Hertfordshires top musicians get set for the 15th Hertford Music Festiva

Musical youth calls the tune   Hertfordshire's top musicians get set for the 15th Hertford Music Festival   The stars of last year's Young Soloists Competition jostled for the limelight at the launch of the 2008 Hertford Music Festival at the Playsomething music shop in Ware this week. Linda and Russell Radford, Mayor and Mayoress of Hertford, celebrated the launch of the 15th Hertford Music Festival with Henry Sargent MBE, the festival's long-standing chairman, sponsor Universal Office Automation and the cream of Hertfordshire's musical talent.   As in previous years rock, pop and orchestral music will take centre stage alongside a wealth of local talent at this year's Hertford Music Festival, which throws open its doors to the public in May. The Hertford Music Festival calendar is already filling up with the emphasis again on variety, with jazz, orchestral, choral and other styles of music including pop, rock and folk all finding a place in this year's programme. Many of the events will again take place at Hertford's rock Mecca, the Hertford Marquee in Railway Street.   The month-long musical extravaganza kicks off with the return of the Opus One Orchestra for an Anniversary concert at the Castle Hall, Hertford, on May 2. The following day (May 3) sees the return of the Wildeshausen Gospel Choir who will be joined by the Hertford Voices for a special concert at Haileybury Chapel.   The Festival's popular Musical Mystery Tour of Hertford will provide a musical banquet taking in a host of pubs, clubs and music venues on Bank Holiday Monday, May 5, and will be supported this year by the Hertford Arts Society, which is promoting musical events of its own alongside its annual art exhibition.   Meanwhile, talented young vocalists and musicians will once again get the opportunity to tread the boards at the Hertford Music Festival's Young Soloists' competition on Saturday, May 10. Thanks to new sponsor Hertfordshire Music Service, and particularly their own Hilary Smethurst-Evans' invaluable input, last year's response was so huge that the Festival's junior talent contest is moving to a bigger venue this year - the Simon Balle School's new music room. The festival's organisers are also hoping to arrange an afternoon showcase at Hertford Museum, if there is sufficient demand.   The Hertford Music Festival has become a focus for local young talent in recent years and so the popular Battle of the Young Bands will see young pop and rock combos fighting for their place on Hertford's staircase of talent throughout the May festival. Part-funded by East Herts Council and sponsored by Giggear, The Cream Room recording studios, Graphic Nature Rehearsal and Recording Studios, Insomnia Music and the Hertford Marquee, the competition includes prizes such as recording and rehearsal time, Giggear 'goodie bags' and a chance for the overall winning band to play at Rock at the Castle on Sunday, August 3.   Presented by Kev Saunders with East Herts Council, the popular monthly Strum City showcase event will again draw its usual eclectic crowd of established national and international names and aspiring songwriters when it takes place in the foyer of the Castle Hall on May 20. Artists have yet to be announced.   Rock music fans with longer memories will get their air guitars out for the UK's leading Hendrix tribute band 'Are You Experienced' (stars of BBC 2's Arena recent special programme on tribute bands) when they crank out the numbers made famous by the '60s rock legend at Hertford Marquee for one night only on May 16. The band's 'Jimi-John' Campbell even sets his Stratocaster on fire Hendrix-style!   The Hertford Music Festival reaches its climax at Hertford's traditional Fun Day, taking centre stage in the grounds of Hertford Castle, when the Richard Hale Big Band will entertain a family audience and the winners of this year's Young Soloists' competition will be revealed and their prizes presented by sponsors Playsomething and Allabout property.com.   The Hertford Music Festival, which this year celebrates its 15th birthday, is again sponsored by Universal Office Automation and grant aided by Hertford Town Council. There are still a number of high profile sponsorship opportunities for musical performances and concerts, including some of the festival's Young Musicians' Awards and the chance for local businesses to get their name up in lights by sponsoring performers for the Musical Mystery Tour or underwriting their own show.   Festival chairman Henry Sargent MBE said: "The Hertford Music Festival is continuing to prosper and I would like to invite musicians of all ages to come forward and take part in this celebration of every type of music. We would like to say a big thank you to Universal Office Automation for again making the Hertford Music Festival possible and to Hertford Town Council for their assistance with grants. We look forward to another successful Festival and warmly welcome all musicians from in and outside Hertford," added Henry.   Festival programmes and tickets for many events will be available from the Tourist Information Centre in Market Place, Hertford, from local venues and from other designated outlets.   Performers or sponsors wishing to be involved in the Hertford Music Festival, Strum City, the Young Soloists Competition or the Battle of the Young Bands should contact the Festival's Music Director Kev Saunders by e-mail: kev@kevsaunders.co.uk

About the Author

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