

LAKE OF STARS

MALAWI ARTS FESTIVAL

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VENUE AND FIRST ARTISTS ANNOUNCED FOR THIS YEAR'S LAKE OF STARS FESTIVAL

Malawi's biggest arts event, the award-winning Lake of Stars Festival, is returning for the 10th edition in 2015 and will take place in the stunning surroundings of Sunbird Nkopola Lodge in Mangochi. The event was recently rated amongst the world's most beautiful festivals by Gigwise.com and has been described by Capital Radio Malawi as 'An eclectic fusion of the arts on the sunny shores of the warm heart of Africa'.

The 2015 Lake of Stars festival will be held on the last weekend of September, 25th – 27th, and promises even more of the high quality entertainment that has seen it develop into a globally respected event. Spread across three days and three stages, the line up will feature a wealth of talent from Malawi, Africa and beyond. Alongside the main festival at Nkopola Lodge, free outreach activities will also take place in neighboring Chipoka Village for the local community.

For the first time, the festival will feature a Nigerian artist, *Ric Hassani*, whose huge hit 'Dance Dance Baby Dance' can be heard blasting from every club, minibus and local radio across Malawi. Among the Malawian artists already confirmed to perform are hip-hop favourite, *Gwamba*; recipient of the recent Malawi Musician's Union award for best R n B artist, *Danny Kalima*; and up and coming singer-songwriter *George Kalukusha*. International flavor will come from cutting edge Scottish trio *Young Fathers*, winners of the prestigious 2014 UK Mercury Prize and Scottish album of the year award, helping to further the cultural connections between Scotland and Malawi. Many more acts will be announced over the next few months.

In addition to a strong musical line up, festival patrons will also enjoy a diverse selection of other entertainment, ranging from poetry, theatre, dance and art to a new interactive science display area. The festival will also continue its family-friendly ethos, with children's activities and free tickets for those aged 12 or under. For those wanting a permanent reminder of the experience, Lake of Stars merchandise and other local arts and crafts will be available.

Last year's festival saw a number of local and international brands partnering with the event. This trend is set to continue in 2015 with support confirmed from the country's national airline carrier, Malawian Airlines; Multichoice; Continental Outdoors and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, all of whom were involved in 2014. A new partnership has also been established with solar energy social enterprise SunnyMoney, who will be working with Lake of Stars to illuminate parts of the festival using their solar lights. After the festival, these will be donated to the local community in Chipoka Village.

Lake of Stars Director Will Jameson said:

"We're excited to be launching this year's Lake of Stars Festival with the backing of a number of our sponsors and partners from 2014, alongside new partners. To run the event to world-class standards is a huge undertaking, and one that wouldn't be possible without their generous support. There are still opportunities to partner with Lake of Stars and reach our media audience of 600 million, so if any companies are interested please do get in touch.

Last year's festival was our biggest and best to date, and this year we want to deliver an even better experience for all those who are involved. We are extremely grateful for the love and support that's shown to Lake of Stars each year by the people of Malawi and we want to continue raising the bar for live events within the country."

A limited number of three-day tickets for this year's festival are on sale from Friday March 6th at the Super Early Bird discounted price of K19,000. In Lilongwe, these tickets are available from Papaya Café in the Game complex and in Blantyre, from Café Ameca at Cure. K1,000 from each of this ticket type will be donated to support flood relief efforts in Mangochi. Further pre-sale tickets will be released for the festival at a later date, with plenty of opportunities to buy tickets at a discounted price before the full entrance fee applies.

Lake of Stars has grown from humble beginnings since its inception in 2003 at Chinteche Inn to become a high profile multi-arts event. Frequently recognised as a leading player in the African festivals market, Lake of Stars offers Malawian artists an unrivalled opportunity to showcase their talents on an international stage. According to the Nation newspaper, it is 'Bigger, better...boosting the economy through events tourism' and South Africa's Mail & Guardian says, 'Lake of Stars has become much more than a music festival, it is a celebration of artistic expression, and increasingly, a platform to launch young Malawian talent'.

In the months leading up to the festival, Lake of Stars will be holding more cultural events and activities across the country than ever before. Plans include a Mzuzu Sunset Sessions event in April, an international film festival in Lilongwe in May, a children's festival in June and branching out into sports-tourism through involvement with the Mount Mulanje Porters Race and Malawi's Olympic Team in July.

For further information and announcements about Lake of Stars, visit www.lakeofstars.org, follow us on www.twitter.com/lakeofstars or www.facebook.com/lakeofstars.

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Notes to editors

- Nkopola Lodge is located in the southern lakeshore area near the town of Mangochi with a good range of accommodation in the area from on-site camping to beachside hotels
For queries about festival accommodation please email festivaltravel@lakeofstars.org
- 10 festivals have taken place in Malawi so far and over 100 events in the UK and Africa since 2003
- Lake of Stars has supported a number of other arts projects in Malawi including the Malawi Musician's Union awards, Tumaini Festival, Likoma Fest, Sand Fest, Blantyre Arts Festival and the Ndife Amodzi concerts
- Lake of Stars has donated a state-of-the-art Funktion One sound system and Midas desk for shared use by music charity Rhythm of Life in Lilongwe and runs the Music of Malawi website - a comprehensive archive of Malawian artists: www.musicofmalawi.wordpress.com

- The LOS project has promoted cultural-tourism and Malawi's creative industries for 13 years. The Malawi government has recognised the crucial part that LOS can play in the country's economy.
- The project has exposed over 800 million people to Malawi through its media coverage, notably on global networks (BBC, CNN, MTV, DSTV) and online.
- It has been contributing to the development of tourism and the arts in Malawi since 2003 and is estimated to have generated over \$3.25 million spend in Malawi
- Will Jameson first visited Malawi for six months in 1998 when he worked in Dwangwa as a volunteer with the Wildlife Society. During that time he travelled to Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique. On returning to England Will took back with him a souvenir – an empty carton of 'Chibuku Shake Shake' beer. Halfway through university at Liverpool John Moores he decided to start a club night with friends Damo Jones, Charlene McDaid and Rich McGinnis. They named the night after the Malawian beer and went on to win Best UK Club in the Mixmag Awards in 2004. The club gave Will the contacts and experience he needed to develop the LOS festival idea.