

No Blues Brothers, but Joliet gets Blues Fest

Bicentennial Park events features local, regional and national talent

By Bob Okon

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T-Bird Huck & The MVP's will play at the 2023 Joliet Blues Festival on Saturday. (Provided by Joliet Bicentennial Park)

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Joliet will have a blues concert that won't be interrupted by a Hollywood strike.

The Joliet Blues Festival returns to Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park from 3 to 10 p.m. Saturday.

Those disappointed by last week's announcement that "Blues Brothers Con: The Sequel," which was to take place at the Old Joliet Prison in September, has been canceled because of the actors and writers strikes in Hollywood may find solace in blues music played in the park along the Des Plaines River.

"It's just a relaxed, chilled-out event," Bicentennial Park Executive Director Lori Carmine said.



Joliet Blues Festival at Bicentennial Park The crowd enjoys the performances at the Joliet Blues Festival at Bicentennial Park. Aug 13, 2022. (Gary E Duncan Sr)

The event won't have Dan Aykroyd and Jim Belushi, who were to appear with the Blues Brothers band at the prison. But it will have four blues artists of local, regional and national status in the relaxed atmosphere of Bicentennial Park with easy access and free parking.

The local blues festival has been growing each year with attendance reaching about 1,200 in 2022. Organizers believe they have the strongest lineup of musicians yet for the 2023 fest.

The headline act is Brandon Santini, who has performed internationally and whose credits include a Blues Blast Music Award in 2019 for best Contemporary Blues Album. His 2019 album, "The Longshot," reached No. 7 on the Billboard Blues Album Chart.

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Brandon Santini will be the headline act at Joliet Blues Festival on Saturday, Aug. 12, 2023. (Provided by Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park)

"Brandon Santini is a world renowned guy," said Jeffrey Barnes, president of the Bicentennial Park board of directors. "Anyone who knows much about the blues knows about him."

And, anyone in Joliet who listens to blues likely knows about T-Bird Huck, who also will perform Saturday.

Coincidentally or not, the Bicentennial Park publicity for Joliet Blues Fest draws a comparison between T-Bird Huck and the Blues Brothers.

"T-Bird has been called the original Joliet Jake based on his antics when he began playing the blues in the '70s, long before 'Saturday Night Live's' Blues Brothers skit," according to the release.

T-Bird Huck also is the host of the "[Joliet Heritage Pro Blues Jam](#)," which is held every other Sunday at various local entertainment venues and features blues artists from the Midwest.

He will bring the band with him Saturday as T-Bird Huck and the MVP's, featuring a horn section, takes the stage.



T-Bird Huck & The MVP's will play at the 2023 Joliet Blues Festival on Saturday. (Provided by Joliet Bicentennial Park)

Also performing will be Darren Jay and the Delta Souls, which features Darren Jay Fallas, a singer, songwriter and recording artist out of Chicago who has toured with Blues Music Award-winning artists, according to the Bicentennial Park release.

Also coming are Matt Hendricks and Bill "Cash" Curtis, a Chicago-based blues and American roots music duo.

Bicentennial Park strives for a combination of local, regional and national talent for its annual blues festival, and the event on Saturday "follows the same formula," Carmine said.

"Joliet has its own identity with blues," she said. "T-Bird will be there for that."



Darren Jay and the Delta Souls will perform at the 2023 Joliet Blues Festival. (Provided by Joliet Bicentennial Park)

The lineup of performers will offer a variety of styles that should please both blues enthusiasts and casual listeners, Carmine said.

The stage schedule is:

- Matt Hendricks and Bill "Cash" Curtis, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- Darren Jay and the Delta Souls, 5 to 6 p.m.
- T-Bird Huck and the MVP's, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Brandon Santini, 8 to 9 p.m.

The event includes food trucks and tents along with four blues bands. Beer and wine will be available to buy. No outside food or beverages will be allowed. Attendees will be required to show identification. Guests may bring blankets and lawn chairs but not yard umbrellas so as not to block the view of the stage.

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 on Saturday. To buy tickets online, visit bicentennialpark.org or joliethbluesmusicfestival.com.

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For more information, call 815-724-3761 or visit the website, www.joliethbluesmusicfestival.com.

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Bob Okon

Bob Okon covers local government for The Herald-News

