

North Carolina's Musical Treasure™



www.EasternMusicFestival.org

— Press Release —



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EMF *fringe* BRINGS THREE BLUES AND BLUEGRASS ROOTED SHOWS DURING ITS PERFORMANCE-PACKED FOURTH WEEK

Greensboro, NC- EMF*fringe* series presents three unprecedented performances rooted in the bluegrass genre with allusions to old blues, swing and rock 'n roll, during its fourth week of concerts. The first of these will feature San Francisco natives **The Waybacks** on **Thursday, July 23, 2009**. The show will be followed by an After Party at Rim Tapas and Fine Wine Bar (219 South Elm Street, Greensboro, NC) featuring musical guest **Salter Path**. This Greensboro performance by The Waybacks is sponsored by YES! Weekly. With just a few tickets remaining, this show will be sold out.



A return engagement for this four-piece group that sold out in 2008, but no two shows are ever the same. Hailing from the San Francisco Bay area, **The Waybacks** are an uninhibited, unpredictable, and eclectic band. Their full arsenal of acoustic and electric instruments is infused with bluegrass, Memphis soul, honky-tonk, Parisian swing, classical music, vintage blues pop, and much more. You may know them from their tour days with **Grateful Dead** founder **Bob Weir**.

www.waybacks.com

Scheduled the next evening, **Friday, July 24, 2009**, **The Larry McCray Band** will share on stage its soulful style and popular sound. This concert, in collaboration with the Piedmont Blues Preservation Society, brings the 2006 Gibson Artist of the Year for a rare Greensboro performance. An After Party featuring **Bill West** will take place at Triad Stage with food provided by Ganache. EMF encourages ticket buyers to purchase their tickets early for this show.



Named 2006 Gibson Artist of the Year, Larry McCray is one of a handful of talented young blues performers leading the genre across boundaries and into the new century. McCray's savage blues-rock guitar and warm, soulful vocals have drawn attention worldwide. He has performed with **Dickey Betts, The Allman Brothers Band, Warren Haynes, and Gov't Mule.** www.larrymccrayband.com

Expected to be another sold-out evening of great music, the innovative **John Cowan Band** will culminate this musical trilogy on **Saturday, July 25, 2009** with a subsequent celebration at Churchill's on Elm (213 South Elm Street, Greensboro, NC). Local singer, songwriter and playwright, **Laurelyn Dossett** of Polecat Creek, will perform as the opening act this evening.

Bluegrass, Newgrass, Rock N' Rollgrass. True innovators defy easy categorization and John Cowan is the ultimate innovator. His ability to move easily between music styles and blend and bend genres into creative new forms has made him one of the most significant voices in acoustic music over the past thirty years. Cowan rose to fame as the lead singer for **New Grass Revival** with his band mates **Sam Bush, Bela Fleck, and Pat Flynn.** www.johncowanband.com



All shows will take place at **8pm** in **Triad Stage** (232 South Elm Street, Greensboro, NC 27401). Thursday's and Friday's tickets may be purchased for \$22 and Saturday's for \$27 by calling the EMF Box Office at Triad Stage at 336.272.0160 or 866-579-TIXX, or online at www.EasternMusicFestival.org. EMF*fringe* ticketholders get free admission by showing their ticket stub.

Special thanks to Series sponsor Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro for their generous support of EMF*fringe*.

More about The Waybacks

They draw freely from the old school and the old world, but **The Waybacks** are no throwback. They've been erroneously pigeonholed as a bluegrass band and celebrated as purveyors of "acoustic mayhem." They are as uninhibited and unpredictable as the eclectic San Francisco Bay area that claims them, and for nearly a decade, their experiments have always proven sharp-witted and musically dazzling. They're living proof that in music anyway, evolution and intelligent design are entirely compatible. "The whole spirit of improvisation – that's always been the cornerstone of this band for me," says founding singer, songwriter and guitarist James Nash. "Through all the stylistic changes and regardless of the instruments we're playing, to me the fun of this band has always been that in some ways I can do whatever I feel like doing at any moment." They've been through changes for sure. Now a four-piece with a full arsenal of acoustic and electric instruments, The Waybacks are releasing *Loaded*, the boldest, rangiest and most exciting album of their career. Produced by Nashville bassist, composer and

consummate sideman Byron House, it's a musical rebuke to anyone who would typecast true artistry.

The folk and roots underpinnings that have long been a Waybacks hallmark are still there, but after years of playing a huge range of venues and festivals, touring with Grateful Dead founder Bob Weir, and reconfiguring themselves around the hot guitar of James Nash and the fiddle virtuosity of Warren Hood, The Waybacks are enjoying a refreshed repertoire – one that's touched by Memphis soul, honky-tonk, Parisian swing, classical music, vintage blue pop and much more besides. Nash and Hood have stepped forward as songwriters, allowing The Waybacks to assemble their first project of entirely original music. They're finding a new collective voice, right before our ears.

Besides Nash, the Waybacks include drummer Chuck Hamilton, bass player Joe Kyle Jr. and the newest member, fiddler and mandolinist Warren Hood. Those who have followed the band's progress over the past five years have had to bid good-bye to two long-time members, finger-stylist and singer Stevie Coyle and multi-instrumentalist Choyo Jacques. But in welcoming Hood (who sometimes refers to the revamped band as a power trio plus fiddle) and focusing around a more rhythmic, far-reaching sound. You might say The Waybacks have grown by shrinking. "I just thought they were all very talented players," says Hood about his attraction to The Waybacks. "I really couldn't put them into a genre, but I guess that's what I liked about it. I'd rather be in a band that plays a little of everything than a band that lives in one genre all night."

The Waybacks were launched in 1999, when Nash, a guitar phenomenon raised in Nashville, was making a living in San Francisco playing solid-body electric guitar. His involvement in an acoustic side project was not supposed to change his life, but it did. "It was kind of a novelty to me," he says. "It was a liberating, exciting thing where I kind of rediscovered that I love playing acoustic instruments." As they began touring, Nash was quickly recognized as a top-flight picker even in the rarified company that circulated at the world's best folk, roots and bluegrass festivals. The Waybacks' show was built around blazing instrumental skills and large doses of hilarity. They'd play traditional fiddle tunes with their own twist, original songs that fell into no category, and insanely difficult jazz tunes like Charlie Parker's "Scrapple From The Apple." Fans loved it, and so did the critics. The Chicago Tribune's David Royko praised their "near-ideal balance of irreverence, chops, discipline, and originality." Bay Area writer Michael Miller admired their "exotic settings" and "mind blowing picking." It led to major festival bookings and eventually a recording arrangement with Nashville's roots label Compass Records.

The Bob Weir shows were one of the most recent validations that The Waybacks had tapped into something profound. The Grateful Dead co-founder has remained incredibly prolific over the years, and in The Waybacks he saw something he recognized. He and the band collaborated on several memorable shows in 2006, including much buzzed-about sets at Merlefest in North Carolina and Hardly Strictly Bluegrass in San Francisco. They translated some of the Dead's electric repertoire into a newgrass format, while working up covers together from the likes of Johnny Cash and Led Zeppelin. So it should come as no surprise if you hear overtones of the Dead's freedom and eclecticism in songs like "Good Enough" and "The River" on Loaded.

When they were getting ready to make the new album, Nash and company scheduled their longest- ever period of pre-production. It was a necessary step to finding out how to work as a four-piece and a productive investment in crafting an album that accomplishes a lot of things. "We were so much better prepared for the studio and we had a lot more fun this time," says Joe Kyle. "Once we got to Nashville with the meter running we were able to get down to business at once. The vibe was strong in the studio. We were at once purposeful and focused and we were having a ball."

Kyle also says that for the first time The Waybacks had more original material to record than they had space for. That's because of the songwriting energy of Nash and Hood. Warren's songs lean toward the vintage, and he shows chops beyond his 24 years in the complex chord changes and sophisticated melodies of tunes like "Savannah." "Nice To Be Alone" sounds like something Sam Cooke might have recorded, and "Tired of Being Right" is a full-tilt roadhouse boogie. Hood also proves he's a gifted singer and every bit the son of Champ Hood, whose seminal Uncle Walt's Band is one good historical touchstone for The Waybacks.

Nash's songs tend to jam out harder and tell great stories. The characters in Loaded and "City Boy" are palpable and have motivation. The proud-because-she-has-to-be girl in "Conjugal Visit" is no lighter weight for being the subject of a funny song. "Beyond the Northwest Passage" is a no-holds- barred sea shanty with a rousing sing-along chorus that features the band's beer-fueled pals from the Greencards and the Infamous Stringdusters.

Drummer Chuck Hamilton says "each successive Waybacks recording project has been an improvement on the previous one – more fun, better musicianship, better production – and Loaded continues in that tradition. Somehow everything seems more authentic now. There's a combination of freedom and pressure that I really like."

When you think about it, that's the essential tension behind all great music. One without the other just doesn't work. It's that balance that makes The Waybacks a real ensemble, one that transcends genres in the best possible way. As Hood says, "I'd like to hear them try to call us a bluegrass band now!"

More about The Larry McCray Band

Larry McCray is one of a handful of talented young blues performers leading the genre across boundaries and into the new century. McCray's savage blues-rock guitar and warm, soulful vocals have drawn attention worldwide.

McCray's hard work paid off when he became the first artist signed by Virgin Records' blues division - Pointblank Records. In 1990, they released his debut, "Ambition," which was well received by the U.S. and European press.

1993 saw the release of McCray's second album, Delta Hurricane, which was recorded in Memphis with the notoriously funky Uptown Horns. The guitarist's gut wrenching rendition of Warren Haynes' power ballad, "Soul Shine," opened many ears to McCray's talent and diversity.

In 1998, *Born To Play The Blues* moved the story of McCray's broadly appealing music forward another giant step. Bold, brawny, often dazzling guitar lines are matched with confident, soul-drenched vocals. Understated funk rhythms and crunchy rock riffs meet searing slow blues and booty-bumping shuffles.

The year 2000 found the guitarist co-establishing his own independent record company together with Koch, forming Magnolia Records. The release *Believe It* kicked it off, putting McCray on chart to continue to release albums on his own dime and time, without the business or rules of a pressing-type of label.

McCray also sights a career highlight as being honored as the Orville Gibson 2000 Male Blues Guitarist of the Year. "Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton, like seven or eight other people were nominated, as well" stated McCray.

With Magnolia Records his new home and a young son to raise, McCray was able to pull back into his personal life for a while. McCray keeps busy on the road trying to find the time to write music.

Magnolia Records released the McCray's first live album, *Live On 75*, on December 6, 2005. A new studio album and tour is to follow in late 2006.

More about The John Cowan Band

Bluegrass, Newgrass, Rock N' Rollgrass. True innovators defy easy categorization and **John Cowan** is the ultimate innovator. His ability to move easily between music styles and blend and bend genres into creative new forms has made him one of the most significant voices in acoustic music over the past thirty years.

After making a name for himself as one of the most in-demand vocalists in the early 1970s' music scene in Louisville, KY., Cowan rose to fame when he became the lead singer for New Grass Revival. He and band mates Sam Bush, Bela Fleck, and Pat Flynn introduced a new generation of music fans to an explosive, experimental brand of bluegrass. After inspiring and entertaining fans for nearly two decades, New Grass disbanded in 1990.

Cowan immediately gave chase to his creative muse following it all over the musical landscape with a series of critically acclaimed albums. The Evansville, Indiana-native wrapped his expansive voice around tunes that ran the gamut from rock to souls to blues and beyond. As the 21st century began he found himself circling slowly, inexorably back to the acoustic music that he knew so well. He began to surround himself with some of the finest acoustic musicians working. When the current line-up of his band, Jeff Atruy (guitar), Shad Cobb (fiddle), John Frazier (Mandolin), Bryon Larrance (Drums) came together, he knew he was on to something special. The music began to take a natural, organic turn back to Cowan's acoustic roots.

The response may be overwhelming, but it shouldn't be unexpected. Fans are hungry for the inventive experimentation and world-class musicianship that New Grass Revival offered. There haven't been many bands capable of carrying the torch that NGR lit. On his latest release, *New Tattoo*, Cowan is fearless. You can hear it in the eclectic mix and blend of styles and the unblinking willingness to bare even the most private recesses of his soul. *New Tattoo* is a bold and important statement from one of the most important voices working in American music.

More About Laurelyn Dossett

One of the most recognizable voices in creating Appalachian-based harmonies and story-songs, and one of the most sought-after voices in creative collaborations, **Laurelyn Dossett** is an award-winning songwriter and performer based in Greensboro, NC. Since starting Polecat Creek with singing partner Kari Sickenberger, Dossett has partnered with Triad Stage's Artistic Director and playwright Preston Lane on four successful music and theater pieces featuring regional folklore and music. One of these songs, "Anna Lee" was featured in the 2007 recording of Levon Helm's Grammy-winning record, *Dirt Farmer*. She is also a regular performer at regional music festivals such as Merlefest, a guest on the radio show *Prairie Home Companion*, and most recently, performer with the North Carolina Symphony. Dossett also teaches songwriting and singing at the Augusta Heritage Center in Elkins, WV.

More About Eastern Music Festival

Now in its 48th year, the Eastern Music Festival & School is recognized for its prodigious contributions to the field of American music and its commitment to nurturing talented American and international youth through a collaborative learning process. The program brings together a cross-section of America's most sought-after artists with pre-professional students in a five-week schedule of 100 concerts and music-related events. **Music Director Gerard Schwarz** heads a distinguished list of participating artists scheduled for 2009, including **Peter Serkin, Sarah Chang, Awadagin Pratt, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Xavier Phillips**, plus many others.

The Festival also produces a popular *EMFfringe* series of alternative programming, featuring everything from Americana to alt country, blues, jazz and gospel with artists such as **Mike Cross, The John Cowan Band, Laurelyn Dossett, Steep Canyon Rangers, Waybacks, The Chris Hicks Band**, blues artist **Larry McCray** and more. *EMFkids* offers camps and concerts with each uniquely designed to foster a love and knowledge for classical and non-classical music. This year's concerts are **Shana Banana** and **Dan Zanes**. *EMFjazz&blues* runs each spring and *EMF Fringe* in the Fall each autumn. Single tickets and FlexPasses on sale now. www.EasternMusicFestival.org; Box Office 336.272.0160 or 866.579-TIXX.

The 2009 Eastern Music Festival season is sponsored in part by the United Arts Council of Greater Greensboro, the North Carolina Arts Council, Lincoln Financial Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Southern Arts Federation, WFDD Triad Arts Station, Greensboro's News and Record, Continental Airways, Yes! Weekly, and Piedmont Music Center (Steinway Pianos). *EMFfringe* is sponsored in part by The Community

Foundation of Greater Greensboro, YES! Weekly, Natty Greene's Pub & Brewing Company, Audio & Light, The Martha and William Murray Foundation, and Print Works Bistro.

For more information about EMF or its programs, please visit www.EasternMusicFestival.org, or call toll free: 1.877.833.6753

The Eastern Music Festival's mission is to promote musical enrichment, excellence, professional collaboration, innovation and diversity through a nationally-recognized teaching program, music festival, concerts and other programs which will enhance the quality of life, health and vitality of our region.

EMF is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
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