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Detroit Jazz Festival Presented by Rocket Mortgage Pivots to Virtual

DETROIT – The Detroit Jazz Festival presented by Rocket Mortgage, the world’s largest (and best) free jazz festival in the world, today announced a pivot to a virtual format that will be streamed and broadcast “live” for free this Labor Day weekend. The Festival begins on Friday, Sept. 3 and runs through Monday, Sept. 6.

The Festival was originally scheduled to be in-person this year, but organizers decided to switch to the virtual format based on mitigating factors:

- Hart Plaza is currently being improved and construction won’t be complete until Fall. While plans were being devised to bring people into the plaza, the enormity of the jazz festival made it difficult to continue to host the thousands that attend the festival annually. The Festival would then have to be held completely in the Campus Martius area, which would cause overcrowding and overflow of patrons in a smaller area. That situation was not an option for jazz festival management due to conflicts with carefully designed health and safety protocols.
- Due to its open footprint, the jazz festival does not have the ability to require COVID-19 testing results and/or request proof of vaccination which is becoming the gold standard for large concert events.
- Concern among some artists was also a deciding factor.

“This is a winning solution that preserves the legacy of the Detroit Jazz Festival while bringing amazing performances into a virtual format,” says Chris Collins, Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation president and artistic director. “We’re thankful for our sponsors, donors and patrons for their support which enables us to once again provide a jazz festival that is safe, live and free for everyone. Also, a special thank you to the city of Detroit for the great improvements happening at Hart Plaza which will make the 2022 Detroit Jazz Festival even better along with many other events held at this venue.”

The Festival, which will be held without audiences, will be streamed or broadcasted live and free (no replays or on-demand) from indoor sound stages at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center and closed to the public. More details will be announced at a later date.

Jazz enthusiasts will be able to view or listen to performances for free in a number of ways including: The Festival’s social media channels and web page; on public radio and television stations; and on the DetroitJazzFest LIVE! app.

This year’s Artist-in-Residence Dee Dee Bridgewater will headline multiple performances during the festival including an opening set with protégé group, the Woodshed Network Ladies, and a closing night performance with her all-female big band. Other highlights include performances from Herbie Hancock, Gregory Porter, Keyon Harrold, Omar Sosa and the Havana-Detroit Jazz Project; Kurt Elling’s The Big Blind featuring Dee Dee Bridgewater: A Jazz Radio Play written by Kurt Elling and Phil Galdston; The Summit: Take 6 Meets the Manhattan Transfer, Monty Alexander HKX, and our world-class Detroit hometown artists.

“We are excited about the work we do to seek out new talent, promote excellence, produce everything jazz and celebrate all of it at the Detroit Jazz Festival on Labor Day weekend in an environment that is safe for everyone,” said Gretchen Valade, chair, Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation Executive Board.

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About the Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation

Known as the Angel of Jazz, Gretchen C Valade is the Chair of the Board of Directors. Gretchen’s vision and love of jazz guides the Foundation’s year-round activities including the signature event, the Detroit Jazz Festival.

Under the leadership of President and Artistic Director Chris Collins, the Detroit Jazz Festival Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization that presents jazz and educational workshops throughout the year. The Foundation produces the Detroit Jazz Festival, which is the signature event for the Foundation and the largest free jazz festival in the world. The Festival is also a major tourist attraction for the City of Detroit, with 26 percent of its audience coming from out of state. For more information, visit detroitjazzfest.org.

The Foundation receives grant funding from the Rocket Community Fund, Kresge Foundation, Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb Family Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Arts Midwest, D’Addario Foundation and Carolyn Wanzo and the Purify Wanzo CTAA Endowment at Wayne State University. Hundreds of individuals also contribute to the Festival through membership and donations.

Major corporate partners include presenting sponsor Rocket Mortgage, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., DTE Foundation, Carhartt Inc., Mack Avenue Music Group, Dirty Dog Jazz Cafe, Absopure, Bingham Legal Group, Central Michigan University, George Johnson & Company, MGM Grand Detroit, and Michigan Hispanic Collaborative.

For more information, visit:

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