

AIKEN, STING & CLAPTON KICK OFF HOT SUMMER MUSIC

by Jon Winslow



CLAY AIKEN

Summer is a time when big-band tour stops hit the town, when music from outdoor amphitheaters fill the night, and

when jazz and jive make block parties swing.

And no place is more hip, more alive and more filled with choices when it comes to summer music than the Capital District.

Just check out the agenda for the next few months. From top to bottom, from A-level acts to bands at back-street bars, from the famous stars to the local stars who light up the sky at night, turn to the events page of any local paper any week this summer and there will be something that catches your eye for sure.

Jim Reagan, a 35-year old consultant who grew up in Albany and who is a guitar player for his own band - the Atomic Johnsons - says the place

to start in the summer is SPAC, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. According to Reagan, *"in the summer, SPAC is pretty much the only venue I pay attention to. Dave Mathews, Rush, and John Mayer are the big ones to go see this year."* Given one choice, Reagan would take the Dave Mathews Band.

Donna Eichmeyer, executive director at Clear Channel Entertainment, an organization responsible for booking events all around the Capital District, thinks the atmosphere and tradition of Saratoga are a key part of why people come back every summer. *"SPAC is really unique in terms of being a tradition. A lot of people here grow up paying \$15 for lawn seats to see and hear a great show. The fresh air and the intimacy of the environment keep people coming back. The fact that we are booking A-level talent, like Phish, Sting, Annie Lennox and Dave Mathews is a plus."* The Phish concert, scheduled for June 19th and 20th is already nearly sold out on both nights. The amphitheater holds 25,000 people.



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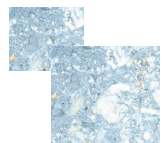
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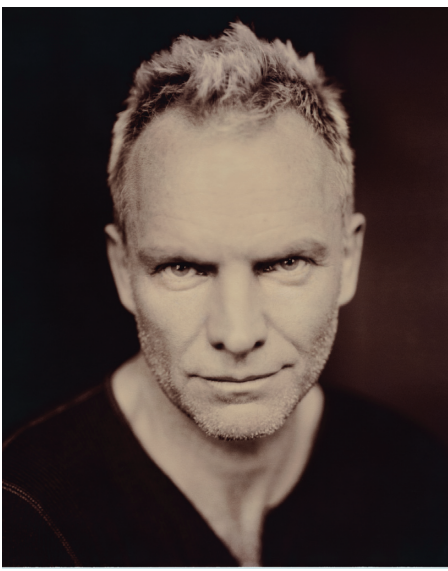
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STING

Downtown Albany is sure to be rocking this summer with a lineup from the Pepsi Arena that includes Van Halen, Clay Aiken, Kenny Chesney and Eric Clapton.

People in the Capital District do think about entertainment, and concerts and performances are a big part of what gives the district its identity.

Saratoga has been the summer home of both the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra for 39 years, since the year the center opened.

Helen Edelman, director of marketing and public relations for the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, believes that the 39-year presence of these two internationally renowned organizations has become a part of

the way people in the region define their cultural heritage.

In fact, tourists are drawn to the area during the summer in part because of the performances and events that take place.

"In the summer, when people vacation and travel," says Edelman, *"they want to visit areas that have a diversity of activity. In addition to the access we have to the Adirondacks, great mountains and lakes, we have a diversity of cultural activity, music and dancing, that makes our community a great anchor point for vacationers."* Edelman also points out that the annual wine tasting festival held at SPAC has doubled its attendance in each of its 3 years of existence.

When it comes to the ballet, Jim Reagan does not disagree. *"They've been coming here for a while. I have friends who sang in the chorus and played in the orchestra, so I have been to the performances. They shouldn't leave."*

This summer, the calendar at the Palace Theatre includes Hootie and the Blowfish, The Temptations, Randy Travis, and George Thorogood.

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