

A stellar wrap-up to the 8th edition of the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival

Montreal, Monday, March 5, 2007 — The **8th edition** of the **MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival** will be remembered as the one that truly established its identity. Powered by a combination of innovation and daring, the urban winter festival hit the ground running with a dynamic series of new activities and a different program for every day of its run. For openers, the Festival's new home in **Old Montreal** and the **Quays of the Old Port** suits it to perfection. From all evidence, the Festival's three-pronged program of culture, gastronomy and outdoor celebration not only lured more Montrealers than ever out of hibernation, but also sparked strong interest in the international community – raising the city's profile and enhancing the Montreal brand, particularly with the 5 km downtown and underground footrace, and the 86 activities of the All-Nighter.

The Hydro-Québec Celebration of Light – *the free outdoor entertainment program*

This edition confirmed the wisdom in moving the Celebration of Light to the city's historic quarter represented by Old Montreal and the Quays of the Old Port. Those who entered the site from Notre Dame Street at Place Jacques-Cartier were greeted by a redesigned **Milk Ice Slide**, now entirely constructed from ice (600 blocks weighing 135 kilos apiece, making 82,000 kilos of ice stretching 120 metres!) as well as the colourful lighting installations of the Festival au Vieux-Port, testifying to the newly expanded dimensions of the event. It was therefore no surprise to see long line-ups at the **Milk Jumpai** and the **Milk Animation Zone** and happy gatherings around the popular outdoor braziers or around a glass of fine South African wine at the **Bistro SAQ**, to watch Place Jacques-Cartier fill to capacity for the **Torchlight Procession**, or to find sight-lines for the **Loto-Québec Winter Fireworks!** No surprise, either, that the first **Grand Opening Event** in the history of the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival – presented by **Labatt Bleue** as part of the **Quays of the Old Port Special Events** – was a massive popular success. Despite the weather, **Éric Lapointe** and his musicians stormed the **Hydro-Québec Stage** with a rock'n'roll set as fiery as the grand-finale pyrotechnics of *Coup de foudre!* presented by Loto-Québec! The event, attended by no fewer than 5,000, was followed by the inaugural soirée of the **Loto-Québec Sphere** hosted by **DJ Champion** and **V.J. Pillow**. This latter event proved so popular, particularly the special *Silent Disco!* evening, that organizers have decided to keep the Sphere open later next year – and thanks to wireless headphone sets, we can extend the festivities later into the evening without disturbing the residents of Old Montreal. That opening night set the tone for the entire winter celebration: the Festival was off and running from the opening gun, and its programming – non-stop, and different every night – never lost momentum! Take note that this high-voltage event, which lit up every face and warmed every heart in the crowd, required 1,250 metres of electrical cable and 1.3 million watts!

The Sun Life Financial Performing Arts – *the cultural program*

The Festival's artistic program reached new heights of intensity and diversity, and we must underline the majestic choreography of two pieces by [bjm_danse] **Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal**, *Les Chambres des Jacques* and *MAPA*, both of which left audiences ecstatic. No less memorable, the ever-impressive **Johnny Clegg** fired up the Metropolis with a performance worthy of his global reputation and his role as honorary co-president of the Festival's artistic program. Those lucky enough to have attended *Perreau et la lune* likely still haven't recovered from the experience: the warmth and intimacy of the Gesù seemed to inspire **Yann Perreau** to deliver an energetic and generous performance. And what more can be said of **Angèle Dubeau**, also honorary co-president, who celebrated both her own 30th birthday and the 10th anniversary of *La Pietà*? Only that she enhanced her reputation as a violinist of rare intensity and generosity. To this, add the following intuitive programming strokes from MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS founder Alain Simard: the return of legendary acoustic group **Oregon**, in the Spectrum; the multimedia concert **Constantinople**, with its magnificent projections; the recital by our former honorary co-president **Barbara Hendricks** and **Monica Freire** in the Lion d'Or. Take note that the Sun Life Financial Performing Arts program received new support from the **ministère de la Culture et des Communications** and from the **Société de développement des entreprises culturelles (SODEC)**.

The Air France Wine and Dine Experience presented by American Express – *the culinary and wine program*

In just eight short years, the Festival's gourmet program has already positioned it as the most important gastronomic event in North America, consolidating both the significance of Montreal as a gourmet destination, and the enviable reputation of its chefs. As underlined by our honorary president **Daniel Boulud**, prestigious chef from our featured city, **New York**, no event of its kind unites so many local and invited chefs, often working together, to delight foodies with their festival menus. It's a formula at the heart of the event's enormous success, a success that has necessitated adding numerous additional events to the **Festival's Finest Tables**. The **Grande Raclette** presented by **Fromages d'ici** was also a sellout, with the cheesemongers of the **Festival of Our Cheeses** in **Complexe Desjardins** going through 7000 cheeses during the first weekend – three times as much as last year! By the time the event concluded, over 3 tons of Our Cheeses had been sold or enjoyed on the site! And **Jean-Talon Market** kept pace with a delicious slate of activities celebrating the products of the **Gaspésie**.

The Montreal Downtown & Underground Event presented by Hydro-Québec in collaboration with Milk

In only its second year, this indoor and underground event, unique to Montreal, has already won over a loyal group of fans! Registration for the footrace through 5 km of the city's underground corridors leapt from last year's 500 to 750. The course was virtually full several weeks before the event was held! Fortunately, those who wanted to be a part of the event could still register to the family discovery path, held on the course after the race. Featuring a panoply of activities for young and old staged by our partners throughout the underground network, the event proved popular enough that some participants took three hours to complete the scheduled 80-minute journey! The trip ended up in Complexe Desjardins, where the party really took off. And the stats tell the tale: over 4,000 bottles of milk were handed out to our competitors and attendees by Milk, co-presenter of the event!

The 4th Montreal All-Nighter presented by Hydro-Québec

With a record 86 events and activities, the Montreal All-Nighter established itself anew as a world-class happening to be reckoned with! With more partners and activities than ever spread over three easily-accessible neighbourhoods (now including the Plateau-Mont-Royal) thanks to three free shuttle services, this already legendary nighttime celebration drew a massive flock of night-owls to its cultural, athletic, interactive program, chalking up 175,000 visits in a single night! Montrealers proved yet again that they have an unmatched appetite for originality and celebration and regrouped in a mass celebration at 4:30 a.m. in the Grand Place in Complexe Desjardins for the free **Convivial Breakfast** presented by Milk. Once on site, our night-owls were treated to a pre-dawn meal including – for the first time ever – a spectacular giant omelet featuring the best of Our Cheeses. For the record, the recipe for the gigantic omelet required some 10,000 eggs prepared in a frying pan weighing one ton and measuring close to 4 metres! Like the Montreal Downtown & Underground Event, the Montreal All-Nighter once again demonstrated its global reach, bringing new international exposure to our city. We hereby underline this year's first-ever contribution of \$10,000 from the **Conseil des Arts de Montréal**. We also thank the **Société de transport de Montréal (STM)** for its participation in the event.

The media answer the call

The MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival enjoyed its highest media profile ever, receiving extensive coverage from both local and international press. Above and beyond the presence of the Quebec media, more than 30 international media organizations were represented: from **New York** (*In New York*, *Globe Trotter TV*, *Time Out New York*) and the rest of the **United States** (*AOL Travel*, *AAA Magazine*, *JAZZIZ*, *LuxuryWeb*, *National Geographic*, *Tonia's Kitchen*) ▪ from **Algeria** (*La Tribune*) ▪ from **Brazil** (*Viagem e Turismo*) ▪ from **Bulgaria** (*Bacchus Magazine*) ▪ from **France** (*Gusto*, *GaultMillau*, *Magazine Avantage*) ▪ from **Germany** (*Radio Deutsche Welle*) ▪ from **Mexico** (*El Economista*, *Blue & Blanc*, *El Financier*, *Excelsior*, *Milenio*, *Empresas y Empresarios*, *Radio Formula*) ▪ from **South Africa** (*Johannesburg Sunday Times*) ▪ from **Switzerland** (*TheFake Magazine*) ▪ from **United Kingdom** (*London Daily Telegraph*, *London Time Out Magazine*) ▪ and from **English Canada** (*Eat Magazine*, *En Route*, *National Post*, *Nuevo Mundo TV*). CNN, NY1 and *Macleans* also spotlighted the event. The burgeoning media coverage once again enhanced and contributed to the international notoriety of both the Festival and the city of Montreal – notoriety that included the presence of representatives from the city of Miami, taking inspiration for the inauguration of their own Florida All-Nighter, as well as a Chinese delegation from the Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival, here to develop an ice-garden project in association with the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival.

A balanced budget

The Festival should wrap up with a small budgetary surplus. This is the 4th consecutive edition of the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival to close with a balanced budget. The entirety of this surplus will be allocated to repaying startup debt, as decided by the Festival's Board of Directors, consisting of members drawn from Montreal's economic, cultural and tourism communities (please refer to the annex for the Board's membership).

Please remember that without the essential support of the three levels of government and its major sponsors, **Hydro-Québec**, **Sun Life Financial**, **Air France**, **American Express**, **Loto-Québec**, the **Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec**, and the **Société des alcools du Québec**, this major winter celebration, a masterwork conceived and executed by **L'Équipe Spectra**, would not be possible. We also thank our 286 partners, hotels, restaurants, cultural organizations, venues, media partners and particularly **Place des Arts**, **Complexe Desjardins**, **the Old Montréal Business Development Corporation**, **the Old Port of Montréal Corporation Inc.** and **Tourisme Montréal**.

On to the 9th edition

For its 9th edition, scheduled for Thursday, February 21 to Sunday, March 2, 2008, the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival welcomes **Toronto** as its featured city, with its most prestigious culinary ambassador, renowned chef **Susur Lee** as honorary president, as well as featured country **Chili** and its wine-growers. Furthermore, the 2008 edition will present a special event, the **400th anniversary of Quebec City**: in collaboration with the team of the "400e", l'Office du Tourisme de Québec and the Mr. Christie's Québec Winter Carnival, we are organizing a "Salute to Québec", featuring a gala dinner starring Quebec chefs and other surprises.

A 10th anniversary worth waiting for!

In 2009, the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival turns 10! Expect a special anniversary edition featuring plenty of surprises, including this: to give our partners plenty of lead time, we are announcing today that Paris will be the featured city of our 10th anniversary! Not only have discussions already been held, notably with the city of Paris, but some of our partners already have exciting plans on their drawing boards.

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