professional musicians from around the world: cabarets, mini-operas, guitarists, pianists, and DJs that come in duos, trios, quartets, and small ensembles.

The 25-year-old festival features music that's been thrilling audiences for the past 600 years, but not all of the tunes are classical. This year, Chamberfest will close out with Toronto's Art of Time Ensemble playing the entirety of *Abbey Road* by the Beatles. Before the pop finale, however, are close to 100 concerts and social events that bring together a great mix of musicians and music fans.

"Our venues are smaller, the proximity to the musicians is greater," says Borys. "You see the intense work that people do. They rely on each other. They are really working together."

“It is, in my opinion, one of the best cities in the country to be living in right now for live music, and it's only going to get better.”

ERIN BENJAMIN

ALL TOGETHER NOW

“We're all in this together,” says Erin Benjamin, president and CEO of the Canadian Live Music Association (CLMA). “Everyone is doing their share to make this exciting work happen, to share it, and make sure things are shifting.”

It's fitting that Benjamin, a singer-songwriter who spent her career championing the importance of live music to quality of life, is now heading the first national association of its kind. CLMA brings the industry together to identify and work toward common goals.

There's also the advent of an Ottawa city council-approved music strategy last year and the formation of the Ottawa Music Industries Coalition a couple years ago to keep festival organizers and festival-playing artists in the game.

“All of the festivals, even though it's an action-packed calendar, are critical,” says

Benjamin. “Whether their focus is live music or not. We need to collaborate in order for everyone to thrive.”

Gibson appreciates the hard work put into the major festivals, and even hosts some of their events at the NAC.

“It's really important to me for artists to come in and have this professional place,” says Gibson. “The lights are great. The sound is fantastic. We treat artists well.”

O'Grady regularly puts on shows on the Fourth Stage and in the NAC Studio throughout the Ottawa Jazz Festival. Monahan's Festival of Small Halls has co-presented shows with NAC Presents.

“I have no interest in competing with Bluesfest, or Jazz Fest, or anyone, in any way,” says Gibson, waving her hand to dismiss invisible audience. “Everyone, go to Bluesfest! Have a great time! And I'll see you in 10 days.”

PHOTO (BELOW) CHRIS PARKER

