

One Awesome Music Festival

Fire & Water marks its 10th year this August long weekend.

LAC du Bonnet's Fire & Water Music Festival is fast becoming known as Manitoba's favourite music festival. Need proof? The event was voted Manitoba's best-loved festival in Travel Manitoba's Festival Madness contest earlier this year.

The contest pitted Fire & Water against such well-known music fests at the Winnipeg Folk Festival and Dauphin Countryfest. It came out on top after five rounds of voting.

"After learning of the competition through a Facebook mention, I got the word out. What happened next was an amazing show of support from our fans and community. Word of the competition spread like wildfire — everyone was getting involved," says Fire & Water spokesperson Cyndie Mitchell.

"Ultimately, the success came from every like, share, re-tweet, post, email, phone call and vote. I may have got the word out, but it was the community of Lac du Bonnet and the Fire & Water fans who took us all the way to the championship."

The Fire & Water Music Festival is a small, intimate festival dedicated to providing a truly unique visitor experience. A lot of planning goes into making sure music fans have the best possible time they can.

"Making sure that we provide a spectacular sampling of independent Manitoba musicians is actually just one part of it," Mitchell says.

"It's all in the details. I think it's the small things that really set us apart. Our festival is a homecoming weekend not only for the fans, but for the musicians as well. It's commonplace to see the musicians mixing and mingling with the crowd, checking out the other musicians and hanging out with their fans."



Vancouver duo Chicken-Like Birds will perform this year.

Those musicians include festival favourite Patrick Alexandre. Following his recent successes with Little Miss Higgins and longtime bandmates The F-Holes, multi-instrumentalist/producer/songwriter Alexandre is once again hard at work. This time, he has chosen a century-old house in the heart of Wolseley near his Winnipeg home to record his newest album, *Strange New World*.

"It's mostly based on bluesy stuff. It's been really exciting and refreshing to have been working on, and I'm refining a new live show based on the new project. I don't usually play bass in this group. Instead I find myself on piano, guitar, and harmonica. It's lots of fun to be freed up from that big bass, although I do miss her from time-to-time," he says.

This year's 10th annual Fire & Water Music Festival takes place July 29-31, and concert-goers will get to see Alexandre in action. He says it's one of his favourite festivals in Canada.

"I'd have to say the No. 1 thing I love about the festival is the community of Lac du Bonnet," he says. "I'm always treated so nicely there."

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Bill Bourne (far right) will once again perform at this year's Fire and Water Music Festival. Seen here with the Free Radio Band, Bourne is a three-time Juno Award winner.

In less than a decade, Lac du Bonnet's annual music festival has grown from just a tiny street festival to a full-blown weekend-long celebration of home-grown Canadian tunesmanship. New festival president Matt Toews answers our questions and lets you know what to expect from this year's event, which promises to be the best one yet.