

THE Montrealer

Bluesman Vincent Beaulne heads up the jazz festival's Camp de Blues



Camp de Blues Artistic Director Vincent Beaulne is a music teacher by day, and a working blues musician heading up Blues Delight

By Peter Kerr

"Blues is an aural tradition – you don't learn it from books. There's love in that music, and you experience the humanity of the blues in person." I'm two minutes into a conversation with Vincent Beaulne, the Artistic Director of *Camp de Blues* that is part of the Montreal International Jazz Festival, and Vincent gets right to the essence of the camp.

Teenagers aged 13 – 17 audition for the seven day 'camp' where they will be part of a 10 piece blues band and also receive group instruction in their instrument from accomplished musicians. The participants are divided into six bands of 10 musicians. Each group has a drummer, bass, guitar, harmonica, piano, trumpet, saxophone, trombone and a singer. There is no charge for the young musicians to participate – making the camp accessible to all youth.

"The teachers play together as a blues band for the students at the beginning of the camp. Then Stephen Barry starts the instruction. He's like our Captain. He shows the kids how much music and feeling can come from one instrument. In fact – he starts off playing a guitar than only has one string!"

Vincent continues; "We teach the kids how to listen to each other, to understand the lyrics and play the song. This also means learning when not to play – to be part of the group." The 'campers' spend the mornings practicing their instruments as a group with a talented and working musician. The classes are small enough that the students can have individual coaching. During the afternoons they rehearse with their own group, playing the blues and preparing for their show on the TD Main Stage on Sunday, June 3. "Each band performs one cover song and one original composition that they have created during their week together." Vincent adds: "The closing concert is a Festival favourite, with huge audiences of 25,000 people. It's great to see a kid who was perhaps very shy at the beginning of the week to really let loose in the closing show. Not only have they learned more about blues music – they've gained a lot of self-confidence."

Vincent lives a life full of music, and is an ideal Artistic Director. He teaches music in grades 5 and 6, and performs and records with his own acclaimed blues band, *Blues Delight*. He is passionate

about the blues music and the range of music and emotion that can be expressed within 12 bar blues pattern. "My love of music comes from my Mom. She loved jazz and for my 16th birthday, she brought me by train from Quebec City to see Duke Ellington at Place des Arts. That concert changed my life."

Vincent is equally eloquent in acknowledging the continuing support from the Jazz Festival organizers. "These people are tremendously busy with the Jazz Festival, Les Francofolies and Montreal Highlights. You'd think that the last thing they needed to do was organize and find sponsorship for a teenaged music camp. But – they do. They are good-hearted people who truly care about music and want to help young musicians."

This year's Camp de Blues begins on Monday June 27, with the closing concert to be presented on the TD Main Stage on Sunday, July 3. It's a terrific high energy performance.

For information about the Vincent Beaulne's *Blues Delight* upcoming performances and their latest recording *Open All Night*; please visit: www.bluesdelight.com Camp de Blues: www.campdeblues.com