

Brass music event builds sax appeal ahead of folk festival

By [Justin Huntsdale](#)

With the Illawarra Folk Festival celebrating its 30th year for the mid-January festival, a fringe event with a distinctly brassy focus will get Wollongong audiences and musicians in the mood for live music this week.

A popular US brass street festival called Honk! that originated in Boston has been adopted by Wollongong and will launch this weekend, bringing a carnival atmosphere to the city's CBD.

It's the first time a Honk! festival has been held outside the US, promoting a message of community music and fun to Australia.

"Honk! was put together as a gathering of activist street bands - brass bands who perform in communities and make a positive change," Boston-based saxophonist and Honk! organiser Ken Field says.

"They are not there to make money or get famous but use music as a positive way.

"The festival's got larger, stronger and more popular for many years and we're pleased other communities are establishing their own festival."

The festival starts on Thursday with workshops at the Wollongong Conservatorium of Music, with street performances in the Wollongong arts precinct on Saturday and Sunday.

There are also a range of after-dark events to accommodate noise restrictions in the city centre.

"We've wanted to do our own Honk! because it's about participation - it's not just about consumption," Honk! Oz organiser Lotte Latukefu says.

"Honk! says we want you to join us - if you have a saxophone under your bed gathering dust, get it out, give it a wash and bring it along to the workshops."

All artists involved in the festival are donating their time for free.

Ken Field will be lending his experience of playing in the US to a special workshop on New Orleans street music, as well as bringing together a band with people of varying skill levels that will perform over the course of the weekend.



Boston saxophonist Ken Field is in Wollongong for the Honk! Oz festival this weekend. (Justin Huntsdale - ABC)

"My love is bringing a variety of players together with different abilities and making great music with them," he says.

"We're inviting amateurs to professional musicians and employing people to the best of their ability to let them do what they can do.

"We'll make some great music and have a blast doing it."

You can check out the festival's full schedule on their website [here](#).

