

Music paying off for jazz pianist



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Cawthra Park Secondary School graduate John Roney now studies music at the University of Toronto. The avid jazz pianist has earned a truckload of scholarships to ease his expenditures.

Musical notes sound especially sweet of late to Port Credit's John Roney.

The 19-year-old Altersen Place resident is a jazz pianist who has benefitted from Cawthra Park Secondary School's regional arts program since Grade 9.

A few years later, Roney's promise has garnered an estimated \$31,000 in scholarships.

This past summer when Roney enrolled at Boston's Berklee College of Music, he began tapping a \$14,000 scholarship.

This fall he entered a four-year jazz performance program at the University of Toronto, thanks to a \$3,000 scholarship.

He'll spend another \$4,000 he got from Yamaha and \$650 from the Peel Board of Education towards his tuition to the University of Toronto.

"Berklee is the jazz version of the Juilliard School of Arts," Roney said.

In the interim, Roney has built up his portfolio by playing at several clubs in Mississauga and Toronto, both as a solo act and in groups.

He's played solo at Michael's Back Door Restaurant in Clarkson — he'll be there again on weekends for the month of December — and the Liberty Cafe in Toronto.

He now has his own group called the John Roney Trio, which includes fellow

Cawthra Park grads Sly Juhas and Jeff Ghaznavi.

They performed a few times at the Higher Grounds coffee shop in Port Credit and at the Mississauga Jazz Festival in Streetsville in June.

Roney also performs with two other groups; the Steve Wingfield Trio and the University of Toronto's class ensemble.

"I'm happy doing what I'm doing, getting out there and playing a lot," he said.

Roney loves jazz because it's soothing to the soul.

"It's so communicative. I like its expressiveness. It's audience-pleasing, which is my cup of tea.

Roney credits Cawthra's program for the start of his musical climb, notably its emphasis on jazz music.

Roney took up piano at the age of 6 but quit by Grade 7 because he found it boring. The program at Cawthra revived his interest.

Now Roney's schedule is power-packed. Recently the Steve Wingfield Trio played The Bookshelf in Guelph and the Liberty Cafe on two straight nights.

Then he played solo the next night at Lainey's Cafe in Port Credit and was in Pickering the following day with the Ted Peters Quartet.