

# Strawberry Fest Boasts Variety

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The strawberries are imported, but almost everything else is home-grown, including the music, at LaSalle's annual Strawberry Festival.

The 18th annual festival, held Friday through Sunday at LaSalle's Gil Maure Park on Front Road, will include fireworks on Friday, a carnival throughout the weekend, music Friday and Saturday, and children's entertainment all day Saturday and Sunday.

Several free events highlight this year's festival:

- Windsor's popular Kiss tribute band, Destroyer, performs Friday before the fireworks.
- YTV's fun-filled van, Weird on Wheels, offers games, laser tag, and other attractions for kids all day Saturday and Sunday.
- Canadian rockers Thornley perform a free outdoor concert at the main stage Saturday, with special guests, Windsor's Ashes of Soma.
- Clifford the Big Red Dog entertains preschoolers and poses for pictures all day Sunday.
- The ever-popular carnival operates throughout the festival, Friday to Sunday.

Spokesman Jeff Renaud said this year's entertainment has been scaled back from last year's unexpectedly large turnout for Finger Eleven.

"Last year, just before finger Eleven played here, their song, One Thing, his U.S. radio and they were suddenly huge," Renaud said. "It was good for us, but it did put some strain on the community."

It was too much of a good thing. The estimated crowd of 10,500 on the Saturday night jammed Gil Maure Park and forced closure of several streets in the area.

The town was dinged to the tune of about \$10,000 in extra policing.

Renaud doubts Thornley will draw those kinds of numbers, although he is banking on the band's profile with older teenagers and college-age adults.

"It is important we get the 13- to 22-year-olds because they're the ones who go to the carnival," Renaud said.

Festival organizers rely on the carnival to generate about 60 per cent of the revenue.

Friday nights attraction, Destroyer, will appeal to the old and young, said Renaud.



**PARTY EVERY DAY:** Members of local Kiss tribute act Destroyer: Moe Potondi, left, Christ Goldspink, Mark DeBlock, and, not shown, drummer Matt Damm. They perform Friday at the LaSalle Strawberry Festival.

Rotondi fell in love with Kiss the first time he saw them on TV as an eight-year-old. Three decades later, he gets to live the life of a rock star on weekends and raise his family - he's got two kids, seven and five - during the week.

In fact, in 1996, while Kiss was touring out of costume, Rotondi and the others got to meet Simmons and Paul Stanley at a Kiss reunion in Chicago.

"Paul Stanley looked at me in my costume and said i gave him an acid flashback to the '70s," said Rotondi.

The band performed at the Calgary Stampede last summer and plans to do more shows in western Canada, where its note-perfect visually arresting shows are gaining popularity.

"It's like Elvis acts," Rotondi said. "There are only a few who really do Kiss tributes well,"

Later this summer, you can catch Destroyer at the Erie Street festival in Windsor and in Tilbury. A fundraiser for Hospice of Windsor is also in the planning stages, said Rotondi.

The rest of Destroyer includes: Mark "Starchild" DeBlock (Paul Stanley), Chris "Fast Finger" Goldspink (Ace Frehley), and Matt "Catman" Damm (Perter Criss). Rotondi's seven-year-old son, Allesandro, will sit in for a drum solo, as well.