Classic Country Comes to Cohan Center Oct. 3

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA – Every time the Oak Ridge Boys step before an audience, they bring three decades of charted singles and 50 years of tradition to the stage.

On Tuesday, October 3, 2006 at 8 p.m. in Harman Hall at the Christopher Cohan Center, Cal Poly Arts and Otter Productions, Inc. present the Grammy-winning Oak Ridge Boys in a special Center Stage series event.

The Oaks have one of the most distinctive and recognizable sounds in the music industry today. Their four-part harmonies and upbeat songs have spawned 25 Number One hits including “Elvira,” “American Made,” “Bobbie Sue,” “Thank God For Kids,” “I Guess It Never Hurts To Hurt Sometimes,” “Fancy Free,” “Gonna Take A Lot Of River,” and “Y’all Come Back Saloon.”

In the course of their successful career, the Oaks have sold over 20 million Gold and Platinum records, earned Grammy, Dove, CMA, and ACM awards, and garnered a host of other industry and fan accolades.

Lead singer Duane Allen, bass singer Richard Sterban, tenor Joe Bonsall, and baritone William Lee Golden each remain as enthusiastic about performing as they have ever been.

“When I go on stage, I get the same feeling I had the first time I sang with the Oak Ridge Boys,” says Allen. “This is the only job I’ve ever wanted to have.”

“Like everyone else in the group,” adds 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 Oaks represent a tradition that extends back to 1943. 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 began regular Grand Ole Opry appearances in the fall of 1945. In the mid-fifties, they were featured in Time magazine as one of the top drawing Gospel groups in the nation.

By 1973, the group – comprised of the four members touring today -- remained at the pinnacle of the Gospel music circuit. It was there they refined the strengths that would soon make them a more mainstream attraction.

In 1975, the Oaks were asked to open a number of dates for Roy Clark. Jim Halsey, Clark’s manager, was impressed by their abilities and went
backstage.

“He told us we were three-and-a-half minutes away – 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 Halsey’s advice and the result was a breakthrough for the Oaks.

Within a year, Paul Simon tapped them to sing backup for his hit “Slip Slidin’ Away” and they went on to record with George Jones, Brenda Lee, Johnny Cash, Roy Rogers, Billy Ray Cyrus, Bill Monroe, Ray Charles, and others.

The Oaks appeared before four presidents, produced one of the first Country music videos, took part in the first headline tour of the USSR, and remain one of the most enduringly-successful touring groups anywhere.

They did it with a consistently upbeat musical approach and consistent business savvy.

“We always look for songs that have lasting value and that are uplifting,” says Allen, who has co-produced the Oaks’ last seven albums. “You don’t hear us singing ‘cheating’ or ‘drinking’ songs, but ‘loving’ songs, because we think that will last.”

He added, “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.”

The Oaks are tireless advocates of charitable and civic causes, serving as spokesmen and/or board members of fundraisers for the Boy Scouts of America, the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, Feed The Children, the National Anthem Project, and many more national organizations.

The Oaks’ high-energy stage show remains the heart and soul of what they do; they refine their show several times a year to keep it fresh.

“We’re not willing to rest on our laurels,” Golden says. “As a group, we do things constantly to challenge ourselves, to try to do something different or better than the last time we did it.”

“I feel like I can do what I do on stage just as good now as I could 20 years ago,” states Bonsall. “In fact…I plan to be rockin’ my tail off out there as long as I’m healthy and don’t look stupid doing it.”

Tickets for the Center Stage performance range from $42 to $58 and may be purchased at the Performing Arts Ticket Office, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. To order by phone, call 805/756-2787; to order by fax: 805/756-6088.

Order on-line at www.pacslo.org. Center Stage Sponsoring Partner: Cat Country 96.1 FM

For audio and video samples of all Cal Poly Arts events, visit http://www.calpolyarts.org.

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