

-December 13th 2018-

RAOUL and THE BIG TIME perform at Maple Blues Awards and Showcase at Blues Summit!

Raoul Bhaneja, returns to host the **Maple Blues Awards** at Koerner Hall in Toronto for a record fourth time and will perform with his long time combo **Raoul and The Big Time**. The current line up featuring founding member **Darren Gallen** on guitar and long time drummer **Tom Bona** will be joined by new member, Hamilton's **Justine Fischer** on upright bass. The band will also be performing a showcase set on Saturday February 2nd as part of **The Blues Summit**, at The Courtyard Marriott Hotel on Yonge Street. On Friday February 1st at 9:30pm the seven piece band will also perform a full show at their home the last two decades in Toronto, **The Rex Hotel** at 194 Queen St. West.

It's been a busy year for the band who spent 2018 celebrating their impressive twenty-year track record as a top live act in Toronto and a staple of the Canadian blues scene. In January 2018 after a successful Indiegogo campaign and support from FACTOR and The SOCAN Foundation, the seven piece **Raoul and The Big Time** travelled to Memphis, TN and reached the semi finals in **The International Blues Competition** against over 250 artists from around the world.

This was followed by a Raoul playing a tour of California with some of the states top blues guitarists including **Rusty Zinn, Tommy Harkenrider, Franck Goldwasser, Johnny Burgin, Nathan James** and **John Marx**. On his returns the band picked up where they left off with a busy mini tour of Ontario that had a stop in Montreal and then a summer of festival appearances including bringing Clarksdale, Mississippi legend **Super Chikan** back to Toronto for the **Beaches International Jazz Festival**. Raoul also enjoyed a debut as harmonica player with **The Colin James Band**, including headlining shows at The RBC Ottawa Blues Festival, London Blues Festival and Applefest in Brighton Ontario, with more shows to follow in 2019.

Part of the late 1990s swing and jump revival in Toronto they began in the back room of The Cameron House and shortly thereafter opened the Toronto JVC Jazz Festival for **Bobby "Blue" Bland** paving the way for what they describe as "**Toronto/ Chicago/ Hollywood**" Blues. This **Maple Blues Award** winning (and six time nominee) band has entertained audiences across Canada, performing at major festivals including **Vancouver Folk, Harvest Jazz and Blues, Salmon Arm Roots and Blues** and **Montreal International Jazz**. They have released five recordings including most recently **Hollywood Blvd** on Big Time Records featuring guest performances from **The Mavis Staples Band, Curtis Salgado, Johnny Sansone, Larry Taylor, Junior Watson** and more.

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