

# Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

June 25, 2021 FREE 24 Pages Vol. 30 / No. 27 • Vol. 34 / No. 18



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## Amphitheater concerts return to Artpark;

FITZ AND THE TANTRUMS: 'We are ready to get back and play shows after way too long of a break'



Fitz and the Tantrums perform July 6 at Artpark.

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Artpark & Company was riding high, on a 15-year streak as Western New York's premier outdoor music venue, when everything came to a screeching halt last year.

2020. The year without – without prom, graduation, weddings, festivals – and, for the Lewiston performing and cultural arts site, without amphitheater concerts.

"It certainly was a much different year not having those large concerts, and we did miss seeing the faces of thousands of concertgoers and the many other people who make these concerts happen every week," Artpark Vice President of Concerts and Marketing Dave Wedekindt said. "As a not-for-profit organization, Artpark derives over 80% of our budget from earned revenues including ticket sales, sponsorships and concessions directly tied to these amphitheater events. Suffice to say, the financial impact was devastating."

Faced with two options – close

up shop or look for alternative programming – Artpark & Company chose the latter. Drive-in movies, walking tours and art installations brought patrons in – and reminded them why Artpark was created in the first place.

"The upside of not having the large concerts was that we feel many people either discovered or reconnected with Artpark as both a park and as the performing and visual arts organization it was envisioned to be and still is today," Wedekindt said. "The popularity of the large-scale concerts series sometimes overshadows that, I think."

Artpark & Company will continue to spotlight nature, art and community this season, while also welcoming concertgoers back to its famed grassy bowl.

"We are eager to welcome patrons back to the amphitheater and see these concerts resume as it offers a real feeling that a return to 'normal' is on the horizon," Wedekindt said. "It also means that many artists, crews, service staff and more are now able to get back to work.

"It has been heart-warming to receive many wonderful messages from patrons through 2020 and into this year to share how much they've missed concerts at Artpark.

"It has also undoubtedly been a challenge to navigate the frequently changing New York state guidelines for large-scale events – and I don't blame patrons for feeling overwhelmed or confused by everything. We're also hearing that some regular concertgoers are still a little hesitant to gather in larger numbers with both vaccinated and unvaccinated people. We're anticipating people will remain cautious in the coming weeks, and hopefully collective confidence will improve over the course of the summer.

"This is also a great summer to get out and check out something new (or new to you). The artists we'll feature this season may not all be necessarily household names, but they're all worthy of playing the Artpark stages. The pandemic has been utterly devastating for venues and musicians.

SEE FITZ, continued on Page 15

## Jazz to fill eateries on what would've been festival weekend



While there might not be a Northwest Jazz Festival this year, the event's board of directors is planning to have local musicians perform at Village of Lewiston restaurants on Saturday, Aug. 28. Enjoy jazz in the village at your favorite dining establishment.

Carol Calato, chairwoman of the Jazz Festival board, has been working with her team in planning next year's festival. "We are preparing for an even bigger and better festival in 2022 and hope that people patronize the businesses this year at our 'Jazz in Lewiston' fundraising event on Aug. 28, 2021," she said.

"There will be opportunities for people to listen to music and donate funds at each location! This is made possible by the generous support of Northwest Bank and we are grateful for their continuous support."

The "Jazz in Lewiston" fundraising event will not be a street festival but an opportunity to listen to music and donate funds for 2022.

Pictured: Theresa Vertalino, north district manager, SVP at Northwest Bank; Calato; and Gloria Baker, vice president/office manager at Northwest Bank, Lewiston.

(Photo courtesy of Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce President Jennifer Pauly)

### MORE INFORMATION

A full listing of participating restaurants and musicians will be made available in July online at [www.LewistonJazz.com](http://www.LewistonJazz.com).



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