

Re-cap of the 7th edition

Innovation, provocation and appeal for the 7th annual MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival

Montreal, Monday, February 27th, 2006 — The MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival's 7th edition took place amid much innovation, provocation and seduction this year, further increasing its popular appeal. And anyone who'd been wondering where winter had gone during the month of January must certainly have been reminded that it was simply on vacation until February. Because it landed precisely during the 10 day-period that spans the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival.

Seven years isn't a long time for a Festival to have grown so much. But it has, thanks to the untied efforts of 250 Festival partners from Montreal's cultural, artistic, economic, tourist, gastronomic and festive sectors. That's why the Festival was happy to add even more reasons for Montrealers to shed their winter cocoons and to create even more events to address their varying interests. From its inception, the Festival has held true to its mandate declared in 1998: to keep the downtown hopping in winter, and to do its part toward creating a perception of the Montreal "brand" as a city of festivals, artistic endeavor and gastronomy throughout foreign tourist markets.

• Sun Life Financial Performing Arts •

Among shows included in the **Sun Life Financial Performing Arts** series were those of **Gianmaria Testa**, the **Nuevo Ballet Español**, **Pink Martini**, as well as **Dave St-Pierre** and his presentation of ***Pornographie des âmes***, all of which enjoyed huge popular acclaim and underscored the pertinence of the artistic aspect of the Festival.

This year's Festival marked the North-American premiere of Co-Honorary President **Marie Chouinard's** ***bODY_rEMIX/gOLDBERG_vARIATIONS***—a true highlight of the wintertime happening. Spectator attendance at her striking new creation confirmed the popularity of the talented choreographer and re-affirmed her place in the Montreal and international dance scenes. The Festival was honored to be financially associated with that event's creation and production.

Other treasures of this year's program were shows by **Momix** (*Opus Cactus*), **Autour de la flûte**, **Lynda Thalie**, **Thomas Hellman**, **Michel Rivard**, **Yann Perreau** and **Mathieu Lavoie**, who together inspired the passions of dance, theatre, music and song lovers.

Actress and singer **Arielle Dombasle** performed magnificently as Co-Honorary President of the Festival. Her show was nuanced, seductive and the pride of this edition.

• The Air France Wine & Dine Experience presented by National Bank •

We would like to once again mention the arrival of two major new sponsors to the event: **Air France** and **National Bank**. Their presence went far toward advancing the 2006 menu of gastronomic activities. There's nothing of such quality and scale in any city in the entire world, and nowhere but Montreal will you find such a tight collaboration between 50 of the city's finest establishments, who put their chefs and staffs at the disposal of visiting chefs from around the world. The admixture of talent has gone far toward promoting Montreal as a center of gastronomy, as witnessed by a recent article in *Gourmet* magazine.

According to Honorary President of the gastronomic section of the festival **Émile Jung** (of the Au Crocodile Restaurant in Strasburg), never has such a large delegation of Alsatian chefs represented the venerable cuisine of that region of France at an international event. Talented practitioners of their regional cuisine were extremely generous in sharing their culinary traditions with Montreal chefs¹. Also present were exceptional wine-makers

¹ Alexis Albrecht, Sébastien Buecher, Henri Gagneux, Antoine Hepp, Michel Magada, Franck Mischler, Michel Orth, Thierry Schwartz and Nicolas Stamm

Beyer, Ostertag, Pfaffenheim² who presented special evenings for sampling the finest vintages of the region. The spectacular series was sponsored, in part, by **Tourisme Alsace**.

Vancouver was the featured city for 2006, revealing a host of unique talents in the persons of their visiting chefs and wine-producers. They were six³ in all, including Sinclair Philip, president of the Canadian Slow Food movement, but best known as the chef at Sook Harbour House who held forth at restaurant DECCA77.

A mere 20 years ago, few would have suspected that Quebec would become such a skilled producer of fine and varied cheeses as it has today. For the **Our Cheeses** event (presented by the Quebec Milk Producers Federation in collaboration with complexe Desjardins), nine master cheesemakers presented over 25 fresh cheeses made right here, all of which received unanimous acclaim from festivalgoers who stopped by to taste them.

As for the **Grande Raclette** (a casual dinner presented by Our Cheeses) over 400 guests were thrilled last Saturday at Windsor Station when Alain Pignard and his team from the Queen Elizabeth showed their stuff. The event opened the door to a wild Montreal All-Nighter for a number of those who attended.

For the first time this year, the **Jean-Talon Market** took part in the Festival, offering a variety of activities during the first weekend. The three days were extremely popular with the public who enjoyed conferences, lectures, presentations and tastings—all broadcast live on the program *À vous la terre* on the Première Chaîne of Radio-Canada, with host Anne-Marie Dussault. Many memorable moments!

Special thanks are due to Chef Laurent Godbout and his team for the **American Big Night Out**, a benefit event of which profits were dedicated to the *Fondation Charles-Bruneau* for research into cancer-fighting foods. It was the first time that the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival has organized such an event in tandem with one of its partners in the Montreal's Finest Tables series. The evening featured five of Laurent's chef friends⁴ and three Californian wine producers⁵.

Also much appreciated was the **Soirée Tel-jeunes** that took place during this year's Festival. Four restaurant owners put their talents to the benefit of young people, with all profits going to the Tel-jeunes, of which actress Marina Orsini is spokesperson.

• The Hydro-Quebec Celebration of Light •

The **Hydro-Québec Celebration of Light** was once again highly popular, the more so because of a number of innovations, most notably that the event took place in the old part of the city. It proved to be a great notion: not only did the Festival attain its objectives, but the first experience generated a whole bunch of new ideas for future years. Teaming up with the **Old Port of Montréal Corporation** and the **Société de développement commercial Vieux-Montréal – Quartier historique** was a natural extension of the Festival, enabling us to expose visitors to this highly entertaining event and to a familiar part of the city that is especially attractive during the Festival.

Despite imponderables like the windstorm and intense cold which forced organizers to close the site for security reasons (and due to significant damage to equipment during the first Friday) our partners' teams worked together closely, bravely setting their sites on next year's edition.

The new site and new formula—boasting a number of different hosted activities concentrated around the two flagship events on each of the Festival's two weekends—was greeted with huge enthusiasm by denizens of Old Montreal and visitors alike. Highly attended activities included the **Milk Ice Slide** and **Milk Skating Rink**, presented by **Canadian Tire**. Also on the menu were the shows of the **Spectacles Loto-Québec** (El Fuego, Lézardom, Walkyries and the circus troupe, *Les 7 doigts de la main*). The **Old Port of Montréal Special Events** included the Montreal Ice Ballet, the Metropolitan Boy Scouts Torchlight Parade, the *Grande Patinade Canadienne*, the Tam-Tams Parade, StreetStatic, and the Port Symphonies in Pointe-à-Callière. And the **Winter Fireworks Loto-Québec** included the opening fireworks display, the *Spectacle pyrotechnique, Grand Feu de joie*, the *Grande Pétarade* and the *Feu de la Nuit blanche*. Visitors also enjoyed the photographic exhibition *Je lis Montréal*, presented in the Jacques-Cartier Pavilion in collaboration with **Les Productions de l'œil** as part of the **Montréal World Book Capital** event.

² Jacky Barthelmé, Marc Beyer, Étienne Hugel, Antoine Kreydenweiss, Seppi Landmann, Bernard Nast and André Ostertag

³ Melissa Craig, Andrey Durbach, Frank Pabst, Sinclair Philip, Edward Tuson and Vikram Vij

⁴ Todd Humphries, Paul Kahan, Marc Orlay, Michjael Schlow and Todd Stein

⁵ Bill Easton, Randall Graham and Andrew Lacopelli

Organizers are particularly proud of the first **Montreal's Underground Walkway Celebration** presented by Hydro-Québec in collaboration with Milk. After years of dreaming, it finally happened and was a success from the start. Some 3000 people took part in the innovative happening, organized with the help of Vélo Québec Événements. The one-of-a-kind event surpassed all expectations: 463 runners (500 registered, in all) managed to finish the unusual 5-kilometer underground race track, requiring them to run up 480 steps and down 569. When the race was over, 2500 people of all ages took the opportunity to explore the length of one of the world's longest networks of underground passages and malls, finishing their stroll in the **complexe Desjardins**.

The closing weekend featured the 3rd annual **Montreal All-Nighter**, one of the Festival's most anticipated and attended events. Presented by **Hydro-Québec**, it was a night full of ambience and delight! Die-hard night owls, Montrealers and a number of tourists were on hand to brave the freezing temperatures and enjoy the provocative menu of special activities taking place in about fifty locations sprinkled throughout the downtown, ending at dawn with the free **Convivial Breakfast** presented by **Milk** in the complexe Desjardins.

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