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## **GRandJazzFest organizers, performers ready for 4<sup>th</sup> annual festival presented by DTE Energy Foundation**

### ***Headliner adds emerging vocalist Melina from San Antonio to lineup***

GRAND RAPIDS, MI – Aug. 11, 2015 –This Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 15 and 16, **GRandJazzFest presented by DTE Energy Foundation** brings 10 diverse jazz performance acts to the Rosa Parks Circle stage in downtown Grand Rapids at West Michigan’s only free, weekend-long jazz festival. The fourth annual festival is expected to draw 12,000 people over the two days.

“As part of our commitment to being a force for growth and prosperity in the communities where we live and serve, the DTE Energy Foundation is proud to sponsor GRandJazzFest, which brings together people from around Michigan for a celebration of arts and culture,” said Faye Nelson, vice president, Public Affairs, DTE Energy and president of the DTE Energy Foundation. “By investing in GRandJazzFest and other arts and cultural institutions that are integral to a strong quality of life, we’re helping to boost local economic development and the economic vitality of the region.”

“Economic development across our state is important to DTE,” said Mark Stiers, president and COO, DTE Gas. “We don’t simply talk about it; we take action. Each year, DTE invests millions of dollars in West

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Michigan by supporting local suppliers. GRandJazzFest is one more way for us to show our support for the region and the 400,000 customers we serve here.”

This year’s headline act brings together three internationally acclaimed musicians – Paul Brown and Nate Harasim with special guest Deon Yates – under the billing “The Producers.” Anchored by veteran contemporary guitarist and Grammy-Award-winner Paul Brown from California, the trio is high-energy jazz.

The headliners just announced that emerging artist Melina (<http://www.melinamusic.net/>) will perform with them at GRandJazzFest. The San Antonio, Texas-based singer emerged on the national stage after several years of headlining festivals and clubs in her hometown. She brings pop, jazz, R&B, rock and gospel to performances. Brown – who has worked with such jazz vocal greats as Luther Vandross, Al Jarreau, George Benson and Jonathan Butler – has helped to launch Melina’s career.

“It’s always a thrill to discover new talent,” Brown said. “When it comes to vocalists, it’s rare to find someone like Melina ... She sent me some of her early demos ... I heard a little Linda Ronstadt and some Adele in a voice that’s seriously as big as Texas.”

Harasim, a Grammy nominee and Soul Train Award recipient, is a composer, keyboardist and multi-instrumentalist from Michigan whose latest album, *Rush*, debuted on the Billboard charts at No. 17.

“This will be my first time performing at GRandJazzFest but I can tell you, the word is out in the jazz community that this festival is one of the best!” Harasim said.

Saxophonist Deon Yates returns to the Rosa Parks Circle stage – he performed at the 2013 festival – as a special guest of The Producers. After going solo in 2009, Detroit-based Yates is fast becoming one of the most sought-after emerging talents in jazz, recently signing with Woodward Avenue Records and set to launch a new album later this summer.

“It’s an amazing event that brings all kinds of people together for the love of great music. I can’t wait to perform again at GRandJazzFest!” Yates said.

Nine additional artists and bands perform over the course of the free two-day festival, bringing all kinds of



jazz music to the Rosa Parks Circle stage, including big band, swing, Latin, Afro-Cuban, straight-ahead and more. Local favorites Walt Gutowski & The Bridge Street Band, Grupo Ayé and Grand Rapids Jazz Orchestra with Edye Evans Hyde will perform, as will Steve Cole, Mike Frost Project 2.0, Bryan Lubeck, Big Band Nouveau, Michael Manson, Brian Simpson and Jackiem Joyner. The complete schedule and performer bios are at <http://grandjazzfest.org/>.

“This will be my first time in Grand Rapids, so I couldn't be more thrilled about performing at this exciting festival,” Keyboardist Brian Simpson said. He will perform on stage with Joyner, an acclaimed saxophonist. “Both Jackiem and I like to bring our music ‘to the people,’ and we’re anticipating tremendous support of what this great city and the sponsors have been so generous to provide ... free jazz!”

2015 performer Bryan Lubeck concurs. “For an artist, it’s not just about the money – we love to play, and play for great crowds. Each festival has a personality of its own, and word travels fast among musicians ... I heard this was a festival you ‘didn't want to miss’ – then I got the call to play and thought WOW!” said Lubeck, a Spanish guitarist who performs at GRandJazzFest on Sunday. “I can't wait to play for this crowd ... the audience, that's what it's all about, and I've heard this audience is amazing. Music is a two-way communication and the better the audience, the better musicians play ... this festival brings the best of both worlds together and creates magic. I also love the variety – no matter what styles you like, the lineup assures you'll walk away whistling a new favorite tune!”

In addition to performing, Lubeck and sponsors Godin and Cordoba guitar companies will be hosting a Family Guitar Tent at GRandJazzFest where people can try out difference types of guitars and enter a drawing to win a free guitar at the festival.

More information on GRandJazzFest can be found at [www.grandjazzfest.org](http://www.grandjazzfest.org), and at the festival's Facebook and Twitter sites – [www.facebook.com/grandjazzfest](http://www.facebook.com/grandjazzfest) and [www.twitter.com/grandjazzfest](http://www.twitter.com/grandjazzfest).

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#### **About GRandJazzFest**

GRandJazzFest presented by DTE Energy Foundation is a community event of the nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization “GR and Jazz” founded in 2012, with the purpose of promoting and bringing awareness of jazz and related arts to new and diverse audiences through educational programs and community events. GRandJazzFest 2015 is a FREE weekend-long event that runs Saturday, Aug. 15, from noon until 10 p.m., and Sunday, Aug. 16, from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m., featuring jazz artists who are primarily Michigan-based. GRandJazzFest brings together notable jazz performers as well as highlights emerging artists for diverse

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audiences. GRandJazzFest is being held at Rosa Parks Circle, a central location in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, where attendees can enjoy music, support local businesses and visit other Grand Rapids attractions. The festival is FREE. More information at [www.grandjazzfest.org](http://www.grandjazzfest.org).

#### **About the DTE Energy Foundation**

The DTE Energy Foundation is the philanthropic arm of DTE Energy, continuing the legacy of community support and involvement of its electric and natural gas utilities, which serve 2.1 million electric customers in Southeast Michigan and 1.2 million natural gas customers across Michigan. As one of Michigan's leading corporate citizens, DTE Energy is a force for growth and prosperity in the 450 Michigan communities it serves in a variety of ways, including philanthropy, volunteerism and economic progress. <http://www.dteenergy.com/foundation>.