

Local musicians vying to be next country music star



Kirk Bates and Dave Byrski, contestants at the semi-finals of the Next Country Music Star

By Sarah Vance

As the Havelock Country Jamboree prepares for its 27th season, local musicians Kirk Bates and David Byrski are among eight competitors who have made it to the Next Country Music Star Talent Search semi-finals. The contest will take place at the Ranch Resort and Banquet Conference Centre in Bethany on April 23.

The contest offers the winning artist the chance to perform on the Twin Stages of the Jamboree, said Jennifer Goheen, an organizer. The audience will be approximately 10,000 people and can range up to 20,000 when the winner performs this summer. Kirk Bates describes himself as a 'seasoned, for-hire musician and actor'; indeed, he won Best Actor at last spring's Bancroft 24 hour theatre. He is optimistic, but intends to come prepared. The judges have been very positive so far. But for the end game, I am adding a band, said Bates. '62 North, D.J. Brown, Dylan Mader and Frank Towns will be with me.'

Bates' March 26 performance, which advanced him to the semi-finals, has been described on the NCMS webpage as having 'impressed the judges with original songs, interpretations of covers, effortless stage presence, and vocal control.'

It is really an amazing accomplishment for a small community like Bancroft to have two musicians advancing, said Jane Doige, an organizer. They are both charismatic and down-to-earth performers who exemplify the spirit of Country music.'

Dave Byrski is in his second year as a contestant, and has opened for the likes of Ed Robertson, Jim Creeggan, and Mary Milne. I have a secret planned for the semi-finals on the 23rd, said Byrski, who is described on the NCMS website as an audience favorite. Stay tuned!'

The talent show is the Jamboree's way of giving back to the future stars of Country music. We love assisting the artists on their way, said Jennifer. It teaches them how to prepare, how to build a proper EPK and YouTube Channel. We provide direction on what to do from this point.'

Guest judges have included Catherine Faint, a booking agent with 40 years' experience, and talent management specialist Corinne Dayman.

The winner will also be the beneficiary of studio time with Metalworks, a full-service Toronto audio facility which provides mixing and digital editing direction.

Our sister-company, Metalworks Production Group, is involved with the Jamboree, which is how we found out about and ultimately jumped on board in 2015, said Sarah Konowal of Metalworks. The winning artist(s) will receive a full-day studio session to record an original song of their choice with a producer and engineer.'

Metalworks has recorded international artists, including the likes of Prince, Katy Perry, and David Bowie. It is also a venue for Canadian performers such as Metric, Furtado and K-OS.

?We have room for 200 people and will be live streaming the performances. But anyone seeking a seat at the contest needs to book early,? said Jane. ?The performers do a wonderful job of cheering each other on and the momentum is growing.?
An all-ages event, tickets can be reserved in advance by calling the Ranch Resort at 705-277-1942.