

# WXPn XPONENTIAL MUSIC FESTIVAL 2010

## About the Artists

### FRIDAY 7/16

#### CAMDEN COUNTY RIVER STAGE

##### **Alejandro Escovedo**

Alejandro Escovedo began playing guitar in college and hasn't stopped since. With the influence of his father's mariachi career and older brothers playing with bands Azteca and Santana, Alejandro was destined for musical stardom. After forming several bands around the country, including one with two of his brothers, Alejandro decided to try it solo. His 1992 debut *Gravity*, won rave reviews and national awards leading up to the honor of *No Depression* magazine labeling him "Artist of the Decade" in the 1990s. Now with a 14-year solo career under his belt, he tours alone as well as with a rock combo (at one time toured with his 13-piece Alejandro Escovedo Orchestra).

**Current Town:** San Antonio, TX

**Recent Release:** *Street Songs of Love* (Due June 29, 2010)

**Label:** Concord Records

##### **Grace Potter and the Nocturnals**

Blues-rock quintet Grace Potter and the Nocturnals have a passion for music from decades past. Their inspired blend of Americana, rock 'n' roll, gospel, and blues stirs up a sense of nostalgia for the music of the 60s and 70s without losing their footing in the present. And with Potter's vocal style drawing comparisons to legends like Janis Joplin and Bonnie Raitt, it's no surprise the band's first two major releases, 2005's *Nothing But the Water* and 2007's *This is Somewhere*, received hordes of critical acclaim. Their latest eponymous release unleashes the full potential of this great American rock band upon the world.

**Current Town:** Waitsville, VT

**Recent Release:** *Grace Potter & the Nocturnals* (June 2010)

**Label:** Hollywood Records

##### **Big Head Todd and the Monsters**

Known for their powerful live performances and original sound, Big Head Todd and the Monsters formed in 1986 at the University of Colorado. Over the next few years, the band amassed a dedicated following throughout the Mountain States, gradually expanding their fan base to the West and eventually, throughout the country. By the time they released their platinum-selling album, *Sister Sweetly*, in 1993, the four-piece had become one of the most successful bands in America.

Touring and releasing more recorded and live albums throughout the next 17 years, Todd and the Monsters today enjoy legions of loyal fans who eagerly await their show coming through town. Their latest is 2007's *All the Love You Need*, released on their own label, Big Records.

**Current Town:** Boulder, CO

**Recent Release:** *All the Love You Need* (2007)

**Label:** Big Records

## JERSEYARTS.COM MARINA STAGE

### Toy Soldiers

Philadelphia's own Toy Soldiers have grown from a tossed together duo started by primary singer/songwriter Rson Gallo in 2007 to an everchanging sized, wildly energetic group of friends and musicians that wander freely in and out of the roots of American music. The band fluently jumps around the spectrum from down and dirty blues rock n' roll to harmony driven traditional country tunes with a wide array of instruments and a stockpile of lead and backup singers. Their first album *Whisper Down the Lane* was released on MAD Dragon records in May. WXPN's Bruce Warren describes it as "a righteous collection of rootsy, jangly, scraggly, soulful indie inspired songs that bring to mind Shangri-La era Kinks, Nashville Skyline-era Dylan, Bright Eyes and the Black Keys, The Coasters and Carl Perkins. Rock it.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Whisper Down the Lane*

**Label:** MAD Dragon

### Dutch

Kevin Baldwin, better known as Stoupe the Enemy of Mankind from the hip-hop group Jedi Mind Tricks, teams up with vocalist-lyricist Liz Fullerton in the band Dutch. Based in Philadelphia, this musically eclectic duo combines touches of jazz and hip-hop along with some even more surprising hints of orchestral undertones. The album released by the team, *A Bright Cold Day*, embodies the best of both worlds – Stoupe's vast musical knowledge and orchestrations and Fullerton's gorgeous voice.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *A Bright Cold Day*

**Label:** Enemy Soil Records

### Ben Arnold

Philadelphia native Ben Arnold has experienced the ups and downs of the music industry while capturing the heart of many folk rock fans; he has produced and financed his own recordings but has also explored the world of major record labels. He has toured as a solo musician and with a band throughout Europe and the United States. An artistic maverick, he is currently signed to the independent record label Ropeadope Records as the label's first-ever singer-songwriter. His

most recent music endeavor, *Nevermind My Blues*, combines melodic creativity with poetic lyrics.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Nevermind My Blues* (2007)

**Label:** Ropeadope Records

### Free Energy

Philadelphia's own Free Energy are taking the rock world by storm in 2010. Fusing elements of 70's glam, power pop, bubble gum, and arena rock, the band unabashedly embraces poppy hooks and boy-girl romance, wooing critics and fans with their exuberant and joyous take on life. That take won the attention of LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy, who produced the band's debut album, *Stuck on Nothing*, for DFA Records. The album's spring arrival saw the band quickly catapulted to the national stage, with stellar SXSW performances cementing what fans knew all along: Free Energy's "hopelessly hopeful" music is not only jam-packed with fun – it's also really good.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Stuck on Nothing* (March 2010)

**Label:** DFA Records

## SATURDAY 7/17

### CAMDEN COUNTY RIVER STAGE

#### Harper Blynn

Formerly known as Pete and J, Harper Blynn is a New York four-piece that loves pop music. Called by *Paste Magazine* their #1 discovery at 2009's CMJ festival, the band and their striking four-part harmonies have captivated audiences, as their loyal fan base in NYC's Lower East Side attests. There, Harper Blynn perfected their sound with regular performances throughout the neighborhood. The buzz from New York fueled tours across the US and the UK, propelling Harper Blynn into 2010 with the *NY Post* naming them one of six bands "ready to pop."

**Current Town:** New York, NY

**Recent Release:** *Loneliest Generation* (May 2010)

**Label:** Baby Jackal

#### Nicole Atkins

Nicole Atkins taught herself to play the guitar at the age of 13 after chancing upon one in her attic. The Neptune, New Jersey native and former XPN Artist to Watch had already mastered the piano (at age 9), and had an early appreciation for iconic artists like Johnny Cash and Robert Plant. Those early influences drove her into New York City's anti-folk scene in the mid '00s, where she found like-minded musicians and a growing audience. A bidding war resulted in

her signing with Columbia Records (who she has since severed ties with), who released her debut, *Neptune City*. A long-awaited follow up, *Mondo Amore*, is on the way.

**Current Town:** Brooklyn, NY

**Recent Release:** *Neptune City* (October 2007)

**Label:** Columbia

### **The Walkmen**

The Walkmen emerged in 2002 with their debut album, *Everyone Who Pretended to Like Me is Gone*. Marked by the use of vintage instruments, sparse rhythm sections, atmospheric guitars, and howling vocals, the album was hailed by critics as the arrival of a unique and innovative artist and firmly established the band's international profile. Their successive follow-ups, *Bow + Arrow* and *A Hundred Miles Off*, continued to raise the band's profile, while 2008's *You & Me* was lauded as the pinnacle of their work thus far. 2010 finds the four-piece preparing to release their eagerly-awaited fifth LP on Fat Possum Records.

**Current Town:** New York, NY & Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *You & Me* (August 2008)

**Label:** Gigantic

### **Yo La Tengo**

For more than two decades, Hoboken-based alt-rockers Yo La Tengo have held listeners and critics alike in a musical trance, and in a constant state of anticipation for each new release. The three-piece, comprised of married couple Ira Kaplan and Georgia Hubley, and bassist James McNew, have built a reputation as one of the most consistently innovative acts of the last decades for their ability to fold a multitude of eclectic styles and genres into their own idiosyncratic aesthetic. Over the years, they've lent original songs to documentaries and film soundtracks, and played unrehearsed covers at listener request for radio station WFMU fundraisers. Their newest album and twelfth release, *Popular Songs*, came out to glowing reviews last September.

**Current Town:** Hoboken, NJ

**Recent Release:** *Popular Songs*

**Label:** Matador

### **Felice Brothers**

Hailing from the Catskills Mountains The Felice Brothers includes three brothers and a bassist friend Christmas. The sound of these contemporary folk singer-songwriters is reminiscent of music from Townes Van Zandt, the Avett Brothers, and '60s folk-rockers like Bob Dylan and the Band. The group got its start playing in New York City subway stations and over the years, the band has toured with the likes of Levon Helm and Bright Eyes. When dubbed WXPN's Artist to Watch in December 2008 XPN Program Director Bruce Warren said "We've fallen in love with The Felice Brothers' raggedy country-folk-rock and so have our listeners...The Felice Brothers

bring their own rough and tumble love of American roots music to the mix including gospel and blues."

**Current Town:** New York City

**Recent Release:** *Mix Tape* (March 2010)

**Label:** New York Pro

### **Rosanne Cash**

The daughter of country superstar Johnny Cash, Rosanne Cash has built her own reputation through over thirty years as a seminal recording artist. Mixing blues, folk, pop, and rock into her own breed of country, she has received multiple Grammy nominations and released a slew of number-one hits, earning the title of Billboard's top singles artist in 1988. Staying busy in the years since, she's released six albums since 1990, including her latest, *The List*. A collection of country songs handed down to her by her father, the album features appearances from legends Bruce Springsteen, Elvis Costello, and more.

**Current Town:** New York, NY

**Recent Release:** *The List* (October 2009)

**Label:** Manhattan Records

## **JERSEYARTS.COM MARINA STAGE**

### **Birdie Busch**

Philly sweetheart Birdie Busch is undoubtedly one of the area's most promising folk talents. Trading in her day job as a Center City restaurant hostess for a career in music, she released her debut LP, *The Ways We Try*, in 2006 to critical acclaim from *Village Voice*, *CMJ*, and *VH1* among others. Her early success was carried further by 2007's *Penny Arcade*, a musical manifesto for Busch that showcased her mastery of upbeat arrangements and honest lyrical style. Now firmly established as an XPN Local favorite, the Americana songstress released her latest, *Pattern of Saturn*, in 2009.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Pattern of Saturn* (2009)

**Label:** Monotask Music

### **Bobby Long**

British singer-songwriter Bobby Long has been writing his finely-crafted songs since taking up the guitar at age 16. After relocating from the countryside of South West England, he became a fixture at London's open-mic nights while attending university there. Long's intensely personal songs resonate with audiences (not surprisingly, he credits Bob Dylan, Elliott Smith and Leonard Cohen as key influences), expanding his fan base exponentially during the massive six-month 2009 Dangerous Summer tour that comprised over 100 shows in cities across the U.S. and Canada. The 10-song *Dirty Pond Songs* CD he recorded in his London bedroom is only available at his shows. The CD's "Left to Lie" topped the iTunes

Unsigned chart and climbed to No. 8 on the Folk chart. Other popular tracks are the atmospheric story-song "The Bounty of Mary Jane," which is also available from iTunes, and the ballad "Who Have You Been Loving," which has received U.S. radio airplay resulting in his appearance on NPR's "World Cafe" national broadcast. He released a collection of live performances from the Dangerous Summer 2009 tour, featuring the single "My Darling Belle," which reached #2 on the iTunes Singer-Songwriter chart. In April, 2010, Bobby Long signed a label deal with ATO Records (founded by Dave Matthews), which will release his first studio album-produced by Liam Watson (Grammy®-winner for Elephant by The White Stripes').

**Current Town:** London, UK

**Recent Release:** *Dirty Pond Songs* (August 2009)

**Label:** Self-released

### Joshua James

Folk singer Joshua James has only been writing songs for six years, but the 25 year-old Midwesterner bears the weight of wisdom beyond his years. With maturely intimate songwriting and a style encompassing folk, country, world beat, and southern rock, James' debut album, 2008's *The Sun Is Always Brighter*, reached #1 on the iTunes Folk chart and elicited praise from critics as some of the best recent work to come from an unknown artist. After touring with the likes of John Mayer, David Gray, and Ani DiFranco, James released *Build Me This* in 2009 to even greater critical acclaim.

**Current Town:** Lincoln, Nebraska

**Recent Release:** *Build Me This* (September 2009)

**Label:** Intelligent Noise

### Diane Birch

Classically-trained pianist turned singer-songwriter Diane Birch is a popular new voice on the music scene, having toured with Nick Jonas in 2010 and her song "Valentino" featured in the 2010 film *Valentine's Day*. Birch had intended to become a film-score composer and pianist but later found singing and songwriting. Her eclectic musical style is influenced by everything from soul to rock, but her biggest inspiration can be attributed to the church hymns she listened to while growing up in a missionary family that traveled around the world, from Australia to Zimbabwe.

**Current Town:** New York City, New York

**Recent Release:** *Bible Belt* (2009)

**Label:** S-Curve Records

### Robert Francis

Raised in a house full of musicians, taking lessons as a teen from Red Hot Chili Peppers' guitarist John Frusciante, and dropping out of high school at seventeen to record his debut album, Robert Francis has dedicated his life to music. The lush, heart-ache fueled Americana found on his first album, *One By One*, established

Francis as a young folk prodigy, earning him a Shortlist Music Prize nomination in 2007 and a contract with Atlantic Records. His first release for the label, *Before Nightfall*, put out last August, features the same poignant and moving songwriting of Francis's debut but grown into a greater maturity and confidence as well as a great, full-band sound.

**Current Town:** Los Angeles, CA

**Recent Release:** *Before Nightfall*

**Label:** Atlantic

### **Ben Vaughn**

Veteran producer, composer, and performer Ben Vaughn has penned themes for such TV hits as *That 70s Show* and *3rd Rock From The Sun*, but his career is by no means defined by his Hollywood work. With a near 30 years of experience as a successful recording artist, Vaughn is perhaps best known for his legendary 1997 album *Rambler '65* – an album recorded entirely in his car. Having worked extensively with Alex Chilton (Big Star), Alan Vega (Suicide), Ween, and many others, Vaughn continues to record and perform in addition to hosting his weekly radio show, “The Many Moods of Ben Vaughn” – featured on WXPN every Saturday from 5-6pm.

**Current Town:** Venice, CA

**Recent Release:** *Designs in Music* (May 2006)

**Label:** Soundstage 15

## **SUNDAY 7/18**

### **CAMDEN COUNTY RIVER STAGE**

#### **Blood Feathers**

Born with a mission to perpetuate America's most important export, rock 'n' roll, Blood Feathers began in 2005 as a collaboration between Ben Dickey and Drew Mills. Their first record, *Curse and Praise*, was hailed by critics who heard it as one for the ages, but received little attention beyond small circles. Luckily, their highly melodic breed of 60s and early 70s guitar rock caught the attention of Philebrity, the popular media outlet for all things Philadelphia. In January, the brand new Philebrity Label released the newly expanded group's second LP, *Goodness Gracious*, to the delight of local audiences eager for more of the band's timeless sound.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Goodness Gracious* (January 2010)

**Label:** Philebrity Label

#### **Dawes**

XPN Artist to Watch Dawes released their debut LP *North Hills* in the fall of 2009, but it was the spring of 2010 that saw the band really begin to break through. Fueled by their success at March's SXSW, the LA area four-piece is making a name for themselves with soul-bearing and gritty live performances, blending classic 70's folk-rock with contemporary embellishments and rich folk-pop harmonies. And though Dawes' members have yet to emerge from their early 20s, their music is surprisingly mature, firmly establishing the band as a musical force to be recognized in the years to come.

**Current Town:** North Hills, CA

**Recent Release:** *North Hills* (September, 2009)

**Label:** ATO Records

### **Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros**

Ten-plus member-strong indie folk troupe Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros caused quite a stir in 2009. Their debut LP, *Up From Below*, earned the sixth spot in XPN's Year in Review Top Albums countdown, and listeners crowned their single "Home" as the best song of the year. Led by former Ima Robot frontman Alex Ebert (aka Edward Sharpe), the group's organic, folk-revivalist sound masterfully evokes the aesthetics of the late 70s with a dreamscape of layered instrumentation and time-transcendent imagery. The inspired energy of their performances and the joyous celebration in their songs has left eager fans hungry for more from this LA band.

**Current Town:** Los Angeles, CA

**Recent Release:** *Up From Below* (July 2009)

**Label:** Rough Trade

### **Cowboy Junkies**

Dubbing themselves the Cowboy Junkies simply because the name had a ring to it, guitarist/songwriter Michael Timmins, bassist Alan Anton, drummer Peter Timmins, and vocalist Margo Timmins broke onto the national music scene with their blues-inspired debut album, *Whites Off Earth Now!!* Since then, the band has recorded a total of 20 albums, with their newest, *Renmin Park*, hitting streets in May. The Cowboy Junkies' original sound was rooted in traditional country, blues, and folk, but today they are best known as a critically-acclaimed pop, folk, and roots music band that has also gained the attention and praise of the alternative rock community.

**Current Town:** Toronto, Canada

**Recent Release:** *Renmin Park – Nomad Series, Volume 1* (May 2010)

**Label:** Latent Recordings

### **Robert Randolph and The Family Band**

Robert Randolph originally learned to play pedal steel guitar during church services in Orange, NJ, later transforming his musical style to a blend of funk, soul and rock. Performing with his cousins, bassist Danyel Morgan and drummer

Marcus Randolph, Robert Randolph And The Family Band are known for their legendary live performances featuring Robert's "string wizardry" and "jaw-dropping pyrotechnics." He has redefined the pedal steel guitar giving it a refreshing, multicultural facelift. His highly anticipated new release, *We Walk This Road* was produced by famed T-Bone Burnett and features Ben Harper and Leon Russell.

**Current Town:** Morristown, NJ

**Recent Release:** *We Walk This Road* (Due June 22, 2010)

**Label:** Warner Bros.

### Dr. Dog

Psych-pop five-piece Dr. Dog has long been a Philadelphia favorite, but the last few years have seen the rest of the nation take notice as these hometown heroes cement their place amongst America's indie rock greats. Since Jim James hand-picked them to tour with My Morning Jacket back in 2004, Dr. Dog has gradually built their national audience through captivating, energetic live shows and their timeless sound, an often joyous combination of classic rock and 90's lo-fi aesthetics. 2010's *Shame, Shame* marks a darker lyrical turn and more varied sonic exploration for the group, but remains true to their defining aesthetic: celebrating life.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Shame, Shame* (April 2010)

**Label:** ANTI- Records

## JERSEYARTS.COM MARINA STAGE

### The Great Unknown

Playing quietly so as not to wake their elderly neighbors, The Great Unknown began in a grandfather's apartment surrounded by family pictures and antique furniture. There, singer Todd Henkin and guitarist Matt Goldsborough worked through the winter, fostering a creative partnership that would go on to become a five-person band. The idea was to create tightly crafted songs that had easily relatable stories and melodies, and on *Tonight Let's Pretend*, their debut album, they do just that. Blending influences as diverse as Woody Guthrie, the moon, Isiah Zagar, Japanese fighting fish, the unconscious, and Hank Aaron, The Great Unknown are an American rock band unique to themselves.

**Current Town:** Philadelphia, PA

**Recent Release:** *Tonight Let's Pretend*

**Label:** Self-Released

### Fool's Gold

Western pop sensibility meets African melody and rhythm in Los Angeles collective Fool's Gold frenetic yet soulful songs. Drawing inspiration from wide-ranging sources like Congolese and Malian music, kraut-rock, Motown soul, and modern

indie-rock, the result is a danceable collage of sounds new and old, foreign and familiar. Sharing one another's eclectic tastes, vocalist and bassist Luke Top and lead guitarist Lewis Pesacov formed the group first as a side-project, but it quickly grew to a troupe of eleven. Now a tight, colorful flurry of strings, brass, wind and percussion, the group's explosive live performance has earned them touring spots alongside the diverse company of Cat Power, Local Natives and a Senegalese kora master Youssoupha Sidibe.

**Current Town:** Los Angeles, CA

**Recent Release:** *Fool's Gold* (September 2009)

**Label:** IAMSOUND

### **The Holmes Brothers**

Since their beginnings in 1967, the multi-Blues Music Award-winning Holmes Brothers have blended the blues, gospel, soul, R&B, country and rock 'n' roll to win over a devoted base of fans and fellow musicians. The trio – brothers Sherman and Wendell Holmes and "brother-in-spirit" Popsy Dixon – create stirring three-part harmonies and have worked with a seemingly endless list of legends, including Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Peter Gabriel, Bruce Springsteen, Odetta and many more. *Feed My Soul* is the band's 10<sup>th</sup> album and their 4<sup>th</sup> on Alligator Records, and was released in March.

**Current Town:** New York, NY

**Recent Release:** *Feed My Soul* (March 2010)

**Label:** Alligator Records

### **These United States**

Called by XPN's own Bruce Warren "one of American rock's best kept secrets," These United States have slowly built their national reputation by relentlessly touring the country and forsaking rent money to pay for gas. With three albums under their belt in only two years, the dedicated troubadours blend influences from a myriad of influences to create their own breed of indie rock-fused Americana. Their dedication is paying off, as the musical growth of their latest, *Everything Touches Everything*, has won the band greater critical praise and an ever-expanding fan base smitten with their infectious energy.

**Current Town:** Lexington, KY & Washington, DC

**Recent Release:** *Everything Touches Everything* (September 2009)

**Label:** United Interests

### **Amy Correia**

Growing up in Lakeville, MA, Amy Correia developed a love for music while listening to the radio, drawing inspiration from Queen, Bob Dylan, and Sammy Davis Jr. However, it was during a temporary break in her career at Barnard College that she discovered her talented and ferocious voice and songwriting. She was recently featured on *Good Morning America*, *Ellen*, *The Today Show*, and

CBS *Saturday Edition* for her the release of her third album, which was produced as a result of funding from her fans.

**Recent Release:** *You Go Your Way* (Summer 2010)

**Label:** Independent

### **Earl Greyhound**

Earl Greyhound began in 2002 as a collaboration between songwriters Matt Whyte and Kamara Thomas, but the innovative blues-rock duo quickly expanded into a trio as they began to play increasingly often throughout NYC. Joined by second drummer Ricc Sheriden shortly after completing 2006's *Soft Targets*, the band began to amass hoards of critical praise from *The New Yorker*, *SPIN*, *Rolling Stone*, *Pitchfork* and more for their unique blend of rock influences from 70's on. Now after four years of touring North America and Japan, the group is set to release their much-anticipated sophomore LP, *Suspicious Package*.

**Current Town:** Brooklyn, NY

**Recent Release:** *Suspicious Package* (April 2010)

**Label:** Hawk Race Records