

# FESTIVALS 2004



In Alberta, when lilacs bloom, snow turns to rain, the smell of barbecued beef fills the air and neighbourhood pubs and coffee shops dust off their patio furniture, Alberta's festival season gets under way. The Edmonton May Week Festival of Labour Arts and its Calgary counterpart, May Works, kick things off with a celebration of working-class arts and culture. And from there, the festivities continue well into the fall.

In 1980, the provincial government spent \$75-million to mark the province's 75th birthday. The celebratory atmosphere produced a whole slew of arts festivals. In the years since, Alberta has generated festival attendance surpassed only by Quebec. This year we have enduring favourites, new events and travelling festivals to delight Albertans the province over.

One of Alberta's longest-running festivals takes place in Vegreville every July. The Ukrainian Pysanka Festival is in its 31st year and is renowned for its colourful combination of costumes, crafts, music and, most of all, food (*kobassa*, *holubchi*, *pyrohy* and *borscht*). Anyone who's been knows why this delicious weekend diversion was named the best cultural festival in 2002 by Attractions Canada.

Music festivals—from folk and roots to bluegrass and country—have long been a part of Alberta's festival culture. At 27 years, the Canmore Folk Music Festival—an alcohol-free, family-friendly event in the Bow Valley—is the longest running folk fest in the province. Likewise, the Calgary and Edmonton Folk Music Festivals both turn 25 this summer. Edmonton's version, set in Gallagher Park and hailed as “the hippest festival in North America” by *Rolling Stone*, will include David Byrne, Ani DiFranco, Spirit of the West and Oh Susanna.

Another Alberta mainstay, the Blueberry Bluegrass and Country Music Festival, takes place in Stony Plain just west of Edmonton. This summer organizers will celebrate their 19th year of bringing national and international crooners

and pickers to town. On the playbill this year: Alfie Myre, Maple Creek and the Nashville Bluegrass Band.

Last year, Calgaryans witnessed the birth of a brand new music event when Burns Stadium hosted the first-ever Calgary Blues and Roots Festival. The raucous outdoor event drew enthusiastic crowds for such legendary performers as Solomon Burke, Buddy Guy, Emmylou Harris and Buckwheat Zydeco. Organizers say this year will be even bigger. In fact, they've moved the festival to McMahon Stadium to accommodate even more music lovers.

Also launched last summer, the Canmore artSPeak festival celebrates the allure of the mountain town to artists and art lovers. Bringing together visual and performing arts, street performers, classical and contemporary music, literary readings, comedy and film, artSPeak gives local and visiting artists a forum.

Alberta's fête-friendly reputation has also attracted the attention of a national festival organizer. The Magnetic North Theatre Festival was unveiled last year at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. It will, in alternating years, function as a travelling drama extravaganza. First stop: Edmonton. “It was a natural choice to come to Edmonton for our first leap year,” says artistic director Mary Vingoe. “There's lots of support and interest and an already vibrant arts scene.” For 11 exciting days in June, an eclectic troupe of Canadian theatre professionals will provide Edmontonians and visitors with a chance to see contemporary theatre that might otherwise never have played in this part of the country. “There was a real lack of opportunity to see work from across Canada,” Vingoe says of the festival's *raison d'être*. “Different parts of the country have different ways of creating theatre. It comes from a spirit of place.”

If it's spirit they're looking for when they roll into Alberta at the height of festival season, they won't have to look very hard. —Amber Bowerman

## MAY

**May Week Festival of Labour Arts.** May Week festival organizers aim to promote the interests of workers and shift working-class culture from the margins of cultural activity to centre stage. A celebration of the international working-class holiday, the festival will include a march, street party, cabarets, poetry readings and much more. Apr 28–May 8. Various venues, Edmonton. 420 1400.

**May Works Festival.** A celebration of diversity, creativity and determination expressed in solidarity with working people around the world. Apr 28–May 9. Various venues, Calgary. 244 6662.

**Fort Macleod Children's Festival.** Fun, games and entertainment for the whole family. May 1. Fort Macleod skating rink. 553 3700.



Join the Edmonton Dragon Boat Racing Club on the North Saskatchewan River, Aug 13–15.

**Funnyfest.** The third annual Calgary Comedy Festival—the largest in Western Canada—will feature 10 venues, 70 shows and more than 70 stand-up comics and improvisational and sketch performers. May 1–15. Various venues, Calgary. 228 7888.

**Jasper Children's Festival.** Popular children's entertainers, crafts and games. May 15. Various venues. 852 4554.

**Visualeyez.** This interdisciplinary, trans-media, “paradigm-busting” event focuses on performance and time-based art, creating opportunities for artists and audiences to interact. May 20–29. Various venues, Edmonton. 423 5353.

**Calgary International Children's Festival.** Say the organizers of Calgary's Children's Festival: “In our fast-paced, media-driven world, we are responsible for reminding children that spoken words are powerful, that listening is important, and that communication between people is an art.” Hear, hear. This global celebration of reading and the arts will delight and educate the whole family. May 25–29. Olympic Plaza. 294 7414.

**Lilac Festival.** Calgary's biggest street fair; 14 blocks of music, crafts and food. May 30. 4th St SW. 229 0902.

## JUNE

**Northern Alberta International Children's Festival.** An annual celebration of visual and performing arts for children. Jun 1–5. Lion's Park, Millennium Park, St. Albert. 459 1693.

**6th Annual Fairy Tales Film Festival.** Alberta's only gay and lesbian film festival kicks off Calgary's annual Pride Week with feature-length and short films made by or about members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities. Jun 3–5. Globe Cinema, Calgary. 205 4747.

**Syncrude NeXt Generation Arts Festival.** NeXtFest is a multi-disciplinary arts festival featuring the newest of new works—including theatre, music, dance, visual art, film and more—by emerging young artists. Jun 3–13. The Roxy Theatre, Edmonton. 453 2440.

**Artsfest.** This year's festival will feature a poster and essay contest, concerts, a “Jaywalkers Jamboree,” blues night, Aboriginal Day celebrations and a teen dance. Jun 4–26. Various venues, Camrose. 672 9949.

**Carifest.** Calgary's annual summer festival celebrating the Caribbean with music, food and colourful entertainment. Jun 4–12. Various venues. 292 0310.

**Spectrum: A Sunshine Festival.** A family celebration of summer with children's games, buskers, food and rides. Jun 4–6. Kin Coulee Park, Medicine Hat. 527 9733.

**Magnetic North Theatre Festival.** This national festival moves from its home base at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa to other Canadian centres in alternating years. This year it comes to Edmonton. Jun 9–19. Various venues. 420 1757.

**Pincher Creek Cowboy Poetry Gathering.** Singers, poets and artisans celebrate the cowboy life. Jun 17–20. Agricultural Exhibition Grounds. 627 5855.

**North Country Fair.** A family summer solstice celebration, with music, theatre and other performances. Bring your tent and stay for the entire weekend. Jun 18–20. Lesser Slave Lake, Jousard. 776 2215.

**Okotoks Youth Festival.** A celebration of young visual and performing artists. Jun 19. Ethel Tucker Centennial Park. 938 3204.

**Bow Island Children's Festival.** It's the 15th anniversary of this festival and organizers have invited past audience favourites Hoja (an a cappella group) and Arché Brazil (a dance troupe) to help mark the occasion. Jun 20. Sentinel Park, Bow Island. 545 2828.

**National Aboriginal Day Festival.** A coast-to-coast celebration of the rich contribution of Aboriginal peoples. Jun 21. Venue TBA, Lethbridge. 328 2414.

**Medicine Hat Jazz Festival.** Bands from across Alberta heat things up in Medicine Hat during this weekend of sultry sound. Jun 24–27. Medicine Hat Cultural Centre. 502 8586.

**River City Shakespeare Festival.** Spend an enchanted summer evening with the Free Will Players under the canopy at the Heritage Amphitheatre. Jun 24–Jul 18. Hawrelak Park, Edmonton. 425 8086.

**Jazz City International Music Festival.** Canada's longest running and third largest Jazz Festival. Jun 25–Jul 4. Various venues, Edmonton. 433 3779.

**Jazz Festival.** Celebrating their seventh year bringing great jazz to Calgary, this 11-day kaleidoscope of music is offered in main stage concerts, club events and free outdoor performances. Jun 25–Jul 4. Various venues, Calgary. 249 1119.

**The Works: A Visual Arts Celebration.**

Another exciting year of free visual art, new media, design and family activities. Jun 25–Jul 7. Downtown Edmonton. 426 2122.

**Shakespeare in the Park.** Great theatre in a beautiful setting. Mount Royal College's Shakespeare in the Park is a summer theatre company dedicated to training young performers and technicians. Jun 29–Aug 22. Prince's Island Park, Calgary. 240 3674.

## JULY

**Calgary Canada Day Festival.** Take your pick of four venues at which to celebrate Canada's national holiday. Jul 1. Prince's Island Park: 268 3888; Calgary Zoo: 232 9300; Heritage Park: 268 8500; Fort Calgary: 290 1875.

**Ukrainian Pysanka Festival.** The 31st annual Pysanka Festival showcases Ukrainian culture. July 2–4. Vegreville Cultural Association, Vegreville. 632 2777.

**Calgary International Spoken Wor(L)d Festival.** Hailed as the first spoken word festival in the West, this inaugural celebration will

include hip hop, jazz, videopoems, spoken word plays and readings. Jul 7–Aug 8. Various venues. 686 4292.

**Banff Summer Arts Festival.** Highlights of 2004 include Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* with full orchestra, a Music Masters concert featuring world-renowned composer Krzysztof Penderecki, the world premiere of *Constantinople* (a multimedia show), and a "saucy" Gilbert and Sullivan cabaret. Jul 9–Aug 14. The Banff Centre. 762 6301.

**Calgary Exhibition & Stampede.** Little doughnuts, chuckwagon races, midway rides, agriculture and history come together at the Calgary Stampede. Jul 9–18. Stampede Park. 800 661 1767.

**Edmonton Street Performers Festival.** More than 60 roving character actors, dancers, mimes, musicians, puppeteers and performance artists. The ESPF has received international recognition for celebrating "street talent" and was recently voted "Edmonton's Best Loved Festival." Jul 9–18. Old Strathcona's McIntyre Park and Theatre District. 425 5162.

**ArtSpeak.** Theatre, dance, street performers, an artisans' fair, art walk, concerts and workshops are all part of this exciting weekend celebration. Jul 11–13. Various venues, Canmore. 678 1882.

**South Country Fair.** The best-kept secret in Southern Alberta, this music festival attracts performers from as far away as Spain, Brazil and New Zealand. Jul 16–18. Fish and Game Park, Fort Macleod. 553 3070.

**Calgary Folk Music Festival.** The Calgary Folk Festival celebrates its 25th year this summer. Great Big Sea, Ruthie Foster, Earl Scruggs and others will be on hand to mark the festival's silver anniversary. Jul 22–25. Prince's Island Park. 233 0904.

**Athabasca Country Fringe Festival.** One and a half hours due north of Edmonton, the town of Athabasca hosts one of Canada's most vibrant (and Alberta's second largest) fringe theatre festivals. Many performers billet with locals and the result is an intimate, creativity-charged weekend. Jul 23–25. Various venues. 675 2063.

**Sizzlin' Street Performers Festival.** Grande Prairie is transformed into a wonderland of activity every summer when professional performers take to the streets. Jul 23–25. Various venues, Grande Prairie. 539 7688.

**Klondike Days.** Ten days of midway rides, games, chuckwagon races and entertainment reminiscent of the gold rush days. Jul 24–31.

Northlands Park, Edmonton. 423 2822.

**Big Valley Jamboree.** Featuring the biggest outdoor stage in Canada, dozens of world-renowned musicians, and more than 70,000 screaming fans, BVJ is becoming one of the biggest country-music concert events in North America. Jul 29–Aug 1. Exhibition Grounds, Camrose. 888 404 1234.

**Blueberry Bluegrass & Country Music Festival.** Now in its 19th year, the Blueberry Bluegrass & Country Music Festival expects over 4,500 eager music fans again this year. Jul 30–Aug 1. Exhibition Park, Stony Plain. 888 526 6464.

**Canmore Folk Music Festival.** Featuring contemporary and traditional folk, as well as country, bluegrass, blues, Celtic and world music. Jul 31–Aug 2. Centennial Park. 678 2524.



Elvis Costello performing at the 2003 Calgary Folk Festival.

**Edmonton Heritage Festival.** This three-day event features pavilions representing over 50 cultures (including, for the first time last year, a Kurdish pavilion). Includes food, music, crafts and educational material. Jul 31–Aug 2. Hawrelak Park. 488 3378.

## AUGUST

**Edmonton Folk Music Festival.** Called the "hippest festival in North America" by *Rolling Stone* magazine, the Edmonton Folk Festival is known for the range of talent it attracts to its spectacular natural amphitheatre: everyone from Elvis Costello to Ani DiFranco to the Corb Lund Band. Aug 5–8. Gallagher Park. 429 1899.

**Cariwest.** A celebration of life, heritage, freedom, artistic expression and optimism. Aug 6–8. Sir Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton. 421 7800.

**InterPlay Festival.** Plays, street performers, music, food, visual art, stand-up comedy and improv make up the largest summer event

in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Aug 6–8. Various venues on Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray. 791 1600.

**Alberta Dragon Boats Race Festival.** More than 70 teams from across North America will gather on the banks of Calgary's Glenmore Reservoir to learn about the culture and heritage of China—and race dragon boats. Aug 7–8. Glenmore Reservoir, Calgary. 216 0145.

**Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival.** Established in 1982, the Edmonton Fringe was the first of its kind in North America and remains the largest with more than 150 groups of artists. Aug 12–22. Old Strathcona. 448 9000.

**Calgary Blues & Roots Festival.** Said a fan of last year's inaugural Calgary Blues & Roots Festival—which saw such greats as Emmylou Harris, Los Lobos, Solomon Burke and Buddy Guy: “No amount of money can buy the kind of fun I had over the three days of the festival.” Aug 13–15. McMahon Stadium. 245 9080.

**Edmonton Dragon Boat Festival.** Join the Edmonton Dragon Boat Racing Club as they host a three-day festival of furious paddling on the North Saskatchewan River. Aug 13–15. Louise McKinney Park. 953 7285.

**Afrikadey.** Calgary's pre-eminent festival of African culture, food, crafts and live roots, world beat and urban music. Also boasts one of the best parades of the year. Aug 15–21. Various venues. 234 9110.

**Global Fest.** Calgary's week-long Global Fest features a veritable mosaic of cultural exhibits—more than 40 countries represented in 10 pavilions throughout the Greater Forest Lawn district. Take in traditional performances, colourful heritage dress and exotic cuisine from around the world (and don't forget the fireworks competition held nightly at Elliston Park). Aug 18–24. Various venues, Calgary. 569 9679.

#### **Stony Plain Cowboy Poetry and Music**

**Gathering.** Great poets, artists and musicians from Alberta and across North America will gather together to “edify, educate, and elucidate the traditional cowboy life and humour in music and prose.” Aug 20–22. Pioneer Museum. 914 6144.

**Shady Grove Bluegrass and Old Tyme Music Festival.** This festival of roots music celebrates its 15th year this summer. Aug 21–23. Broadway Farms Bed and Breakfast, Nanton. 936 5123.

**Whoop-Up Days.** The annual Whoop-Up Days parade kicks off this five-day summer

fair: midway rides, entertainment, a trade show and rodeo. Aug 24–28. Exhibition Park, Lethbridge. 328 4491.

**Cornfest.** While “Cornfests” are held across North America, there’s none quite like the one in Taber, which features—as all Albertans know—the tastiest corn on the planet. But this festival is more than simply gastronomical: its website proclaims, “Come for the corn, stay for the fun,” which will include “the best fireworks display in Southern Alberta.” Aug 27–28. Confederation Park, Taber. 223 2265.

## FALL

**Symphony Under the Sky.** The summer festival season ends on a sweet note with the Enbridge Symphony under the Sky. Overlooking the scenic river valley, the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra plays with a host of international guest performers. Sep 2–6. Hawrelak Park, Edmonton. 428 1414.

**Barbeque on the Bow.** While there will be live entertainment, a corn roast and vendor booths, the real highlight of this annual two-day “celebration of meat” is always the Alberta Championship for Kansas-style barbequing—the winner of which represents the province at the “Super Bowl of barbe-

quing,” in Kansas City, Missouri. Sep 5. Eau Claire Market, Calgary. 225 1913.

**C-JAZZ.** A two-day free musical extravaganza including more than 20 acts who’ll play from the floating stage at Olympic Plaza. Sep 10–11. Calgary. 802 4822.

**Waynefest.** Music, food and brews will liven up the Alberta ghost town of Wayne (population: fewer than 40 people) for the third year running. Waynefest is a new music festival inspired by a “really complicated kitchen party.” Campsites are available. Sep 10–12. 452 5380.

**Lethbridge Children’s Festival.** There will be games, music, crafts and face painting at this free arts festival for children and families. Sep 11. Galt Gardens. 381 1537.

**Calgary International Film Festival.** In 2003, 38,000 attendees saw 258 films from 39 countries screened at the Calgary International Film Fest, making it one of the biggest film festivals in North America in only its sixth year. This year promises to be even better, with enough premieres, controversy and celebrity sightings to satisfy the most ardent film buff. Sep 24–Oct 3. Various venues. 283 1490.

**Word on the Street.** This festival features author readings, question and answer periods and book signings. Also, book and magazine publishers, booksellers, literacy and educational organizations and libraries exhibit current and back-listed books and magazines. Sep 26. Eau Claire Market, Calgary. 543 1506.

**Banff-Calgary International WordFest.** Join local writers, readers and enthusiasts as they celebrate the written and spoken word. Oct 13–17. Various venues, Calgary and Banff. 294 7462.

**Banff Mountain Festivals.** Celebrate mountain culture with a variety of events, including a book festival, film festival, visual arts exhibitions and performances. Oct 30–Nov 7. Banff Centre. 762 6675.

**Global Visions Film Festival.** A yearly documentary film festival that premieres intelligent, compelling, challenging films that focus on global human rights, social and environmental issues and the dignity and resilience of the human spirit. Nov 2–7. Various venues, downtown Edmonton. 414 1052.

