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News Release

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National Acts Put East Lansing's Summer Solstice Jazz Festival on the Map

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EAST LANSING, Mich. – Festival goers are in for a treat with the 13th Annual Summer Solstice Jazz Festival, as this year's big-name, national acts prepare to come together with regional musicians to put on an unforgettable show.

This summer East Lansing will welcome national headliner Esperanza Spalding to the Summer Solstice Jazz Festival stage – a prodigy-turned-pro jazz vocalist and bassist blessed with uncanny instrumental chops and a voice that is part angel and part siren. Spalding, born and raised in Portland, Ore., taught herself how to play the violin at five years old, became one of the youngest instructors at the Berklee College of Music in her early 20's and has risen to national acclaim with the release of her self-titled debut album. In addition to touring the map and recording with some of the world's greatest jazz musicians, Spalding recently was invited to the White House to perform for President Barack Obama as part of a special tribute to Stevie Wonder and participated in the new City Stories ad campaign for the Gap, Inc. brand Banana Republic.

Young, fresh and with a story to tell, Spalding's appearance at the festival signifies the caliber of performers that will grace the stage in years to come as the festival continues to grow and become a bigger player on Michigan's festival scene.

This year East Lansing will also welcome the Rodney Whitaker/Carl Allen Project to the Summer Solstice Jazz Festival stage. Signed to the Mack Avenue label out of Grosse Pointe, Mich., this drums- and bass-led duo has released two critically acclaimed albums and has been praised by audiences across the nation for "taking them back home." Culling themes from classic R&B, soul jazz, pop and straight ahead styles, the duo has received rave reviews, including being listed in *The Philadelphia Inquirer's* list of the Top 10 Jazz Albums of 2007 for their debut work "Get Ready."

The appearance of more nationally acclaimed performers at the Summer Solstice Jazz Festival is a direct result of a partnership between the City of East Lansing, Wharton Center for Performing Arts and the MSU College of Music. The partnership, formalized in 2008, established the three entities as co-producers of



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the festival. The co-producers will continue to grow the festival in years to come, pooling resources to bring in more nationally renowned acts, creating additional spin-off events and adding new stages at future festivals.

The 13th Annual Summer Solstice Jazz Festival will hit downtown East Lansing with a high-caliber ensemble of local and national jazz performers on June 19 and 20, 2009. The festival, located in Parking Lot 1 of downtown, is free and open to the public.

Visit www.eljazzfest.com to read the 2009 performers biographies, view a full performance schedule and learn more about the history of the event.

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