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News

For Immediate Release

Attn: Music, Arts & Entertainment Editors

4th ANNUAL WFMT MIDNIGHT SPECIAL FOLK FESTIVAL SLATED FOR SEPTEMBER 20

Four-Hour Concert and Live Broadcast
to Be Staged on North Shore

*Lineup to Include Special Guest Kathy Mattea,
John McCutcheon, Michael Smith, Claudia Schmidt,
Randall Williams, Haines & Leighton,
and the Austin Lounge Lizards*

Editors: Hi-resolution artist photos are available. E-mail natsilv@aol.com

CHICAGO, August 4, 2009 — Grammy Award-winning folk, roots, and country music singer Kathy Mattea will be the special guest at the fourth annual WFMT Midnight Special Folk Festival on Sunday, September 20, 2009, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., in Skokie, Ill.

98.7WFMT has announced a lineup of seven artists of national and international stature for its four-hour extravaganza to be presented on a single stage at the North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Boulevard.

Rich Warren, producer and host of WFMT's the "The Midnight Special" program, assembled the festival's talent roster, which includes Mattea, John McCutcheon, Michael Smith, Claudia Schmidt, Randall Williams, Haines & Leighton, and the Austin Lounge Lizards.

"Our goal was to choose a musically diverse group of artists who are incredibly good at connecting with individual listeners," Warren says. "All these people have mastered the craft of entertainment."

Warren describes the festival as “a lively celebration of songs with substance, songs that are touching and topical, sublime and satirical.”

A Chicago Tribune article noted that Mattea, who has earned two Grammy Awards and enjoyed great success on the country music charts in the late 1980s and early 90s, “was always more literate folkie than mainstream country queen.” Her 2008 CD, *Coal* (Captain Potato Records), a heartfelt album of mining and mountain songs, is the West Virginia-born singer’s tribute to her Appalachian coal mining heritage. *Coal* was nominated for a Grammy Award in the Traditional Folk category. A CD review in American Songwriter said, “Mattea sings like a woman with a true understanding of the words” (<http://www.mattea.com>).

McCutcheon, an acclaimed singer-songwriter, has received praise from folk icon Pete Seeger, to whom he has been compared for his musicianship, stage presence, and commitment to social and economic justice (<http://folkmusic.com/homepage>).

An icon of the 70s Chicago folk scene, Smith has written songs recorded by Steve Goodman and other luminaries. Folkwax magazine calls him an artist who “has repeatedly proved that he is adept at focusing on the ordinary and conjuring the exquisite and extraordinary” (<http://www.artistsofnote.com/michael/index.html>).

Schmidt is a versatile singer-songwriter whose discography embraces fourteen albums of mostly original songs. The San Francisco Chronicle’s Derk Richardson called her “contemporary folk music’s front-line ambassador of wonder.” A reviewer for the Folk & Acoustic Music Exchange found “a sense of adventure and integrity in every song she does. Schmidt’s voice has a strength and soul of its own” (<http://claudiaschmidt.homestead.com>).

Williams, a 30-something performer who trained as a classical singer at a European conservatory, is an audience favorite at folk festivals around the country. Sing Out! magazine says, “Randall Williams explodes onto the scene like a bolt of lightning. ... Combine that voice

with highly articulate guitar work and superlative songs for a most powerful presence”

(<http://www.whereisrandall.com>).

The humorous and engaging Canadian duo of Mark Haines and Tom Leighton perform original and traditional songs influenced by their Celtic and North American folk roots. When these high-energy multi-instrumentalists play multiple instruments at the same time, they sound more like a quartet or even, as the Toronto Sun observed, “a symphony orchestra”

(<http://www.haines-leighton.com>).

The Austin Lounge Lizards, a rollicking quintet of satirical folk, bluegrass, and country gadflies, recently released a single inspired by government bailouts. The song’s hard-luck narrator asks, “How do I get to be too big to fail?” (A music video is viewable at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rnE5zvosplc>.) The group’s Website is

<http://www.austinelizards.com>.

Tickets are \$25 for balcony seats, \$55 for main floor seats, and \$125 premium main-floor seats with admission to a backstage VIP reception. Tickets are available by phone at (847) 673-6300 and online at www.northshorecenter.org. Free on-site parking is available behind the theater. Public transportation: El: Yellow to Skokie, then bus: 97 Skokie (Old Orchard).

The all-ages festival will also air live over WFMT 98.7 FM, with a simultaneous live Webcast at www.wfmt.com.

The festival takes its name from “The Midnight Special,” the station’s eclectic, long-running Saturday night program of contemporary and traditional folk music, comedy, show tunes, and more.

The WFMT Midnight Special Folk Festival is underwritten by the Maxine Yefsky Family Trust.

Festival Schedule

The performance schedule for the 2009 WFMT Midnight Special Folk Festival is as follows (all times are approximate):

3:00– 3:02 p.m.: Introduction by Rich Warren of 98.7WFMT

3:02–3:27 p.m.: Randall Williams

3:29–3:54 p.m.: Claudia Schmidt

3:56–4:21 p.m.: Michael Smith

4:25 –4:55 p.m.: The Austin Lounge Lizards

4:55 –5:15 p.m. Intermission

5:15–5:20 p.m.: Song (“Kisses Sweeter Than Wine”) dedicated to longtime WFMT listener and folk music supporter Art Yefsky, whose family trust underwrites the festival. Artist to be announced.

5:20–5:45 p.m.: Haines & Leighton

5:47–6:20 p.m.: Kathy Mattea

6:20–6:54 p.m.: John McCutcheon

6:54–7 p.m.: Grand Finale with all festival artists

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