

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2005

USA WEEKEND Magazine's Tour Program Attracts Younger Readers
Local Newspapers Host Battles of Bands in Record Numbers

McLean, VA – USA WEEKEND Magazine and the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus announced today the unprecedented success of their current tour, a revolutionary program now in its third year. The level of local participation demonstrated by newspapers in tour cities has reached an all-time high.

The co-sponsored tour is a one-of-a-kind program that brings a state-of-the-art music studio to newspapers and teens across the country. Newspapers hold competitions among local high schools to determine which students get to visit the bus. This year eight of the 14 tour cities will host battles of the bands, more than twice as many as in 2004 and an all-time high. The winning bands earn the opportunity to create music videos and professional-quality CDs on the bus. The project is co-sponsored by USA WEEKEND Magazine and the John Lennon Songwriting Contest.

“Teens love music. The bus is the perfect tool to help introduce newspapers to high school students who haven’t developed the newspaper habit yet,” said Dave Barber, senior vice president of newspaper relations at USA WEEKEND.

New York, Tulsa and Fort Lauderdale are among the cities incorporating battles of the bands into the bus tour program. Last month, the *Standard-Examiner* in Ogden, Utah, hosted a battle that attracted 900 teens, three times last year’s number. Eleven neighborhood schools — nearly every school in the area — took part.

“The battle of the bands has become a huge success in our area,” said Jill Halbasch, marketing services coordinator at the *Standard-Examiner*. “The battle has allowed us to reach a younger audience through music.”

At the *Detroit News*, the *Arizona Daily Star* in Tucson, the *Amarillo Globe-News* in Texas and other newspapers, the local battle of the bands entered the cyber age: Host newspapers created elaborate promotion and registration pages on their Web sites. The winners of the contest run by the *Daily Breeze* in Torrance, Calif., benefited from some insider expertise when recording artist John Legend, whose new album, *Get Lifted*, reached No. 4 on the *Billboard* chart, attended their session on the bus.

The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus provides opportunities for both professional and amateur songwriters around the world. The visitors receive free, hands-on experience using the latest audio and video technology, gear and products. The bus, a 501(c)(3) venture, is partially sponsored by Maxell Corporation, Yamaha, themusicedge.com, Apple Computer and Disc Makers. The John Lennon Songwriting Contest and Educational Tour Bus are made possible by an agreement with Yoko Ono Lennon.

###

USA WEEKEND Magazine is a national weekly magazine distributed in 608 newspapers in the United States. Awarded for its journalism and design, USA WEEKEND focuses on social issues, entertainment, health, personal finance and travel. The magazine's Make A Difference Day is the nation's largest annual day of community service. The magazine provides Newspaper in Education classroom guides to partner newspapers. **usaweekend.com** provides enhanced content and interactive magazine features. USA WEEKEND is part of the Gannett Co., Inc.

For more information:

Nichole Tillman
Communications Manager
USA WEEKEND Magazine
7950 Jones Branch Drive
McLean, VA 22107
Phone: 703.854.4543
E-mail: ntillman@usaweekend.com