

W I L D H O R S E R E S O R T C A S I N O

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For Immediate Release

Wildhorse Resort & Casino Welcomes Country Music's Unique Oak Ridge Boys

Pendleton, OR - The Oak Ridge Boys, who feature one of the most enduring sounds in country and gospel music, will appear at Wildhorse Resort & Casino on Nov. 20 at 7 p.m. Tickets go on sale November 1 and can be purchased online at www.wildhorsesort.com or in the Wildhorse Gift Shop. Reserved section tickets are \$35 and General Admission tickets are \$25.

Every time they step before an audience, the Oaks, as their fans know them, bring three decades of charted singles, and 50 years of tradition, to bear on their smoothly honed stage show.

"When I go on stage, I get the same feeling I had the first time I sang with The Oak Ridge Boys," says lead singer Duane Allen. "This is the only job I've ever wanted to have."

"Like everyone else in the group," adds bass singer extraordinaire Richard Sterban, "I was a fan of the Oaks before I became a member. I'm still a fan of the group today. Being in The Oak Ridge Boys is the fulfillment of a lifelong dream."

The two, along with tenor Joe Bonsall and baritone William Lee Golden, comprise one of country's truly legendary acts. Their string of hits includes the pop chart-topper *Elvira*, as well as *Bobbie Sue*, *Dream On*, *Thank God For Kids*, *American Made*, *I Guess It Never Hurts To Hurt Sometimes*, *Fancy Free*, *Gonna Take A Lot Of River* and many others. They've scored 12 gold, three platinum, and one double platinum album, plus one double platinum single, and had more than a dozen national Number One singles.

The four vocalists are backed by a five piece band, including Donnie Carr, lead guitar; Jimmy Fulbright, bass guitar; Chris Golden, son of William Lee, drums; Ryan Pierce, steel guitar, mandolin and fiddle; and Ryan Pierce, keyboards. Pierce's dad played piano for the Oaks from 1957-72.

They just released an album, "Journey", late last year and will stage 160 shows in 2005, including their appearance at Wildhorse.

This year the Oaks were honored with an exhibit in Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame—The Oak Ridge Boys: Thirty Years in the Mainstream, 1975-2005—that runs through Nov. 29.

The Oaks are also the official music ambassadors for the National Anthem Project, an effort that kicked off in March to teach our national anthem to the two-thirds of Americans that surveys show don't know it. Headed by First Lady Laura Bush, the project has received much national exposure in the news and entertainment media.

Even the publication of the group's coffee-table book written by Bonsall, "An American Journey," shows the right kind of maturity you might expect from these show-biz veterans.

In print, they publicly address the most painful part of their history: The acrimonious departure of Golden in 1987 and the subsequent hiring of Steve Sanders, who without warning, walked off the tour bus in 1995 and never returned.

Golden returned to the fold in 1996 and the group was reinvigorated, only to be rocked again in 1998 when they received word that Sanders committed suicide.

The Oaks represent a musical tradition that extends back to 1943, before Hank Williams had a career. The original group, based in Knoxville, Tennessee, began performing Country and Gospel music in nearby Oak Ridge where the atomic bomb was being developed. They called themselves the Oak Ridge Quartet, and they began regular Grand Ole Opry appearances in the fall of '45. In the mid-fifties, they were featured in *Time* magazine as one of the top drawing Gospel groups in the nation.

By the late '60s, with more than 30 members having come and gone, they had a lineup that included Duane Allen, William Lee Golden, Noel Fox and Willie Wynn. Among the Oaks' many acquaintances in the Gospel field were Bonsall, a streetwise Philadelphia kid who embraced Gospel music wholeheartedly, and Sterban, who was singing in quartets and holding down a job as a men's clothing salesman. Both admired the distinctive, highly popular Oaks.

Their Gospel sound had a distinct Pop edge to it, and while it made for excitement and crowd appeal, it also ruffled purist feathers and left promoters unsure about the Oaks' direction. Then in 1975, the Oaks were booked to open a number of dates for Roy Clark, whose manager Jim Halsey was floored by their abilities.

"He came backstage and told us we were three-and-a-half minutes (meaning one hit record) away from being a major act," says Bonsall. "He said we had one of the most dynamic stage shows he'd ever seen, but that we had to start singing Country songs."

They took his advice and the result was a breakthrough.

Within a year, Paul Simon would tap them to sing backup for his hit, *Slip Slidin' Away*, and they would go on to record with George Jones, Brenda Lee, Johnny Cash, Roy Rogers, Billy Ray Cyrus, Bill Monroe, Ray Charles, and others. They would appear before four presidents, produce one of the first Country music videos (*Easy*, in 1977, which wasn't released in the U.S. but hit #3 in Australia), take part in the first headline tour of the USSR, and become one of the most enduringly-successful touring groups anywhere.

"We always look for songs that have lasting value and that are uplifting," says Allen, who has co-produced the Oaks' last four albums. "You don't hear us singing 'cheating' or 'drinking' songs, but 'loving' songs, because we think that will last. We also don't put music in categories, except for 'good' or 'bad.' When we get through with it, it's probably going to sound like an Oak Ridge Boys song no matter what it is."