



Ernie & the Automatics

SPOTLIGHT ON

Singing for a Cure

by **Clint Hamblin**

Since its opening on October 20, 1903, The New England Conservatory of Music's Jordan Hall has featured a wide range of musical artists, but none quite as incomparable as Miss Patti LaBelle. Presented as a benefit for the Joslin Diabetes Center's High Hopes Fund on June 20, LaBelle and her club act, along with a special opening



Patti LaBelle

performance by Ernie & the Automatics and R&B singer-songwriter Link, had the audience dancing in the aisles of this historic concert hall.

The night began with Ernie & the Automatics, led by car-czar-by-day and rocker-by-night, Ernie Boch Jr. Selling a combined 30 million records worldwide, the band includes Barry Goudreau on guitar and Sib Hashian on drums, two former original members of the multi-platinum selling band Boston. The well-received band performed classic rock hits and originals as well as new songs from their debut CD, "Low Expectations," released this month. Boch's diabetes doesn't stop him from managing a \$1.5 billion auto empire in addition to a successful musical career.

The audience loved R&B singer/songwriter Link. The four-time ASCAP award winner is one of the industry's most sought-after R&B songwriters of his time.

Born Lincoln C. Browder, Link is now partner of Superstar Music Group, a company he started with NBA star Michael Finley of the San Antonio Spurs and Shannon Walker Williams Allen, singer, songwriter, actress and wife of Boston Celtics' Ray Allen. It is this association with Allen, whose 1-year-old son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes last year, that brought him to Singing for a Cure to benefit Joslin Diabetes Center's High Hopes Fund.

A beautiful bouquet of red roses was placed on the grand piano along with a lineup of several pairs of colorful and bejeweled shoes. LaBelle hit the stage wearing an outrageously sculptured dress and the highest of high heels. At 65 years old and with a fully intact four-octave range, she tore the house down singing "On My Own," "New Attitude," and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." LaBelle surrounds herself with an outstanding backup group and a talented musical director who all had their own moment in the spotlight with the original Lady Marmalade taking a position as a backup singer. It was a privilege to have attended this performance.

Recently inducted into the Apollo Hall of Fame, LaBelle announced, "I'm a diabetic." Giving herself insulin five times a day, she manages a full schedule of performances along with her charitable work. Since losing her mother to type 2 diabetes and discovering she also has the disease, Patti has become a relentless partner in the pursuit of finding a cure. She has inspired others to follow her lead and change their nutritional and physical activity habits while living life to the fullest. As the author of several diabetes-friendly cookbooks and years of service as a spokesperson for the American Diabetes Association, she continually utilizes her celebrity to shed light on the disease that now impacts 24 million Americans.

"Patti is a perfect example of someone who can live with diabetes and have a long and productive life," says Michael



Link

Sullivan, senior vice president of development for Joslin. "Since 2002 diabetes has doubled, with obesity clearly playing a major role. Look at the U.S. We have the highest rates of diabetes, mostly in poor rural areas."

Joslin has 23 clinics in the United States, treating 250,000 people, as well as three international sites, the most recent of which opened in Dubai, and another is in the planning stages in India.

"Diabetes is growing in the Middle East at an alarming rate. In Dubai where the government is funding Joslin to be there, a third of the population is diabetic," Sullivan said.

The money from these fundraisers goes to the High Hopes Fund to help find a cure and improve conditions. Brava to LaBelle for her tireless efforts educating the public, fundraising and for sharing her very outstanding talent.