Pier hosts Coastal Jam

By Ash Bolt

Cunningham Pier is set to be transformed into one of the country's most unique music festivals this weekend.

Coastal Jam is returning to Geelong on Sunday afternoon but for the first time it will be held as an outdoor festival on the iconic pier.

Coastal Jam organiser Adam Metwally said he was excited to try something different with the festival.

"I'm from Geelong and growing up there wasn't a lot happening in terms of the nightlife," he said. "I always looked at Cunningham Pier and thought it would be really cool to do something there.

"We've held Coastal Jam inside at the pier before but then COVID happened and we've got some support from the [City of Greater Geelong] council.

"I thought this was our one good shot to try and see if we could do an outdoor music festival on Cunningham Pier."

Taking over the pier from 3-11pm on Sunday, the festival will see electronic twins Cosmos Midnight tackle a DJ set alongside Perth alt-dance trio Crooked Colours, German act LOVEBIRDS, Fleetmac Wood, Dean Turnley, Coco Du Ma, Zoë and more.

Metwally said it was logistical challenge to organise the festival, but the support had been fantastic.

"It's the first time we've tried outside and it's a whole different beast," he said.

"Inside you have all the infrastructure you need, you just have to get the stage set up but this time we're essentially building a whole mini city on the pier that will go up and come back down within 24 hours.

"It's something that's really different … this is a bit of a trail run that will hopefully validate that space as a great place for events.

"The first time is always the hardest but hopefully it will be backed and can continue to grow – the end goal would be able to land someone like Flume for a festival here in Geelong."

Metwally said he was hopeful the weather would be on his side.

"Thankfully the weather is looking good and tickets have been selling alright – there's a chance we might sell out by the time it comes around," he said. "This has all come together pretty quickly and tickets went on sale a month ago … and the market has responded well.

"With the smaller capacity and everything else to get this up we can't realistically make money, but I just want to see a great event that will hopefully grow."

Details: coastaljam.com.au

Businesses help each other rebuild

The Geelong Chamber of Commerce has returned to face-to-face events, running its 'After 5' event on Wednesday, March 9, in partnership with the Cats and Higher Mark, kicking off the 2022 AFL season.

The chamber was excited to welcome over 250 of its members to network and reconnect in a relaxed and welcoming environment, embellished with delicious food and drinks.

Attendees heard from the Geelong Cats' newly appointed chief operating officer Simon Kelleher on how the club is set for another great year, with a handball competition run and winners receiving some great prizes.

"We all need to work together to rebuild confidence in our business community," chamber chief executive Ben Flynn said.

Members also had the chance to visit over 10 expo booths across the venue to hear about a range and different ideas and offerings for the region. With many businesses looking to grow this year, promoting their business at chamber events is an essential part of developing new opportunities and making their business stand out.

For more information on the chamber and the benefits of being a member, visit www.geelongchamber.com.au.

1/ Tara Paatsch, Simon Flowers and Tennille McInnes. **2/** Sophie O'Gorman and Justine Martin. **3/** Rob Brown, Simon Fenech, Sian Pritchard and Marcus Johnson. **4/** Kimberley Sinnott and Sharmilla Packiry. **5/** Mary Stekelenburg, Ann Chappell, Jane Mithen and Brian Schultz. **6/** Damien Chappell. **7/** John Fitzgerald, Paul Bazalicki, Sarah Dowling and Mo Daud. (Pictures: Supplied)

The Vardos Trio. (Melisa Savickas)

Windfire Festival set to shine

Geelong's big month of live music will continue over the next week with the return of the Windfire Music Festival.

After two postponements over the past two years, Music in the Basilica's music festival will kick off today and run until Sunday, March 20.

Music at the Basilica publicity officer Jan Bashiruddin said it was exciting to finally be able to bring the festival back.

"We're really excited for this to happen – we've had this group of performers lined up for three years now," she said.

"The festival is all about bringing high-quality music, which is not necessarily mainstream popular music, to Geelong for everyone to enjoy.

"It also allows us to show off all the beautiful buildings we have locally that have great potential to be used for live performances.

"It's a wonderful festival that gives local performers the chance to perform at home and gain experience, while also bringing in performers of international calibre."

The festival's opening concert will be presented by Orchestra Geelong, playing under the leadership of conductor Mark Shiell for the last time, and feature the inaugural concert of the Geelong Youth Orchestra.

"The creation of the Geelong Youth Orchestra has been a dream for some years and now we are so happy to launch GYO alongside Orchestra Geelong in the Windfire Music Festival. What a wonderful way to announce the arrival of this terrific new orchestra," Shiell said.

"GYO is at the beginning of a wonderful future of creating opportunities for young musicians to play with each other. Based on the model of the Sydney Sinfonia, GYO sits young musicians alongside professionals to be mentored in rehearsal and performance.

"There is so much young musical talent in Geelong and the Bellarine. I can't wait for the audience to hear them. I'm quietly looking forward to the impact I think they're going to make."

The festival will also feature the Vardos Trio brining its gypsy-flavoured music to Wesley Uniting Church and the Excelcis choir at the All Saints Church this weekend.

During the week there will be two workshops – one on African drumming by Jacqui Dreesens and the other a vocal workshop on the Bellarine Peninsula by Kym Dillon.

The second weekend of the festival will see the Geelong Concert Band play a newly-commissioned work by Geelong composer Kym Dillon, which Bashiruddin said was "amazing", the return of the Exaudi Youth Choir and the Melbourne Chamber Choir performing.

Details: musicatthebasilica.org.au

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