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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STARFest announces star-studded 2020 festival lineup

ST. ALBERT — The STARFest (St. Albert Readers Festival) tradition of bringing audiences engaging, provocative events continues, even as we move the 2020 festival online. St. Albert Public Library is thrilled to present a star-studded lineup that will connect STARFest audiences with a slate of exciting authors – including Jesse Thistle and Emily St. John Mandel – who are inspiring national conversations.

We kick off the 10th STARFest on October 6 with Jesse Thistle and his remarkable memoir, *From the Ashes*, in which Thistle explores a past that includes the foster care system, abuse, addiction, crime and homelessness, and his journey back into the circle of his Indigenous culture and family. Thistle’s book has topped bestseller and “best of” lists across the country and was a finalist for this year’s CBC Canada Reads.

The festival continues with Marina Endicott and *The Difference*, a sweeping novel set on board the *Morning Light*, a Nova Scotian merchant ship sailing through the South Pacific in 1912. *The Difference* examines the repercussions of one character’s choice to take a small boy from a Micronesian island to raise as her own.

Aislinn Hunter joins us next with *The Certainties*, a vivid novel about the entwined fates of two very different refugees in two distinct moments: a war-torn Spanish border town in the 1940s, and a British island in the 1970s, as a ship full of would-be migrants approaches shore.

Karma Brown will bring us a delightful online literary/cooking experience as she and Jennifer Cockrall-King create dishes from her bestselling *Recipe for a Perfect Wife*, a novel about a woman who decides to become a writer and to build the kind of life her husband dreams of.

Next, we are excited to bring you Emily St. John Mandel with her latest novel: *The Glass Hotel* is a captivating novel of money, beauty, white collar crime, ghosts and moral compromise in which a woman disappears from a container ship off the coast of Mauritania and a massive Ponzi scheme implodes in New York.

Award-winning journalist and radio host Desmond Cole joins us with *The Skin We're In*, an urgent and unsparingly honest chronicle of one year – 2017 – in the struggle against racism that counters all assumptions about Canada as a post-racial nation.

Téa Mutonji joins us with her award-winning first book, the short story collection *Shut Up You're Pretty*: memorable moments in this punchy, sharply observed collection include a woman contemplating her Congolese traditions during a family wedding, a teenage girl looking for happiness inside a pack of cigarettes, and a mother reconnecting with her daughter through their shared interest in fish.

Nazanine Hozar's stunning debut, *Aria*, has been shortlisted for the Amazon First Novel Award; it takes us inside the Iranian revolution through the eyes of an orphan girl, and through the brutal revolution that installed the Ayatollah Khomeini as Iran's supreme leader.

The festival wraps up October 28 with Annabel Lyon and her smart, mysterious novel *Consent*; through the stories of two sets of sisters whose lives are braided together through tragedy, Lyon explores familial duty and the ways love becomes entangled with guilt and resentment.

"All STARFest authors will present online this year, though we will continue to investigate the possibility of incorporating in-library experiences, depending on the situation in the coming months," says Festival Director Peter Midgley. "Either way, STARFest 2020 is going to be a truly exciting festival – the range of voices and stories we're hosting will take audiences from the intimate to the global, often in the same conversation."

This year's STARFest hosts will keep the questions and the conversation flowing, and include some crowd favourites and some new faces: Celina Loyer, Jacqueline Baker, Thomas Trofimuk, Jennifer Cockrall-King, Senator Paula Simons, Jesse Lipscombe, Valerie Mason-John, Marcello Di Cintio, and St. Albert Public Library's current Writer in Residence, Conni Massing.

"We're proud to present world-class authors locally through STARFest. We love the conversations the Festival generates on ideas, issues and writing," says Peter Bailey, CEO of St. Albert Public Library. "Libraries like ours are about people and STARFest does a great job of bringing communities together – even online."

STARFest 2020 online events will be free, and attendees will have the option to donate to STARFest online. While the final shape of the festival will depend on what restrictions are in place in October, all festival decisions are rooted in St. Albert Public Library's commitment to the health and safety of authors, interviewers, attendees, and library staff and volunteers.

Check www.starfest.ca for the full festival schedule and to register for events today.

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