

# Ten days of jazz: 200 artists, 70 concerts, 10 venues

About 13 hours ago by: [Anna Borowiecki](#)



1 / 12 The Joshua Redman Quartet, co-headliners at the TD Edmonton International Jazz Festival, has played music together for 21 years and developed a unique musical rapport that allows them to communicate spontaneously during their improvisational jazz. ARNE REIMER/Photo



## REVIEW

### *Edmonton International Jazz Festival*

ne 21 to 30

inspear Centre, Triffo Theatre, Yardbird Suite, Old Strathcona Performing Arts Centre, Varscona Theatre, Polar Park Brewing, Café Blackbird, Blue Chair Café, Bellamy's Lounge at Chateau LeCombe, Capital Plaza at Alberta Legislature Grounds

ckets: Ticketed and free event info at [edmontonjazz.com/tickets/](http://edmontonjazz.com/tickets/)

As the 40th edition of Edmonton's summer jazz festival nudges closer, the region gets ready to party with some of Canada and the world's hottest musicians.

The [TD Edmonton International Jazz Festival](#), running June 21-30, marks the return of celeb concerts, open-air music at the legislature, massive festive gatherings and fun in the downtown core and Old Strathcona.

The 10 days of jazz feature 200 artists at 70 electric concerts where living legends mingle with fresh young musicians, and professional artists around the world uncork their talents in a fusion of genres and influences.

"For some people, it's been an opportunity to make themselves known. If you're a young person featured in a jazz festival, it gives you an opportunity to share music with an audience. It makes people more aware of what you do. If a musician is older, it gives an audience the opportunity to see what they've accomplished," said festival producer Kent Sangster.

Producers will be happy to hear that while most festivals are raising ticket prices, Sangster was able to offer a few breaks in a push to attract a broader audience base.

"This year we've softened the high-end ticket packages and there are more free events. We were able to do that because we were in a situation of sitting on a surplus."

For instance, tickets for the marquee concert at the Winspear Centre featuring a double-bill with Joshua Redman Quartet and Cécile McLorin Salvant are running at a very reasonable \$29 to \$40. A double-bill in previous years with high profile artists at the same venue occasionally ran as high as \$90.

Though prices have dropped in part due to the economy, Sangster strives for a festival that bubbles with diversity and flair. His watchword is quality. At its core, the festival gives fans an opportunity to experience wonderful music and make unforgettable discoveries.

This pairing of Joshua Redman Quartet and Cécile McLorin Salvant on June 25 is a great example. Both artists are past winners of the prestigious Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition.

Redman is one of the most highly regarded and magnetic jazz artists who surfaced in the 1990s. His sound has been described as challenging, provocative and forward-looking, but also hard-swinging, melodic, soulful and saturated with a joyous spirit.

His quartet (Aaron Goldberg, piano; Reuben Rogers, bass; and Gregory Hutchinson, drums) released *Come What May* in March, their first recording in almost two decades.

"He's one of the main sax figures in the world and he can play with anybody. He was a brilliant

x player 30 years ago when he was just a young lion and he's just gotten better," said Sangster.

école is another one. There's real jazz singers and then there's authentic jazz singers. She's a young person and she's taking tradition forward in a non-traditional way. It's acoustic but it comes across as classy. She's like a New York jazz singer. You think Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald. It's just her manipulation of phrasing."

As a music instructor at MacEwan University, Sangster places a high premium on nurturing young musicians. This ingrained belief was developed in Sangster's early professional career after Sammy Banks hosted a jam at the Yardbird and invited the aspiring sax player to sit in.

"There was a psychological change in me. I felt validated as a musician."

Continuing Banks' legacy, Sangster features the YEG Youth Jazz Showcase and the Big Band Bash with well spots for Audrey Ochoa, Mallory Chipman and Remi Noel.

"If you're interested at all in world class talent, I'd check out NextGen. These four people will knock your socks off."

Meet Joey Alexander, 14, who already recorded two Grammy-nominated studio albums, *Countdown* (2016) and *My Favourite Things* (2015), as well as *Joey.Monk.Live!*, a 2017 surprise release to honour Thelonious Monk's centennial.

"It's not just his playing at a mature level. It's how he improvises. He plays jazz, but he reinvents. He's young, but he's so together."

And then there's Jacob Collier, a multi-instrumentalist, singer, arranger and composer based in London, England.

"He's a techno wizard. Jacob has revolutionized how harmony and technology work together. He's gonna put on a show and wow us. He's not only playing great songs, but what we see is driven by what he plays."

Jazz seems to attract many female vocalists, however female band musicians are fewer. As one of the few exceptions, Melissa Aldana has cracked the glass ceiling. The Chilean born jazz prodigy was the first female instrumentalist to win the coveted Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition.

The under-30 tenor saxophonist performs with her quartet and distinguishes herself in what the Chicago Tribune described as an "austere and translucent beauty of tone, the serpentine complexity of her solos, and the gnarly idiosyncrasies of her compositions ..." It's a flowery description, but you get the idea.

"People here have never heard of her, but they will remember her," said Sangster.

avana-raised but now American citizens Alfredo Rodriguez and Pedrito Martinez have melded the music of their homeland with a wide variety of global influences. Radiating a natural chemistry, their first outing, *Duologue*, explores moods and influences from Cuban classics to original compositions to some unexpected faves.

"They're a couple of young hotshots who are taking piano, percussion and vocals to new levels."

at a gathering of global influences, The World of Jazz Series is the festival's international crossroads, an opportunity to see how varying cultures influence jazz.

ots of Edmonton artists are promoted, but it's a balancing act and in this series we like to step up our game and present international artists."

'racuse native and major league trumpeter Joe Magnarelli reignites the stage with his swinging quintet while Azerbaijan raised Amina Figarova and world concert pianist interprets jazz with a classical tinge.

"It's (Figarova's sextet) like a New York sounding band, straight-ahead and energetic," said Langster.

Spanish guitarist and composer Jakob Bro instead delivers a more introspective sound while Iceland's Joanna Duda Trio uses exploratory keyboard electronica to grow multiple layers of texture.

Hungary's Djabe fuses jazz with world rhythms even as Sweden's LSD has developed a reputation as one Europe's hardest swinging saxophone trios.

Russia's Oleg Butman Trio is renowned for Butman's crazy drumming while the United Kingdom's award-winning Empirical have steadfastly maintained their spot as one of the island's most exciting jazz ensembles.

Anyone searching for an electrifying, dynamic and wacky show need go no further than The Juffle Demons. This funk band blends virtuosic jazz and funk with out-there costumes and over-the-top stage antics.

"They play street dance music. They're just plain fun."

This year the big band sounds of the Edmonton Jazz Orchestra features legendary saxophonist Tim Perry and vocalist Ranee Lee in a mix of some of the jazz catalogues golden hits.

The Chateau Lacombe is the festival's host hotel and during the festival's run, jazz notes will be flowing from Bellamy's Lounge during both Happy Hour and Late Night Jam Sessions.

In the lighter Happy Hour, expect to hear notable ensembles such as the Paul Ritchey Trio,

boy Nicholson Trio, Charlie Austin Trio, Andrew Glover Trio and Jazz Nipp Trio.

ie Late Night Sessions starting at 10 p.m. instead are more of free exchange between artists mming. Select quartets are booked: Remi Noel, Chris Andrew, Audrey Ochoa, Dave Babcock and remiah McDade. The sessions also attract headliners that just completed their gig and are up r a few more hours of music.

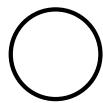
he best thing are Bellamy's jams. They feature Edmonton artists and it's free access. The best part is you get to see young musicians from Edmonton performing with some of the big names like Hilario Duran or Joe Lovano," said Sangster.

he festival is filled with lots of different styles and flavours. We've tried to make it as accessible as possible, and we have something for free every day of the festival."

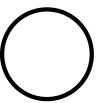
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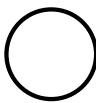
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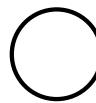
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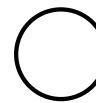
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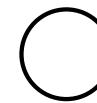
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