

The MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS FESTIVAL 500,000 visitors for our 5th year! Great weather spells a huge success!

Montreal, Monday, March 1, 2004 — The 5th edition of the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival has come to a glorious finish, thanks to the **huge popular acclaim** of over 500,000 visitors. And it's made the organizers pretty happy, too, when over 11 mild days and nights Montrealers and tourists alike showed up to soak in the very best of a special 5th anniversary edition. And the best was very good indeed, an unusual mix of exciting activities spread over a somewhat more concentrated period than in previous years, but – judging from the figures – of particular appeal to local and out-of-town visitors alike. Divided into three separate but complimentary showcases – the **Sun Life Financial Performing Arts**, the **SAQ Wine and Dine Experience** and the **Hydro-Quebec Celebration of Light** – this year's Festival attracted not only lovers of art and fine dining, but a huge number who showed up simply for the fun of it all. And that includes a strong turnout of families, descending on the site to enjoy the many activities that were planned specially for kids and their parents. According to the firm Descarie & complices, more than a half-million visitors – an attendance record – took part in Montreal's youngest of festivals, which has now apparently become the focal point of our Montreal winter. The energy was there, the vibes were right and there was an overall infectious enthusiasm, especially for the occasion of the first **Montreal All-Nighter**, launched to celebrate this 5th anniversary. And that wasn't just public enthusiasm, either, because some **200 partners** associated themselves with the event to make it such a resounding success. All of which is to say that **the Festival isn't just getting older – it's getting bigger!**

This year, all three elements of the Festival combined to spotlight the charms and unique talents of the **Rhône-Alpes** region of France. Not least among them was Chef Georges Blanc, Honorary President of the **SAQ Wine & Dine Experience**, who demonstrated beyond any doubt why his native province is known world-wide as a "land of flavours". And the same flair shone through in the **Sun Life Financial Performing Arts** segment, when the **Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon** and dance company **Käfig** delivered shows that demonstrated their talent, masterful delivery and intensity, all at once. Equally popular were the photo exhibit **Lyon 8 décembre – Fête des Lumières** in the corridor at Place des Arts, and the hugely successful **Guignol** – a distinctively Lyonnais marionette show – that charmed young and old, twice a day, at the Complexe Desjardins.

Owing to its growing international character and the Festival's unrelenting efforts to position the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival as a global-scale tourist event, this year's Festival once again enjoyed excellent **foreign press coverage** from outside Quebec, including correspondents travelling from **English-speaking Canada**, the **United States**, **France**, **Italy** and **Japan**. In fact, no fewer than 29 press organizations were in town to cover the event. And to further the international range of the Festival, the first North-American performance of the symphonic version of *Lord of the Rings*, composed and conducted by Academy Award-winning Howard Shore, was recorded in high-definition for global DVD distribution by New Line video.

Five Years and Five Special Events Divided into 3 exciting series at the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival

• The Sun Life Financial Performing Arts •

Many of the acclaimed shows included in the Sun Life Financial Performing Arts series were sold out well in advance, as in the case of *Amelia* by LaLaLa Human Steps, the *Lord of the Rings Symphony* by Howard Shore, Laurie Anderson's **new creation** and the theatre piece *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

Strong box office performance demanded that organizers stage numerous encore performances, as was the case for shows by **Laurie Anderson** and **Natalie Choquette**. The same happened for **Robert Lepage's** *The Busker's Opera*, with 2 extra shows scheduled for the Spectrum on March 5 and 6. As for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, attendance was so good that the Saidye Bronfman Centre Theatre has added an entire week of extra shows, starting today and continuing until March 7th, inclusively.

Programming under the banner of the Sun Life Financial Performing Arts gave us all a chance to experience the highest calibre artistic performances anywhere, including **Barbara Hendricks** at Place des Arts and the **Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon**. Those, among others, simply would not have taken place in Montreal without the support of the Festival, which, along with partners, also financed the creation of **Busker's Opera** by Robert Lepage. And the same goes for **Amelia** by choreographer Edouard Lock, who graced the Festival once again this year.

• The SAQ Wine and Dine Experience •

The Bistro SAQ on the Festival site was also a resounding success. The **5-to-7 wine tastings** were sold out for all 10 evenings, and reviews from those who attended were lavish, especially with regard to the quality-price ratio.

Similar enthusiasm also surrounded the new **Prix Fixe Menus** category, where 5 participating restaurants saw their clientele expand considerably when festivalgoers showed up for special menus priced at \$9.99. Three of the establishments even reported doing second sittings.

Flavour Week was also more popular than ever, with average daily attendance in Complexe Desjardins hitting 3500, compared with 2500 last year.

The **Georges Blanc Honorary President's Dinner** at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth and the **Jaboulet Wine Tasting Evening** (a vintner invited by the Cube restaurant) were the two prestigious gastronomic events of this year's Festival. Both were sold out well in advance, and exit polls of gastronomes in attendance were invariably positive. The **Bouchon lyonnais Convivial Meal** was a resounding success, too, hosting at least 500 guests at Windsor Station. The **Le Lait Convivial Breakfast** was also a crowd-pleaser on Sunday morning, when 2000 participants who managed to stay awake all night for the Montreal All-Nighter showed up (and filled up) to celebrate their achievement.

Thanks to the teamings up of Montreal's best with guest chefs from abroad (thanks also to the impressive variety of thematic events programmed) there were plenty of surprises in store for this year's festivalgoers. A majority of the restaurants participating in the **Montreal's Finest Tables** program were full-up. Extra dinners had to be added to meet the demand, most notably at La Chronique restaurant, the *Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec* and the Mikado. Five typically Montreal 'bring-your-own-wine' restaurants taking part in this year's Festival were also filled to capacity and had to turn people away, Chez Christophe being but one of them. All of which suggests that, as planned, the SAQ Wine and Dine Experience has become a culinary and oenological event unique in North America.

• The Hydro-Québec Celebration of Light •

The **Montagne** installation on the exterior site enjoyed excellent attendance, too, and for a number of reasons, one being the 58 projections of the multi-media show *Les Aventures de Tom*. Many visitors climbed to its 22-metre summit to take in the unusual view of the city and the brightly lit festival site, yet another way in which organizers have attempted to make Montreal itself the star of the HIGH LIGHTS Festival. The expert conceptualization of La Montagne by François Bérubé highlighted the diversity of the event, as much for the observatory at the summit, as for its giant screen projections and surrounding sound & light montages. In a word, it was all for fun, as were the ever-popular Glissade Le Lait installed on St.Catherine Street, the Fireworks Canada displays and presentations by the Bleue Dry D.Js.

The **Loto-Québec Fireworks Grand Finale** also came off as planned. For the 2003 edition of the Festival, 10,000 showed up for a collective photo, glow-sticks in hand. The image capturing the essence of this year's MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival.

Acrobats of humor and masters of the one-line zinger, the better-known names of the **Ligue nationale d'improvisation** delivered fine performances during but one of **Loto-Québec's several free-of-charge evenings**. The Complexe Desjardins was filled to the rafters, thanks to the established followings of impro comedians Marie-Hélène Thibault, Charles Lafortune and François-Étienne Paré with their un-plotted and totally unpredictable sketches.

Another free evening from **Loto-Québec**, la **Nuit de l'humour** was presented in collaboration with Radio-Canada. The "happening" took place in the Complexe Desjardins, specially re-arranged into a cabaret format for the event, which featured François Massicotte, Les Denis Drolet and Mike Ward who all kept things at a fever-pitch of hilarity for the duration.

With temperatures hitting +4°C (+12°C with the sun factor) the Festival was more like a spring celebration on Saturday afternoon, February 28. In fact, Le Café Hydro-Québec offered visitors the **very first outdoor terrasse of the year**. After our long, cold winter, it was quite a moment to see the happy smiles of people sitting right out in the open for the first time since fall.

The Montreal All-Nighter: a marathon of activity !

The advent of the **first Montreal All-Nighter** generated huge energy among the event's 35 partners for days before it actually happened, and the media and public alike were getting mighty curious about the up-coming nocturnal romp. It too, was a rare success, as befits its inauguration on that rarest of dates, February 29th. The weather was mild, for one thing, which brought over 100,000 to the main site, ready to party all night. But there was also both quantity and quality in the over-nighter's events, many of them free of charge. The evening showed the true, festive face of Montreal and its denizens, that unique and spontaneous way of enjoying life in our city, and making friends of the many who come to town to find out what all the fuss is about. The party assumed huge dimensions, with 11,200 visitors arriving at Complexe Desjardins for the **Nuit de l'humour**. In the Old Port, no fewer than 11,000 came for fireworks. 8900 stopped by the *Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal*, where there was a broadcast of **Bachibouzouk**, hosted by Chantal Jolis for Première Chaîne on Radio-Canada. 5500 went to **Montreal City Hall** and at least 3500 visited the **Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal**. At the **Planétarium**, half-hour line-ups were the order of the night, although no one seemed to mind the wait in the euphoria of the moment. At 4:30 a.m., more than 1000 people headed for the Complexe Desjardins for the **Le Lait Free Convivial Breakfast**. At 5 a.m., the SAT was still packed to overflowing, and on the site the 5000 skewers for brochettes distributed earlier were simply insufficient to meet the enthusiastic demand. Beer and wine even ran out, because no one could have predicted that huge of a turnout!

A balanced budget and abundance of visitors

This 5th annual MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival ended with a **balanced budget**, the very best indicator of the financial health of the event: \$6.1 million in receipts and \$6.1 million in expenses. On-site, the popularity of the Café Hydro-Québec, the Bistro SAQ, the Le Lait maple syrup kiosk and the brochette grills accounted for a considerable sales increase in the order of 80% over last year. As for our partners-sponsors, results were equally positive.

Frequented figures indicate increasing public appreciation of the event, with total attendance above one-half million. Condensing the event into 11 consecutive days (rather than the old formula of 18 days over the course of 3 weeks) has achieved excellent results, as witnessed by the grid below, compiled by the independent firm Descarie & complices.

Activities and locations	Number of persons
Festival Site / All-Nighter	430,872
Gastronomic and wine-related events	54,436
Ticketed performances	30,881
Total	516,189

What's also remarkable about this year's Festival is the number of tourists who came by, night after night, for the 5th edition – from Toronto, Vancouver, New York, and Boston, the latter on the list being the American City of Honour this year, with 3 of Boston's finest chefs invited. A poll was therefore undertaken during the event to find out where they came from, what their particular needs were and their reasons for coming this year so we can make plans to increase the impact on tourism of the event during coming years. Overall results attest to the organizers' effectively addressing the Festival's objectives and mandate, as presented to the public sector. Those were and remain: to create a winter festival that puts life into a down period of the year; that brings people into downtown restaurants and concert halls; that consolidates Montreal's reputation and positioning as a cultural and gastronomic capital; and that reinforces our international reputation as the "city of festivals".

Looking ahead to our 6th year

The MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival is happy to invite you to the 6th edition, which will take place from **Thursday, February 17th until Sunday February 27th, 2005**. That means 11 consecutive days of activities distributed over three complimentary series. And it's going to be a good one, just like the last.

Because for next year, we'll be following our established tradition of featuring **one region of the world** in particular, to *highlight* its culinary, artistic, cultural and touristic interest. After Catalonia (2003), and Rhône-Alpes (2004), next year it will be **Northern Italy** under the spotlight. Also as in past years, we'll be featuring an American city, focussing on its chefs and artists, which will next year be **Chicago**, following in the footsteps of San Francisco, in 2003, and Boston, in 2004.

Hydro-Québec, who will remain the official presenter of the festival in 2005, made a special, non-recurrent contribution this year to create a special event to mark our 5th anniversary, that being the **Montreal All-Nighter**. Given the popularity and success of the nocturnal event, **the Festival is eager to find another sponsor** so that the Montreal All-Nighter can become yet another annual event in the life of our city. For 2005, it's been scheduled for the night of Saturday, February 26th until the morning of Sunday, February 27th.

Another project to bring people together is anticipated for 2005: the **The Great Montreal Underground Run**. Last year, a feasibility study was conducted to determine the viability of such a public sports event. So dust off your sneakers, because this first-of-its-kind event will be happening on Sunday, February 20th, 2005 when the Festival takes over 7 kilometres of our unique underground network, unequalled anywhere on Earth for its length, continuity and wintertime practicality.

Since its creation in 1998, the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival team has said that it would take 5 years to make the new event as rooted in the Montreal calendar as our other festivals and to establish a program that will guarantee its success over the ensuing years. As we close this year's festival, and with genuine pride, we're pleased to announce that we've kept our word.

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Media outside Quebec that covered the 5th edition of the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival

United States

AAA New Jersey
AAA Pioneer Valley
Better Homes & Gardens Magazine
Boston Magazine
Boston Phoenix
Dallas Morning News
Gallaghers Travels
Nation's Restaurant News
New Haven Register
New York Resident (weekly)
Nikki Style Magazine
SATW
Travel Food & Wine
Yankee Magazine
Woman's Day

English Canada

Globe & Mail
Going Places magazine
Journey
Leisure Ways
L'Express de Toronto
National Post/Saturday Post
National Radio Net

France

Europe 1 (radio)
Revue des Gourmands (La)

Italy

Corriere della Serra

Switzerland

Schweizer Radio DRS 2

Bulgaria

Bacchus Magazine

Japan

Eat Magazine/www.worldeventvillage.com - Sony Broadband

225 essential partners in our success!

The MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival isn't like other festivals in the sense that it relies on the external assistance of about 225 partners to complete its programming. All partners – whether from the food service and hospitality or entertainment industries – must be individually approached to participate.

Three levels of government have been directly associated in establishing and developing the Festival: the Government of Canada (Canada Economic Development, Canadian Heritage); the Québec government (*Tourisme Québec*, the *ministère des Affaires municipales, du Sport et du Loisir*, the *ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation*, the *ministère de la Culture et des Communications* and the *ministère des Relations internationales*); plus the City of Montreal, as well as the *Arrondissement de Ville-Marie*.

The Festival's major sponsors are Hydro-Québec, the SAQ and Sun Life Financial. Associate sponsors are: Loto-Québec, Stella Artois, Labatt Bleue Dry, the *Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec* and *les Aliments du Québec*, who invested significant amounts to make the Festival a success and who have thereby contributed to the economic revival of Montreal and tourism in this city.

Tourisme Montréal has contributed, from our inception, to financing the development, launching, programming and marketing of the new Festival which is designed to revive winter-time tourism.

For our 5th edition, which featured the Rhône-Alpes region, we received support from the *Conseil régional de la région Rhône-Alpes* and ERAI Canada (an international Rhône-Alpes concern).

Sixteen (16) other advertising partners also contributed to our success. (See attached list.)

Fifteen (15) hotels graciously agreed to accommodate chefs and artists invited by the Festival. (See attached list.)

Thirty (30) theatrical and dance companies, orchestras and museums were associated with the arts program, either directly (through shows and concerts which, without the Festival, would not have taken place), or indirectly (by scheduling shows to take place within the context of the Festival). Please see attached list.

Forty (40, see attached list) producers, associations, manufacturers and artisans offered their time and know-how to present a number of the free activities throughout Flavour Week at the Complexe Desjardins.

Almost fifty (50) Montreal restaurant owners and chefs welcomed star chefs from abroad and devised special menus for their dining rooms to be part of the Festival (see attached list).

Over sixty (60) partners worked together to make the first Montreal All-Nighter happen and succeed beyond all expectations.

On behalf of all Montrealers, restaurants and tourists alike, the MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS Festival thanks all of the above for their invaluable contribution to the success of our annual celebration of winter.

MONTREAL HIGH LIGHTS FESTIVAL PARTNERS

Montreal's Finest Tables: Alexandre _ Anise _ Au Petit Extra _ Au Pied de Cochon _ Brunoise _ Café de Paris _ Café Méliès _ Chez Chine _ Chez la Mère Michel _ Chez L'Épicier _ Chez Queux _ Christophe _ Cube _ Guy & Dodo Morali _ Il Sole _ ITHQ _ L'Armorican _ L'Entre-Miche _ La Chronique _ La Colombe _ La Gaudriole _ Le Beaver Club _ Le Boulevard _ Le Café du Nouveau Monde _ Le Castillon _ Le Club des Pins _ Le Latini _ Le Lutétia _ Le Paris _ Le Poisson Rouge _ Le Soubise _ Leméac _ Les Chèvres _ Les Continents _ Les Halles _ Les Infidèles _ Les Remparts _ Mikado Laurier _ Moishes _ Nuances _ Renoir _ Restaurant Julien _ Restaurant Yoyo _ Ristorante Saporì Pronto _ Soto McGill _ Toqué ! _ Verses Restaurant _ Zawedeh _

Flavour Week: Alicom _ Aliments du Québec _ Arctique glacier _ Au Pied de Cochon _ Boulangerie Première Moisson _ Charcuterie à l'Orange et vin blanc _ Chez Gerry _ Chocolats Geneviève Grandbois _ Cidrerie Michel Jodoin _ Cidrierie-verger Léo Boutin _ Complexe Desjardins / Place Desjardins inc. _ Domaine Pinnacle _ Entreprise Rhône-Alpes International (ERA) _ Esther Fortin et Jos Paquet _ Ferme apicole Desrochers _ Festival des Fromages de Warwick _ Fromagerie Au Gré des Champs _ Fromagerie de l'Érablière _ Fromagerie du Marché Atwater _ Fromagerie La Moutonnière _ Fromagerie La Vache à Maillotte _ Garland Canada _ La Ferme basque de Charlevoix _ Latina _ Le Castillon _ Le cerf rouge de Boileau _ Le Maître Gourmet _ Le Ricaneux _ Le Ruban Bleu _ Les Chèvres _ Les frères Atkins inc. _ Les Pâtes de fruits KJD inc _ Les Toques Blanches Internationales du Québec _ Les viandes biologiques de Charlevoix _ L'oise Naudière _ Lollyland _ Loto-Québec _ Marché Transatlantique _ Nouveau Falero _ Nuances _ Orly Global Trading Inc. _ Saeco Canada Ltée _ Saum-mom _ Société des alcools du Québec (SAQ) _ Vignoble Lafortune _

Performing Arts: Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon _ Boston Shawn & Sackbut Ensemble _ Casino de Montréal _ Centre des Arts Saidye Bronfman _ Centre Leonardo Da Vinci _ Centre Pierre-Péladeau _ Compagnie Käfig _ Complexe Desjardins / Place Desjardins inc. _ Conseil régional de la région Rhône-Alpes _ Constantinople _ EDF _ Ex Machina _ Jazz à l'année _ L'Ensemble Amati _ L'Ensemble contemporain de Montréal _ La Louisiane _ LaLaLa Human Steps _ Le Mat Électrique (Groupe Sonepar) _ Les Amis de la Montagne _ Les Grands Ballets Canadiens _ Ligue nationale d'improvisation (LNI) _ Loto-Québec _ MCM Gestion Artistique _ New Line Cinema _ Orchestre symphonique de Montréal _ Ourson Doré _ Pointe-à-Callière – Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal _ Productions de l'Œil _ Société de développement de Montréal _ Société de la Place des Arts de Montréal _ Tangente _ Théâtre Outremont _ Université McGill _ Usine C _ Ville de Lyon _ Viva Voce

Montreal All-Nighter: Alexandre _ L'Alizé _ Association québécoise de la distribution de fruits et légumes _ Autocar Dostie _ L'Avenue du Mont-Royal _ Boulangerie Première Moisson _ Café Campus _ Café du Nouveau Monde _ Candelum _ Casino de Montréal _ Centre des sciences de Montréal _ CinéRobotique et Cinéma ONF _ Le Club espagnol du Québec _ Club Soda _ La Compagnie Larivée Cabot Champagne _ Complexe Desjardins _ Danone _ Les Eaux Danone d'Amérique du Nord _ École nationale de l'humour _ Ensemble Anonymus _ Epsilon _ Espace 306 _ Ex-Centris/Cinéma Parallèle _ Festival International de Jazz de Montréal _ Festivalissimo _ Films Séville _ Frite alors! du boulevard Saint-Laurent _ Galerie Joyce Yahouda _ Galerie [sas] _ Hydro-Québec _ Jazz à l'année _ Kaléidoscope _ Krispy Kreme _ L'Équipe Spectra _ Lion d'Or _ Loto-Québec _ Le Métropolis _ Monopoli, galerie d'architecture _ Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal _ Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal _ Musée Juste pour rire _ Mutek _ L'Off Festival de jazz de Montréal _ Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain _ piknic elektronik _ Place des Arts _ Planétarium de Montréal _ Pointe-à-Callière – Musée d'archéologie et d'histoire de Montréal _ Les Producteurs laitiers du Canada _ Productions de l'Œil, BloWup photogalerie _ Productions du Diable vert _ Saeco _ La SAT (Société des arts technologiques) _ Silence, on court ! _ S.I.T.Q. – Le 1000 de La Gauchetière _ Société de développement de Montréal _ Société des alcools du Québec _ Société du Vieux-Port de Montréal _ Radio-Canada _ Sylviane Poirier art contemporain _ Théâtre du Nouveau Monde _ Union des écrivaines et écrivains québécois (UNEQ) _ L'Usine C _ La Ville de Montréal _ Vision Globale

Hotels: Best Western Hôtel Europa _ le Centre Sheraton _ Delta Centre-ville _ Fairmont Le Reine Elizabeth _ Hôtel-Suites Le Faubourg _ Hilton Montréal Bonaventure _ Holiday Inn Montréal - Midtown _ Holiday Inn Select Montréal _ Hôtel Inter Continental Montréal _ Hôtel Hyatt Regency Montréal _ Loews Hôtel Vogue _ Le Méridien Versailles et Château Versailles _ Sofitel Montréal _ Le Square Phillips Hôtel & Suites _

Sponsors: Air France _ les Aliments du Québec _ ARTV _ l'Association des hôtels du grand Montréal _ Bleue Dry _ le Complexe Desjardins _ la Financière Sun Life _ Gouvernement du Canada _ Gouvernement du Québec _ Hydro-Québec _ Le Lait _ Loto-Québec _ Mountain Coop Equipment _ les Producteurs laitiers du Canada _ la Société des alcools du Québec _ Société Radio-Canada _ Stella Artois _

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