



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Toronto Acoustic Festival Expanding to Weekend Event

Toronto, ON— Acoustic music lovers, mark October 13/14 on your calendar—the little music festival with a big heart is expanding this year, and promises to be an event to remember.

The Toronto Songwriters' Festival, which debuted to a full house last year at Hugh's Room with some of the city's top acoustic musicians, adds a second day this year to include young performers. What's unique about this festival is that all funds raised go toward helping poor children in Laos and India.

Saturday night's event will feature top acoustic musicians performing original compositions, including Joshua Bartholomew, Kat Goldman, Andy Carey, Tucker Finn, MEAStars and Peter Verity. CityTV's Jojo Chintoh will be returning to kick off the event. Patrons can shop for exotic art and gifts at the silent auction.

Sunday afternoon's event will feature young artists performing their original compositions: Lindsay Broughton, Joey and Cierra MacDonald, Lindsay Regan, Justin Bridgemohan and Tafari-I Davis. A guest appearance will be made by Dale Russell and Artemis Chartier. A grade school choir will perform a folk song and a percussion performance.

“Our concept was to create a festival that would provide a platform for those truly talented musicians who aren't signed with any big labels,” explains festival co-founder Shawn Phelps, “while also raising money for our children's education projects in Laos and India.”

These are not your everyday acoustic performers. Read the following bios to get a taste of what's in store for this year's attendees:

-With over 160,000 MySpace plays, airplay and performances on CBC national radio, appearances on SUN TV's entertainment news show, Joshua Bartholomew has accomplished a lot without the help of a record label. He has already opened for Randy Bachman, Burton Cummings and Ron Sexsmith, among others—and he's only 23!

-Back in 2003, Kat Goldman's star was rising. She had been signed in the U.S. by a manager famous for the breakthroughs of artists such as Shawn Colvin, Suzanne Vega and Dar Williams. She was being courted by majors like Columbia and Vangaard. By autumn she was planning a move to New York City. But on her way to a recording session in Toronto she stopped at a bagel shop, where a car drove through the window and pinned her to the wall. She needed emergency reconstructive surgery on her hip and leg. She spent two years learning how to walk again, writing and reviewing the events in a bungalow in North York by herself. The experience led to the release of her spectacular album, *Sing Your Song*, last autumn, which inspires even as it breaks your heart. Kat is back and she's better than ever.

-The unique, foot-tapping music of cellist and singer-songwriter, MEA (www.meastars.com), will get into your bones, and her melodies will stay with you long after her performance. She was recently nominated for the first annual Toronto Independent Music Awards for her creative pop/rock recordings. She plays

with a variety of accomplished Toronto musicians including Marc Nadjiwan (winner of the Aboriginal Music Awards). In 1998, MEA moved to the city from the small town of Deep River, Ontario to study classical cello at the University of Toronto with internationally acclaimed cellist Shauna Rolston. She was inspired to start pairing the dark and poetic songs she'd been writing since she was a teenager with her cello after hearing Quebec artist, Jorane. Her music has been compared to Bjork, Tori Amos, Jorane and Sarah McLaughlin.

Sunday's youth event is being held in partnership with School Alliance of Student Songwriters (SASS), which is run by two seasoned musicians: former songwriter and guitarist for The Guess Who, Dale Russell, and teacher and musician, Artemis Chartier. Saturday's event is being held in partnership with Songwriters' Unite, a collective of over 400 songwriters run by Russell Leon.

The festival was created by Toronto-based charity Jai Dee (Good Heart) Children's Fund (JDCF) to raise money for their children's literacy projects in Laos and India. Last year they raised \$8,000 and helped over 400 children.

JDCF was founded by Shawn Phelps (a former magazine editor and college teacher) and Thanou Thirakul (a software developer), after a trip to Laos when they came across a local kindergarten in a shack that didn't have crayons or toilets. "It seemed like it would take so little to make a real difference there," Phelps says. "And now that we were able to really help that school, I know for sure that it's true. It's not hard to make a difference. You just have to take that first step and believe it will all work out somehow."

Event Details:

Toronto Songwriters' Festival

Venue: Hugh's Room

Dates: Saturday October 13: 8pm till late \$25 advance/\$27 door

Sunday October 14: 11am – 3pm \$10 advance/\$12 door

Tickets: Call Hugh's Room: (416) 531-6604

*All proceeds go towards helping children in Laos and India through Jai Dee (Good Heart) Children's Fund.

For more information, including artist bios please visit:

www.torontosongwritersfestival.com (info@torontosongwritersfestival.com)

www.jaideechildrensfund.org (info@jaideechildrensfund.org)

Call Shawn Phelps (festival organizer & director, JDCF): (416) 761-1666

Jai Dee (Good Heart) Children's Fund is a Toronto-based charity that helps children rise above poverty through education in developing countries at the grassroots level. It is run by a Toronto couple (Shawn Phelps and Thanou Thirakul) who decided to start it after visiting a kindergarten school in Laos and realizing how little it would take to make a difference. In Thailand and Laos, to have "jai dee" means to have a good heart. www.jaideechildrensfund.org

Songwriters Unite! is a collective of 400 songwriters run by Russell Leon, a Toronto-based music teacher and musician who heads up an eponymous band. www.songwritersunite.com.

SASS Canada was founded in 2003 by Dale Russell (songwriter and lead guitarist of The Guess Who, 1983-2000) and Artemis Chartier (singer-songwriter and high school teacher) to enable young people to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, to learn valuable musical and literacy skills, to develop their creativity, to build an artistic network to benefit each member personally, and carry on the tradition of great Canadian writers. www.sasscanada.net