



Artswells Festival in Wells Showcased Over 80 Artists From Across the Country and Around the World

By Julie Fowler, Artistic Director
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The 2nd *Annual Artswells Festival of All Things Art*, which took place July 29 – Aug 1, 2005 in Wells, showcased a wealth of independent artistic talent from across the globe. Since its first incarnation in 2004, the festival has expanded from one day of workshops and live music with 12 bands, to four days of performances with over 42 groups in performance, musical, literary and visual arts and 25 workshops in all sort of artistic practices.

Art in Wells is certainly swelling and with the success of its second year now under its belt, the festival is set to become a strong annual event for both Island Mountain Arts and the town of Wells.

The festival kicked off Friday, July 29 at the historic Wells Community Hall with the 6th *International One Minute Play Festival*. Celebrity judges, who included the likes of CBC NXNW's **Sheryl MacKay**, North Cariboo MLA **Bob Simpson**, reporter and PG CBC host **Betsy Trumpener** and Prince George Free Press reporter **Autumn MacDonald**, carefully adjudicated the over 15 entries and finally decided on a great Scottish influenced play by two Barkerville actors.

The night continued with a presentation by *Flexible Theatre Puppetry* from Vancouver, two contemporary dance pieces, including one by *Science Friction Productions* that incorporated fantastic live improvised music by a number of the visiting musicians. **Kia Kadiri**, an amazing hip-hop diva from Vancouver, kicked the evening into high gear with her socially conscious unstoppable rhymes. The night finished off with two DJ Teams, **DJ Troll and Audio Hazard** from Grand Forks and **Mike Jevne and Jason Nawatio** from Vancouver.

Live music on the outdoor stage started up Saturday afternoon, as did workshops at the Wells School and at the IMA Gallery. Saturday highlights included the *Songwriters Circle Workshop* at the gallery with **Kevin Kane** (former Grapes of Wrath lead singer from Kelowna), **Reid Jamieson** (folk man from Toronto), **Lisa Poushinsky** (punk rock goddess from Ottawa) and **Rodney Decroo** (award winning poet and lyricist from Vancouver). Other great moments included performances by the bluegrass duo from Golden, the **Billy Grass Goat Boys**; smooth rootsy blues performer, **Courtney Wing** and Band from Montreal; hip-hop group from Prince George, **Versus**; spoken word rhymer from Victoria, **Corwin Fox** and to end off the evening, man of the didgeridoo **Shane Philip** with dancer and trumpet player **Omana** from Telkwa, BC.

As if Friday and Saturday weren't enough bang for your \$30 weekend pass, Sunday showcased an amazing array of talent from local folk man **Murray Boal** of Dragon Mountain Farms to absurdist pop man, **Wax Mannequin** from Toronto, who put in a memorable performance despite having only arrived earlier that day after a whole night on the greyhound and day before on a plane from Toronto. Other notable performances included powerful rock vocalist **Dana Shellmire** and band from Los Angeles, folk hero **Raghu Lokanathan** from Prince George, country crooner **Rae Spoon** from Vancouver and local Wells bands, **Gold Quartz Drive** and **Those Guys**.

Of the 13 workshops that took place on Sunday, some highlights included, the *Freestyle Poetry Workshop* with **Kia Kadiri** and **Corwin Fox**; *The Songwriting Business* with **Courtney Wing** and **Linda McRae** (former bassist of Spirit of the West from Vancouver), and *Didgeridoo Playing for Beginners* with Shane Philip.

The outdoor stage did not stop until Monday afternoon and featured some great performances including **William Kuklis** from Victoria, **Trevor Caswell** from Kamloops and groovy **Snoovy** from Toronto. Monday also featured a host of great poetry readings in the gallery with **Justin Foster**, **David Usher** and more from Prince George and Quesnel.

Granville Johnson, djembe drum man from Prince George, helped wrap up the spectacular four days of festivities with a heart pumping drum performance that lead into the *Monday Mayhem Open Jam Party* that closed off the festival.

Many great things came out of the festival. Not only did it draw performers and festivalgoers from near and far to the tiny Cariboo town of Wells, but it sparked some great creative energies between many artists. Collaboration and networking was at the heart of *Artswells* with many artists from across the province and beyond getting to know each other and jamming together. One great example of this is the meeting of **Rae Spoon** and **Rodney Decroo** who, since the festival, have decided to do an album and go on tour together.

Island Mountain Arts has great plans in the works for the third annual *Artswells Festival* next year (tentative dates August 4 – 7, 2006) and plans for *Artswells* to become the largest independent arts festival in the whole province.

Many thanks to those of you out there that attended *Artswells* this year and to the many people who volunteered endless hours to make the festival a success. We had a number of sponsors and donors, without whom the festival could not have taken place.

Last of all, it was the artists who shone like many apples on fire, to use the words of **Rodney Decroo**. There is an unbelievable amount of artistic talent in this province and it is the mission of the *Artswells Festival* to nurture and showcase that talent, the spin-offs of which might just be enough to cause a landslide of positivity and creativity to flow through our little neck of the woods into the rest of the global village.

If you are an independent artist/musician and interested in being a part of the 2006 *Artswells Festival* please contact me at Island Mountain Arts at media@imarts.com.

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