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USA WEEKEND Magazine Forges First-ever Partnership with Simon Cowell and Musicland for its 2005 Songwriting Contest for Teens

McLean, VA (January 21, 2005) – USA WEEKEND Magazine announced today that for the first time in its 20-year history it is launching a three-way TV-retail-publishing partnership on the 2005 USA WEEKEND Songwriting Contest for Teens.

USA WEEKEND has joined forces with Simon Cowell, the outspoken judge on American Idol, Fox TV's top-rated reality show that started a new season this week, and Musicland, the \$1.6 billion leading national music retailer.

"We're delighted such a great combo of music-industry players can be part of our national contest," said Jack Curry, Vice President and Executive Editor of USA WEEKEND. "We believe this multi-dimensional collaboration will allow more students than ever to participate."

Every year, thousands of teenagers from across the country enter the USA WEEKEND Songwriting Contest, the largest of its kind in the nation, by writing original song lyrics. Contest rules and entry forms can be found in the Feb. 4-6 issue of the magazine, at 650 Sam Goody stores across the country, and online at usaweekend.com. Students ages 13 to 18 have until Feb. 17 to enter.

"We're thrilled to partner with USA WEEKEND Magazine on a project that allows our core customers – America's teenagers – to express themselves through song," said Eric Weisman, CEO of Musicland, which operates more than 900 retail stores nationwide, including Sam Goody and Suncoast.

Cowell joins past Idol winner and best-selling recording artist Fantasia as a USA WEEKEND celebrity judge for the Songwriting Contest. Previous celebrity judges include Usher, Justin Timberlake and Mary J. Blige.

"Simon's a tough critic, but I'm sure our teen contestants are up to it," Curry said.

The Grand Prize winner, to be announced this spring, will receive a trip for two to a season finale of American Idol and will meet Cowell backstage. The winning lyrics will be published in the USA WEEKEND. The winner also will receive a \$1,000 U.S. Savings Bond, the Sony Vegas + DVD Production Bundle (which includes a DVD/CD burner and Sony Acid Music Studio software) and a Nokia 3300 "American Idol" phone/MP3 player, plus a Sam Goody gift card.

About USA WEEKEND Magazine

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 also provides Newspaper in Education classroom guides to partner newspapers. usaweekend.com provides enhanced content and interactive magazine features. USA WEEKEND Magazine is a part of the Gannett Co.

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