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[Home](#) > [Music](#) > [Music News](#)

## MUSIC NEWS

# Music News Digest: NXNE Lineup, Quebec Artists at SXSW, Ron Sexsmith's 60th

Other Canadian music news this week includes the Canadian Folk Music Awards, Simply Saucer, The Sheepdogs, the Polaris Music Prize and more.

By [Kerry Doole](#) | Mar 06, 2024



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NOBRO, one of the Quebec-based acts in the spotlight at SXSW this year Daniel Esteban

## Awards news

The countdown is on for the 2024 **Canadian Folk Music Awards** (CFMAs), set for St. John's, NL, April 3-7. The festivities include two Awards Gala Concerts, three Nominee Showcases, and other events. Showcase performers include Marie-Ève Laure, Dans l'Shed, Barbra Lica, Cynthia Hamar, Steven Taetz, Noah Zacharin, Mary Beth Carty, Musique à bouches, Sophie Lukacs, Jackson Hollow, Medusa and The Bombadils.

Awards Concert Nights performers include Julian Taylor, Aaron Collis, La Déferlance, Queen Kong, Steve Dawson, Kaeley Jade, Al Qahwa, Youngtree & the Blooms, Aleksí Campagne and **Jill Barber**. Tickets and more info [here](#).

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## Jill Barber - Homemaker



- **The Polaris Music Prize** has revealed details of its 2024 Event Season. The Long List of nominees for the prestigious prize will be announced on June 11, with the short list of 10 finalists named on July 11. The Polaris Gala is set for Massey Hall in Toronto, on Sept. 17, with tickets for that event available [here](#).

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## Festivals news

- Considered one of Canada's leading music discovery festivals for almost 30 years, **North by Northeast** (NXNE) has just announced the first round of over 100 emerging Canadian and international artists who will perform at more than 20 live music venues in Toronto from June 12-16. Notables on the list include acclaimed sing-songwriters Talia Schlanger and Loryn Taggart, Hamilton hip-hop luminary LTtheMonk, rockers Kasador and Old Soul and soul artist Maya Killtron.

Artists who played NXNE gigs early in their careers include Lizzo, Run the Jewels, Daniel Caesar, Feist, The Weeknd, Billy Talent, Arkells, Sam Roberts and The Lumineers. Fest co-founder and head **Michael Hollett** reports that over 2,500 applications were received for the approximately 250 performance slots. Info and passes [here](#).

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- 12 up-and-coming bands from Quebec and other provinces will be featured at **SXSW** showcases presented by **Pop Montreal** and **M For Montreal** at Swan Dive, Austin on March 13. That list comprises **Hanorah, Winona Forever, Sorry Girls Lola 1:2, Janette King, Corridor, NOBRO, Nyssa, La Sécurité, Love Language, Totalement Sublime** and **Night Lunch**.

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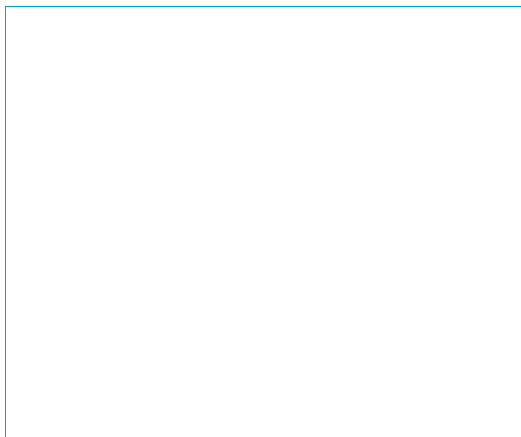
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## Industry news

- For the first time in the event's history, **Nova Scotia Music Week** (NSMW) will take place in Wolfville/Mtapan, from Nov. 7-10, 2024. To celebrate the official launch of NSMW 2024, Music Nova Scotia is offering Launch Special Pricing on a limited number of delegate passes and festival wristbands [on sale now](#).
- We recently [reported](#) on the death of acclaimed Canadian DJ and hip-hop promoter **Sean Lalla**. A [GoFundMe](#) campaign has now been set up to assist his family
- **Make Music Matter** is a very worthy Canadian charity that, in its own words, "uses the creative process as a therapeutic tool to help empower marginalized individuals and communities." Lending support to the cause is **Blue Rodeo**, donor of a studio-played guitar signed by all members of Blue Rodeo and now up for auction. The axe, a golden Fernandes 1990s Sustainer with tweed Fender-style case from the 1950s, has been played in studio on Blue Rodeo, Bryan Adams and Sarah McLachlan recordings by guitarist Colin Cripps. Bidding [here](#) closes on March 10.

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- **The Escarpment Blues Society** is a new not-for-profit membership-based organization designed to promote blues and roots music through multiple avenues in the Niagara Escarpment area. It officially launches with a star-studded concert set for May 28 at the Ancaster Memorial Arts Centre featuring such blues award winners as Harrison Kennedy, Jack de Keyzer, Dawn Tyler Watson, Suzie Vinnick, Steve Marriner and Steve Strongman, all backed by the EBS All Stars (Colin Lapsley, Jesse O'Brien, Matt Burns, and Roly Platt). Tickets go on sale to the public on March 11. More info [here](#).

- Canadian punk rock Label **Thousand Islands Records** has launched *The Sauce* compilation series with Volume 1, now available to pre-order on Vinyl and CD prior to a May release. Featuring artwork from Samuel Lucas, the physical-only release is comprised of 17 tracks, including unreleased songs from Winning Streak, **Trashed Ambulance** and Twenty2.

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- Popular vocal trio **The Celtic Tenors** have announced a new partnership with Toronto-based **Slammin Media** for worldwide distribution through Believe. Their hit album, *An Irish Songbook*, has just been reissued, with four bonus tracks, and it will be promoted via the group's 25th anniversary international tour. An in-demand concert draw, The Celtic Tenors have sold over a million albums worldwide.

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- It was a birthday love-in for acclaimed songsmith **Ron Sexsmith** at Toronto's Massey Hall last Thursday. Timed to celebrate his 60th birthday and hosted by his favourite venue in the world, the concert featured two sets that offered a career retrospective of the work of one of our most talented and prolific artists. A few deep cuts were sprinkled amongst his better-known tunes, as Sexsmith at times performed both alone, on piano and guitar, and with his A-list band of Toronto players including longtime collaborator Don Kerr, David Matheson, Jason Mercer and Kevin LaCroix. Also guesting onstage were such other comrades and collaborators as Kurt Swinghammer, Lori Cullen, and Ron's wife, Colleen Hixenbaugh. The fact that Sexsmith was greeted with a standing ovation and later a massed rendition of "Happy Birthday" confirms the deep affection in which he is held by his fans. It was the most attentive audience this scribe has ever witnessed at Massey Hall, and, refreshingly, almost nobody took cell phone photos. This true artist and his material totally deserve that respect.

- **Irene Torres** launches her album *TRAVESÍA* (out on Vesuvius Music) on March 6 at Lula Lounge in Toronto, backed by eight stellar local players. Tickets [here](#).

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- Local faves and international cult heroes **Simply Saucer** blitzed The Mule Spinner in Hamilton on Sat. night, while recording a live album featuring a full reprise of the material from their seminal 1989 debut, *Cyborgs Revisited*. That record comprises tracks written in the mid-'70s that were all ahead of their time. The Simply Saucer sound is a compelling hybrid of proto-punk, psychedelia, garage rock, electronica (theremin, anyone?), and avant-garde jazz. For this occasion, main man Edgar Breau recruited an ace band — original bassist Kevin Christoff, Mike Trebilcock (Killjoys) and Blue Rodeo's drummer Glenn Milchem — and they fired on all cylinders. Kudos to The Mule Spinner's Glen Marshall for coming up with the idea, and executing it perfectly. Interesting factoid: The show fell on the birthday of Lou Reed, a key influence on Simply Saucer. Breau noted that Simply Saucer classic "Bulletproof Nothing" has been called "the best Lou Reed song he never wrote." Breau tells *Billboard Canada* that this lineup has Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa gigs lined up, and opportunities for touring in the U.S. are opening up.

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- Popular rockers **The Sheepdogs** have announced additional shows on their current *Backroad Boogie* Canadian tour, with **Daniel Romano's Outfit** joining the band on all Ontario tour dates. Upcoming gigs include Oshawa, March 13-14, Wingham on March 15, Chatham on March 16, and Lindsay, on March 18 and Kingston, March 20. Tix and info [here](#).

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- Powerhouse Toronto vocalist **Roveena** has amassed 3M streams and 12M YouTube views with her material, and she now returns with a new single, the emotional ballad "Save Me." The tune is a co-write with **James Bryan McCollum**, of Philosopher Kings and Prozzak fame. Check it out [here](#).

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**NXNE**

**CFMAS**

**RON SEXSMITH**



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Frontenac News Oskar Graf

**FYI**

## **Obituaries: Canadian Luthier Oskar Graf, Austin Music Scene**

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This week we also acknowledge the passing of Laughing Hyenas/Jesus Lizard drummer Jim Kimball and Sigue Sigue Sputnik drummer Ray Mayhew.

By [Kerry Doole](#) | 4h

**Oskar Graf**, a renowned Canadian luthier and co-founder of the Blue Skies Music Festival, died on August 26 at the age of 81.

A 2014 [profile in Frontenac News](#) noted that "a celebrated 40-year career as one of Canada's top-notch luthiers [guitarmakers] was not the career that Oskar Graf originally planned for but he affirms that it is one that he is very grateful for. Trained in his native Germany as a cabinet maker and industrial/furniture designer, Graf, who was born in Berlin, came to Canada in 1968. He worked briefly in his trained field upon his arrival in Toronto before purchasing land not far east of Clarendon Station, where he designed and built the home and workshop that he has lived and worked in ever since.

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