

SUNFEST '06: A CELEBRATION OF WORLD CULTURES

July 6-9, 2006, Victoria Park, London, Ontario, Canada

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Sunfest is Canada's Premier Celebration of the Global Arts - and a Top 50 Festival (as selected in 2006 by Festivals & Events Ontario). It is held without an admission fee in beautiful Victoria Park, London, Ontario. Every summer since 1995, Sunfest has brought together thousands of people of all ages and cultures for four days of exemplary music, dance, crafts and cuisine from around the globe. This unique, high profile event features more than 20 top professional world music & dance ensembles based in Canada and abroad.

We are fortunate to have such a wonderful festival in London. Sunfest, and its artistic director Alfredo Caxaj, have put London on Canada's music festival map. Li Robbins, world music critic for The Globe & Mail described it as "A... a gem of a world music festival ..." The Toronto Star had this to say about Sunfest, "Remarkably, the top world music festival in Ontario might not be any of the four Toronto fests. Sunfest in London ... includes a compilation of acts coming through Toronto and even a few others ..." (John Goddard, "The world has come to our doorstep," Toronto Star, June 26, 2004).

A nonprofit community arts group, The London Committee for Cross Cultural Arts Inc. (also known as The Sunfest Committee), under the artistic direction of Alfredo Caxaj, runs Sunfest and a year round program to celebrate world cultures. Vimla Harry is the Chair of the Committee, Bob Fletcher is Vice Chair, Teresa Ainsworth is Secretary and I serve as Treasurer. The other Board members are Ian Davies, Jeff Floyd and Greg Hanbuch. Also integral to Sunfest's success are more than 200 dedicated grass-roots volunteers, who assist with all aspects of the festival's operation.

Over the years, Sunfest has showcased international headliners from nearly every region of the planet, including Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and First Nations territories.

In 2004, the Jazz Village Stage debuted at Sunfest, quickly attracting an enthusiastic following of its own for afternoon and early evening performances by many of Canada's jazz luminaries. Over 140 eclectic food and craft vendors from across Ontario line the paved footpaths in Victoria Park

An immediate hit with Londoners when the festival debuted in the summer of 1995, Sunfest is now considered one of the key events of its kind, and, arguably, Ontario's largest free showcase of Francophone culture. The Globe & Mail lists it as one of the 98 best summer festivals in Canada.

Tourism London ranks Western Union Sunfest as the number one summer attraction in London, in terms of both revenue generated for local businesses (about half a million dollars each year). The festival attendance has been estimated at more than 200,000 visitors during Sunfest '05.

Approximately 70% of those visitors are Londoners, with the rest coming from out-of-town, from across Southern Ontario, but, increasingly, from U.S. cities like Detroit, Michigan and Dayton, Ohio.

Funding to support the admission free Festival comes from the Department of Canadian Heritage, Ontario Arts Council (OAC), Ontario Trillium Foundation, Government of Quebec, City of London, and London Arts Council. Donations at the festival from visitors are also a critical part of its continued success.

In the spring of 2005, CBC Radio One and Radio-Canada (Ontario) became exclusive radio sponsors of Sunfest '05, airing special festival announcements, interviews and giveaways on regional programs like Fresh Air and Ontario Morning. Upon returning from his first visit to Sunfest, Radio-Canada's Director of Radio, Alain Dorion, praised it as the most beautiful festival he's ever seen.

Sunfest owes its continued growth to a solid base of corporate sponsors, including Western Union the title sponsor, VIA Rail Canada, A-Channel (the CHUM-owned TV station in London), Hilton London, Brick Beer Company, Loblaws, Pizza Pizza, Robert Q Travel, Corporate Imaging Centre, Old Oak Properties, and (website host) Real Internet Company.

This year's festival will no doubt be as exciting and enticing as those in past years.

Western Union Sunfest '06 International Headliners include:

- * KONONO NO. 1 B Democratic Republic of Congo
- * NIYAZ B Iran/U.S.A.
- * AURELIO MARTINEZ B Belize
- * MUSAFIR B India
- * VALLE SON B Cuba
- * LES AMAZONES DE GUINEE B Guinea
- * LOS DE ABAJO B Mexico
- * CéU B Brazil
- * AMPARANOIA B Spain
- * SECKOU KEITA B Mali
- * SARA TAVARES B Cape Verde

WU Sunfest '06 National Guest Artists & Cultures Represented

- * KABA HORO B Bosnia
- * SAMBA SQUAD B Brazil
- * ROSHEEN B French/Quebecois-Celtic
- * LAZO B Dominica
- * TANDAVA B India/China
- * AFRODIZZ B Afrobeat

* JENG YI B Korea

Western Union Sunfest '06 Jazz Village Stage

* LES PROJECTIONNISTES

* JEAN BEAUDET TRIO

* PHIL NIMMONS & FRIENDS

Y & MORE!

See you at the festival. Call us if you would like to volunteer at Sunfest or get involved in the London Committee for Cross Cultural Arts Inc.

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