

MENDOCINO MUSIC FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

PO Box 1808 • Mendocino, CA 95460

707 937-2044 • 707 937-1045 (fax)

music@mendocinomusic.com • www.mendocinomusic.com

Contact: Ken Krauss (707) 937-4041

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The Mendocino Music Festival: Entering a Third Decade of Musical Excellence – the Contemporary Concerts

For the over the two decades of its existence the Mendocino Music Festival has diversified and broadened its range to be inclusive of as many diverse musical styles as possible. Performers like Brazil Brazil, the Persuasions, Charlie Musselwhite, The Klezmatics, Les Percussions de Guinee, the Bobs, Alasdair Fraser, and Tuck and Patti are just a few of the outstanding performers from the worlds of blues, folk, R & B, and world music who have graced the festival's performance tent. This year is no exception, as the festival continues a tradition of bringing both new and established artists to their audience.

The Mendocino Music Festival has presented bluesmen Eric Bibb and Keb Mo' to the North Coast before each of them had become well known to blues fans. This year, guitarist Chris Cain joins this list, with a concert on Wednesday, July 11 at 8:00 PM. A protégée of the Ford brothers, Pat and Robben (also veterans of the MMF), Cain's act is full of influences and references as diverse as B.B. King and Wes Montgomery. His voice is always mellow and smooth with a deep throaty resonance. As for his guitar, he demonstrates why many feel he's the best blues guitarist on the West Coast. Obvious influences are again B. B. King, Albert King and Albert Collins.

On the next night, Thursday, July 12, at 7:30 PM, the festival continues its double bills with performances by Molly O'Brien and Sisters Morales. Molly, joined by her husband Rich Moore on guitar, sings jazz, R&B, blues, gospel, southern mountain traditional — you name it — and she approaches each genre with an ease that makes you think she was immersed in the style since the first time a note left her throat. The Sisters, hailing from Texas, grew up around a musical and very Mexican family which contributed to their diverse tastes in music. Both the sisters' voices are very different, but their harmonies are strong and tight and sound as if they're made up of one voice. The incredible talents of their band members (guitarist David Spencer, drummer Vicente Rodriguez, and bassist Cornbread) round out the Sisters' sound, which has been described as "energetic, emotional and rockin".

On Monday, July 16 at 8:00 PM one of the world's bluegrass super groups takes the stage. Blue Highway is a group that excels at every facet of their music, from instrumental dexterity to impeccable vocal interplay to literate, powerful songwriting. Individually, Jason Burleson (banjo, guitar, mandolin), Rob Ickes (Dobro), Shawn Lane (mandolin, fiddle, vocals), Tim Stafford (guitar, vocals), and Wayne Taylor (bass, vocals) are at the forefront of their respective roles, appearing on innumerable projects as sidemen, songwriters, and solo artists. Together, in Stafford's words, they are "a democracy in the best sense of the word" with everyone singing from the same songbook and tuned into the same frequency.

Tuesday, July 17 at 8:00 PM will feature Time For Three, a young, dynamic trio of classically trained string musicians that defies categorization who crosses over the boundaries of music exploration with energy and style. In concert, a bluegrass standard like Orange Blossom Special may be followed by a gypsy-tinged Csardas. Tf3 is equally comfortable offering their own arrangements of shorter classical works and popular hits, whether Brahms or the Beatles. Violinists Zachary DePue and Nicolas Kendall

and bassist Ranaan Meyer combine classical expertise with a love of country, bluegrass and jazz improvisation. Their performances bring down the house wherever they play.

The last Friday of the festival offers another double bill, and what a one-two punch it will be! On July 20 at 8:00 PM, the first act will be talented and quirky multi-instrumentalist David Lindley. Well known for his many years as the featured accompanist with Jackson Browne, and leader of his own band El Rayo-X, Lindley has long championed world music. The eye-poppingly clad "Mr. Dave's" uncanny vocal mimicry and demented sense of humor make his onstage banter a highlight of the show. Mr. Dave is a tough act to follow, but Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir are sure to be equal to the task. In 1992, Linda was introduced to some field recordings of traditional African-American music and within months, she assembled the Cultural Heritage Choir: Rhonda Benin, Elouise Burrell, Melanie DeMore, and Simon Monserrat. In addition to songs and chants, delivered through such stylistic forms as call-and-response, multi-layered harmonies, and repetitive verse, the CHC repertoire includes intoned sermons, folk tales, polyrhythmic percussion, and dance.

This is a line up which, in complement to our classical programs, celebrates the diversity and exuberance of the many styles of music in the world. The concerts offer something for everyone, in terms of familiar genres as well as new musical territory. The performers will take you on a journey to the heart and soul of music. For more information or tickets, call the Mendocino Music Festival office at 707-937-4041, or visit the MMF web site at mendocinomusic.com.