

Editor's Picks

MARC SKULNICK'S BUZZWORTHY BEATS & TOP TUNES



JAZZ AT THE GASWORKS

What's not to love about an event that brings some of jazz music's most acclaimed performers to Hamilton AND in the process helps support the An Instrument For Every Child program? The fantastic Jazz at the Gasworks Series launched earlier this fall with performances by well-known jazz artists including Berlin-based drummer/composer Andrea Marcelli and Toronto jazz/gospel singer Sherie Marshall. (The Gasworks is a new cabaret-style live music venue housed in a circa 1850s building on Park Street North downtown.) The good news is that the series will continue throughout the year. Check website for performers, dates and details. aninstrumentforeverychild.ca



2ND BALCONY

I recently heard about the Incite Foundation for the Arts' 2nd Balcony Project, which is spearheaded by a trio of wonderful Hamiltonians — Carl Turkstra, Graham Crawford and Carol Kehoe. In

a nutshell, the 2nd Balcony Project enables corporations — and individuals — to sponsor second balcony seating for the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra's '14-'15 concert series at Hamilton Place, thereby providing free tickets to social groups in the city. Better yet, the folks at Incite will provide up to \$5,000 per concert, with the remaining half of the funding being contributed by sponsors. Seeing as how the second balcony is currently closed for HPO performances, it's a win-win for all involved.

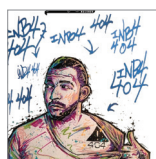
incitefoundation.ca



BLACKBURN HALL

I have to confess to knowing nothing about Blackburn Hall when the local band's self-titled debut album landed on my desk (technically it landed in my Inbox as I was emailed the link, but you get my point.) Turns out the Hamilton three-piece power trio — led by Pete Hall (ex of A Northern Chorus) on guitar/vocals; Adam Melnick on bass and Dan Empringham on drums — are the purveyors of some damn fine alt-rock, as evidenced by their impressive first single, "49". Hall's vocal style has a definite Neil Young/Ron Sexsmith-esque

inflection and that, coupled with the riff-heavy, and quite muscular, guitar sound that is a hallmark of the group's sound, makes for a fantastic little debut. Top track: "Black's Forest", a meandering slice of country-flavoured confection that is a joy to behold. blackburnhall.bandcamp.com



BUCKEYE RED

Hamilton's fast becoming recognized for its burgeoning electronic dance music (EDM) scene and based on the calibre of releases such as this one by Buckeye Red, it's no surprise why. Also known as Leo Gagnon, the 27-year-old DJ/producer has played alongside some of the biggest names in the business. After a slew of singles that quickly became dance floor favourites, Gagnon finally drops his long-awaited debut long player. Lest you think that all EDM sounds the same, the seven tracks on *INB4 404* run the electronic gamut, from the gloriously sparse, house-tinged warehouse funk frenzy of "I Got It" to the skulking bass-bini anarchy that is "Ziggurat" to the distorted dubstep wobble of "Mess Machine." Watch your bassbins, I'm tellin' ya. BuckeyeRed.com



Diana Panton

Over the past nine years, Diana Panton has released a series of critically acclaimed CDs and performed around the world. But for the Hamilton born-and-raised musician, singing in front of anyone else wasn't even on the radar screen growing up.

"I always liked singing when I was young, but I usually did it alone," she said. "I didn't think of being a singer at a professional level or at any level when I was younger."

Panton eventually got the break that set her on the path towards singing. At 13, she got the lead role in a local musical and impressed with her vocal abilities. After searching for two years, Panton found a singing teacher and continued to develop her unique voice, singing mostly classical music.

Panton was already gaining fans and confidence when she tried out for Hamilton's All-Star Jazz Band, one of the premier youth amateur big band organizations in Canada. The first time she auditioned, she was turned down. But the second time, she made the cut.

"It was an amazing experience," she said. "It was in working with the All-Star Jazz Band that I got to meet and watch some of the great jazz musicians at festivals around the world."

In 2005, Panton put out her debut solo CD. Entitled *yesterday perhaps*, the album became popular simply by word of mouth. Something that Panton wasn't prepared for.

"I didn't really plan for success. I just wanted to put out a beautiful album," she said. "I remember being a little surprised that it even got played on the radio."

Her most recent album, *RED*, garnered almost universal praise from critics for her emotive vocals and the album's sophisticated, impressive arrangements.

Aside from singing, Panton is also an accomplished educator. Prior to recording her first album, she finished her honours master's degree in French literature at McMaster. She taught at the University of Paris, and was a sessional lecturer in the French department at Mac. She then got her teaching degree in French, visual and dramatic arts and teaches at Westdale Secondary School.

Asked which audience is tougher to face, a crowd of thousands at an open-air festival or a new class of students on the first day of school, Panton pondered the question before answering.

"Music is definitely an easier sell," she said with a laugh. "When kids come to school, they're excited but there's also a fear and trepidation. People don't usually come to concerts like that."