



PODCAST FESTIVAL HITS TORONTO FOR THE FIRST TIME

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Want to make your life better? Listen to a podcast!

Since the term 'podcast' was coined in 2004, millions of people have made chores, commutes and gym visits infinitely more interesting by listening to a podcast at the same time.

These days, you can download a podcast that relates to almost any topic, including pop culture, politics, religion, sports, humour, science, media, fiction, true crime and much more.

According to Media Technology Monitor, 21% of Canadians are currently listening to podcasts, and Edison Research found that monthly podcast listenership has increased 75% in the U.S. since 2013.

To honour the medium, Hot Docs is hosting Canada's first international podcast festival – officially called the Hot Docs Podcast Festival – from Nov. 18 to 20. A number of podcasters attending the event will be presenting their programs live for the first time ever, or at least the first time in Canada.

The events will be happening at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema on Bloor St. W.

Alan Black, the director of operations at Hot Docs, tells 24 Hours that the festival will give listeners a chance to experience podcasts in a unique way.

"Listening to podcasts is such a solitary and personal endeavor that for the most part is experienced alone," he writes in an email. "We wanted to give Torontonians a chance to share their favorite podcasts in a room full of like-minded, engaged people."

Black says his team put an emphasis on mixing strong local podcasters with popular storytellers from the U.S. Here are a few podcasts that you can expect to see live this weekend:

Criminal: Radiotopia's award-winning crime podcast delves into the behind-the-scenes stories of various crimes, looking at numerous real-life tales – from the absurd to the horrifying – instead of focusing on one case, like Serial. Host Phoebe Judge will be bringing brand new stories to the Hot Docs stage, showing forensic photographs and court documents on-screen while being accompanied by live scoring.

Sleepover: Sook-Yin Lee's new podcast, which was recently renewed by CBC for a second season, will be presenting audience members with an intriguing situation: Three mystery guests will meet for the first time on stage, and then spend the next 90 minutes working through their personal dilemmas – with advice from the crowd – in a giant bed.

Mystery Show: This is one of the most entertaining podcasts of all time. Host Starlee Kine investigates tiny, inconsequential mysteries – including the true height of Jake Gyllenhaal, or the origin of an elaborate belt buckle found in the street – and infuses each case with hilarious, insightful writing. Surprisingly, Gimlet Media recently announced that it won't be involved with the podcast's second season, so it'll be interesting to see if Kine addresses that in Toronto.

The Imposter presents Degrasiland: Canadaland's new-ish arts podcast, The Imposter, will be giving Hot Docs attendees an exciting finale on Sunday. Host Aliya Pabani will explore the global impact of the Degrassi franchise, combining comedy, music, stories and interviews.