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High Res Images available upon request

Artrain adds Mr. B's Joybox Express to its Roster 2,000 Mile Mississippi River Ride Planned for 2014



Ann Arbor, MI – Artrain, Inc. is adding **Mr. B's Joybox Express Mississippi River Ride**, an ambitious 2,000-mile bicycle-powered piano tour in 2014, to its project roster.

Mr. B's Joybox Express was created by the renowned jazz and blues pianist and amateur athlete, Mark "Mr. B" Braun to bring attention to and raise awareness of the positive effects of arts and athletics.

Since 1971, Artrain has delivered world-class arts and cultural exhibitions and education programs to under-resourced communities throughout the United States. Winner of the National Medal for Museum Service, Artrain's mission is to deliver discovery and – through the galvanizing power of arts and culture – to transform lives, organizations and communities. Originally using America's rail system to deliver art exhibitions, Artrain now uses a variety of methods to deliver cultural outreach programs of all types – visual and performing arts, cultural, history and science – to communities with limited access to these types of programs.

"Mr. B's Joybox Express is a great addition to Artrain's roster," said Deb Polich, Artrain president/CEO. "We adore the coupling of music and athletics. While our mission has been to deliver great art programs, we believe that one of our greatest services has been offering people opportunities to discover their own passions. We've always believed it was an additive process of arts AND sports, science, math etc. rather than a choice of or a competition between the arts OR sports, science, math, etc."

To be included on Artrain's roster a project must complement Artrain's mission, be arts or culturally based and be of the highest quality. Other projects on Artrain's roster currently include CriticCar Detroit, an arts journalism project, the exhibition *Infinite Mirror* and the National Park Service War of 1812 bicentennial project: *Paths to Peace*. Past Artrain projects have featured the Smithsonian Institution, NASA, the Heard Museum, Detroit Institute of the Arts and the Cranbrook Museum of Art among others.



Ann Arbor-area pianist Mr. B, motivated by his own involvement with music and sports, dreamed of putting a piano on a bike and riding it across the country to spread the joy of jazz and blues music while doing something physically challenging. He also wanted to raise funds for local youth arts and athletic programs. His dream became a reality in 2009 when bicycle designer Mark Nobilette, whose custom bikes have been chosen by many top-ranked racers and triathletes, built **Mr. B's Joybox Express Piano Bike**. Nobilette created a one-of-a-kind piano bike boasting 27 gears, two chains, shock absorbers, a rear

photo credit: John Lilley

differential, hydraulic disk brakes and a flatbed big enough to hold a 352-pound, full-sized upright piano.

On its inaugural tour, Mr. B. and fiddle player Lance Wagner pedaled their way through mid-Michigan, stopping in towns to play concerts and raising funds for local youth projects. Since then, **Mr. B's Joybox Express** has traveled more than a thousand miles across Michigan, visiting dozens of cities and raising tens of thousands of dollars for local organizations.

Having tested the premise of the Joybox Express in Michigan, Mr. B. set his sights on the Mississippi River corridor. As producer, Artrain will manage all aspects of the **Mr. B's Joybox Express Mississippi River Ride**. "I am not an arts administrator by trade but I was willing to learn and do what I had to in order to make this Mississippi tour come to life," said Mr. B. "Now, having Artrain in the lead allows me to focus on what I do best, play jazz and blues piano and train for a 2,000 mile ride hauling a piano!"

Starting in Lake Itasca, Minn., the headwaters of the Mississippi, Mr. B and two musician-riders plan to ride 2,000 miles reaching New Orleans in 90 days. Along the way they will be hosted by cities, towns and villages where they will present community concerts as well as in-school music education programs, to immerse students in the history of jazz and blues. Focusing on cycling, the Joybox physical activity programs will promote bike safety, skills and endurance-building programs. With Artrain's guidance, communities will be encouraged to organize group fundraising Joybox Express ride-a-alongs for the novice or experienced rider – all with the intention of raising funds for local youth arts and athletic programs.

Anyone interested in becoming involved with or having the Mr. B Joybox Express Mississippi River Ride stop in their community may contact Artrain at 734.747.8300 or by email at info@ArtrainUSA.org

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