



HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES AND NOMINEES ANNOUNCED TODAY!

(July 31 – Edmonton) – At a press conference held in today, the Western Canadian Music Alliance announced the nominees for the 6th Annual Western Canadian Music Awards to be held in Edmonton, October 16 – 19.

With representation from the prairie provinces, BC and the Yukon, it is once again clear that the music industry is alive and kickin' and full of world-class talent.

Nominations from Alberta (25), British Columbia (42), Manitoba (19), and Saskatchewan (9) make up the contenders in 19 artistic categories. A complete list of nominees follows.

Also announced today were the latest inductees into the **Western Canadian Music Alliance Hall of Fame**, Edmonton native, **Tommy Banks** and Vancouver band, **Spirit of the West**.

Tommy Banks is well-known to Canadians as one of our most accomplished and versatile entertainers, and an international standard-bearer for Canadian culture.

From 1968 – 1983, he was the host of “The Tommy Banks Show”, originally broadcast on CBC Television and eventually seen through international syndication. He has conducted almost every major professional orchestra in Canada and has been an accompanist/arranger/producer for hundreds of well-known performers (including prairie big-leaguers PJ Perry, and Big Miller). He has been the musical director for the 1978 Commonwealth Games, the 1983 World University Games, Expo '86, and the 1988 XV Olympic Winter Games. In 1984, Mr. Banks' 17-member jazz band was the first to tour China in 35 years.

A Juno and Gemini award-winning performer, **Tommy Banks** has been recognized with an Honourary Diploma of Music from Grant MacEwan College, an Honourary Doctor of Laws from the University of Alberta, made an Officer of the Order of Canada, and awarded the Alberta Order of Excellence. He was the founding chairman of the Alberta Foundation of the Arts, and in May 2001, **Senator Banks** was appointed vice-chair of the Prime Minister's Caucus Task Force on Urban issues, a task force dedicated to strengthening the quality of life

in large urban centres.

Tommy Banks's contributions and pioneering effort have resulted directly in the flourishing recording, arts, cultural industries in the province of Alberta and across the country. He continues to be an integral part of our industry today.

In 1983, a trio began paying their dues in tiny pubs and clubs and called themselves "Evesdropper". Twenty-five years later, **Spirit of the West**, with their blend of folk, rock, Brit pop and Celtic influences, are recognized world-wide as one of Canada's most successful alternative acts.

Releasing their debut self-titled album in 1984, Geoffrey Kelly, John Mann, and J Knutsen were soon signed to Edmonton's own independent label Stony Plain Records. *Tripping up the Stairs* came out in 1988, and with the departure of Knutsen, saw multi-instrumentalist Hugh McMillan arriving on the scene. *Labour Day* was recorded and released in 1988, and a major UK tour ensued. With some personnel rearranging, the four-piece SOTW, including Linda McRae on accordion, toured their first major label release (*Save This House*, 1990, Warner Music Canada) in Canada and opened for The Wonder Stuff abroad.

Realizing the 'need for speed' SOTW, hired drummer Vince Ditrich to give them a bit more power, and they recorded *Go Figure* (1991), followed by *Faithlift* (1993), the album that finally gave Spirit of the West the commercial radio air play they deserved – and the album hit platinum sales.

Following their venture into performing with orchestras across Canada, McRae left to pursue her solo career. Two more albums followed before the band took a small hiatus. While continuing to perform live as SOTW, founding members Mann and Kelly and drummer Ditrich released solo albums, and they all pursued other interests in the music and entertainment industry to much success.

On July 15, 2008, the band released *Spirituality: The Consummate Compendium*, a two cd comprehensive collection celebrating 25 years as **Spirit of the West**.

Both **Tommy Banks** and **Spirit of the West** will be recognized and inducted during the 6th annual Western Canadian Music Awards ceremony, to be held on Sunday, October 19 in Edmonton. Tickets go on sale August 15th.

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For media inquiries, please contact:

Aimée Hill, WCMA Publicist

780.289.6395

aimeehill@shaw.ca