

2009 – 2010 Season

**Performing Arts Series**

Charles R. Rogers, Artistic Director
presents

Tommy Emmanuel

Rick Price

guest appearance

8 p.m.

Yardley Hall

Johnson County Community College

This evening's selections will be announced from the stage.

Biographies

TOMMY EMMANUEL – Two-time Grammy nominee Tommy Emmanuel is one of Australia’s most respected musicians. The legendary guitarist has a professional career that spans over four decades and continues to intersect with some of the finest musicians throughout the world. A household name in his native Australia, Tommy has garnered hundreds of thousands of loyal fans worldwide. Tommy’s unique style - he calls it simply “finger style” - is akin to playing guitar the way a pianist plays piano, using all 10 fingers. Rather than using a whole band for melody, rhythm, bass and drum parts, Tommy plays all that- and more -on one guitar. Guitar legend Chet Atkins was one of the first to inspire Emmanuel to try this “fingerpicker” style as a child. Decades later, Atkins himself became one of Emmanuel’s biggest fans. Emmanuel’s unusual talent and life are common lore in Australia. Born into a musical family, Tommy and his older brother Phil were considered child prodigies. Tommy got his first guitar at age 4 and was taught by his mother. He learned by ear, with no formal instruction, and has never read music. By the age of 6, he was already working as a professional musician. As children in the 1960s, Tommy and his older brother Phil were in the family band, variously named The Emmanuel Quartet, The Midget Safaries and The Trailblazers. Tommy played rhythm guitar and Phil played lead, along with their brother Chris on drums and sister Virginia on slide guitar. The Emmanuel siblings’ band earned the family’s sole income for several years, but Tommy doesn’t remember such responsibility as a hardship: “I’ve spent all my life from the age of 4 playing music and entertaining people. I never wanted to do anything else. Music brings people together.” By age 10, Emmanuel had played his way across Australia.

In 1962, Tommy heard Nashville guitarist Chet Atkins’ music for the first time and was riveted by the complexity of Atkins’ solo sound. He spent hours trying to figure out the “fingerpicking” style and gobbled up each of the American star’s albums as they came out. Shortly after his father’s death of a heart attack in 1966, Tommy even wrote Chet a letter and, to his surprise, the famous artist and producer wrote him back. Chet would grow to become Tommy’s mentor and primary influence, but it would be another 15 years before the two would finally meet in person.

After his father died, the Emmanuel family was approached by Australian country music star Buddy Williams, who took the family on the road until they were forced by the Australian child welfare department to stop traveling. The children were then sent to a regular school. During these years, Tommy was playing in The Trailblazers on weekends. He also taught guitar and made numerous television appearances in musical competitions. Emmanuel’s first brush with fame came when The Trailblazers won two televised talent contests and were able to produce an album.

Leaving school and home in his early teens, Tommy embraced big city life in Sydney in order to pursue his career as a professional guitarist. By the ’70s, he was playing in clubs all over the city and soon found himself in high demand as a session player and sideman known for his versatility and easy-going personality. During the mid-70s through the early 80s, Emmanuel played on recordings for Air Supply, Men at Work and dozens of other popular bands and artists, as well as thousands of commercial jingles. He became known as one of the best modern guitarists in Australia. Some of his most notable appearances were on the Air Supply hit singles “Lost in Love,” “All Out of Love,” “Every Woman in the World” and “Now and Forever.”

In 1985 Emmanuel joined one of the decade’s biggest Australian rock bands, Dragon, and recorded the platinum-selling album *Dreams of Ordinary Men*. In 1987, Dragon toured with

Tina Turner on her “Break Every Rule” tour. As a songwriter (co-writing with 1960s Australian star Steve Kipner), his compositions have been recorded by Olivia Newton-John, Al Jarreau and Sheena Easton. It is for his successful solo career, however, that Emmanuel is best known.

In 1980 Emmanuel made a trip to the United States and finally met and got to play with his hero, Chet Atkins, in Nashville. From that magical moment forward, the Tennessee master guitarist and producer took the 20-something Australian ace under his wing and began introducing him to other guitar legends. Tommy speaks of his mentor with the love and gratitude of a son and Atkins’ influences are evident throughout his music and personal philosophy. Emmanuel’s technical precision, his virtuosic improvisations and his unusually broad repertoire- which encompasses not only country and bluegrass, but pop, jazz, blues, gospel, even classical, flamenco and aboriginal styles -also bespeak Chet Atkins’ distinctive legacy.

Emmanuel got his solo instrumental career off the ground with the release of the gentle and textural *Up from Down Under* album in 1988. In the '90s his efforts blossomed and began to be recognized and rewarded by the Australian music industry and media. He set sales records that have yet to be broken. His versatility has taken Emmanuel from international Jazz Festivals to shows with the Sydney Philharmonic, the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, and performances for the Masai people in remote areas of Kenya. Tommy’s dream of recording with Chet Atkins came true in 1996 when the pair made an album titled *The Day the Finger Pickers Took Over the World*, for which Emmanuel received his first Grammy award nomination.

Tommy was well-known in Australia, Asia and Europe long before his presence was felt in the U.S. However, in 1997 his album *Midnight Drive* was in the top five for 16 weeks, which made him the “most added artist” on the NAC radio charts that year. In Nashville in 1999, Tommy was honored by his mentor Chet Atkins with the title of “Certified Guitar Player” for his contribution to fingerstyle guitar, a rare distinction shared by only three other people in the world (Jerry Reed, Steve Wariner and John Knowles). It was a crowning moment for Emmanuel and a title the self-proclaimed “humble, uneducated, country kid” from Down Under takes very seriously. After Tommy’s appearance with his brother Phil in the Closing Ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games, and his debut at the famous Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, in late 2000, Americans wanted to know who this mysterious Australian guitar virtuoso was. In 2001, Emmanuel released his first solo-acoustic album, *Only*, and in 2002 it debuted in the U.S.

In all, Emmanuel’s catalogue includes 16 musical recordings running the gamut of solos, duets, ensembles, cover tunes, originals, both electric and acoustic guitar. He has made several instructional DVDs and regularly teaches master classes on the road. At 54, performing live is more important to him than ever and he tours constantly, playing about 340 concerts a year for the last four years. Guitar players of all levels come to his shows to watch the magic hands of the “Guitar Wizard of Oz,” but his appeal goes far beyond musicians. His live shows are known for their humor, passion and infectious joy. The power of his charismatic showmanship will be Emmanuel’s legacy. Tommy Emmanuel’s message is pure love for the music and his delight in sharing it with the world, one audience at a time.

“Run, do not walk, to a Tommy Emmanuel concert near you. True happiness is in tragically short supply right now, all over the world, but you will definitely find it there.”

- Richard McFalls, *Cactus Cafe Show Review (Austin, TX)*

RICK PRICE – Rick Price has one of the most soulful voices in contemporary Australian music. He’s also one of the most accredited Australian singer/songwriters of the 1990s. Having released eight albums to date, Price has had career sales exceeding 340,000 units in Australia, has received multiple platinum and gold awards, and has won and been nominated for several industry awards. Since his pop idol days, Rick has forged himself a successful career not only as a great recording artist, but also as a true musical troubadour – a multi-instrumentalist, a collaborator, a producer, a man and his songs on an endless tour.

Price was born in Beaudesert, a small country town near Brisbane, Queensland. He began playing music at the age of 9 and appearing with his family band, Union Beau. He learned to play guitar, piano, drums, keyboards and harmonica. At 18, Price escaped to Sydney and continued working as a musician, playing bass with various inner city outfits and landing the occasional bit of studio and touring work.

During the mid-80s Rick turned his focus more towards his singing. His distinctive vocals were soon in demand and in 1988 he was invited to sing “Celebration of a Nation,” the theme song for Australia’s Bicentennial. This opportunity helped lay the foundations for his solo career.

Price began writing his own material in the late 80s. His solo career was launched in 1992 when his pop singles “Not A Day Goes By,” “Heaven Knows,” and “Walk Away Renee” all reached the Top 15 on the Australian national singles chart. Title track “Heaven Knows” was released in over 20 countries and also achieved Top 40 status in Europe. Price earned the APRA (Australasian Performing Rights Association) Song of the Year songwriting award for “Heaven Knows” and the *Heaven Knows* album went triple platinum in Australia and Southeast Asia. He has received awards for his groundbreaking success in opening Asian markets to Australian music. This first album’s popularity was the beginning of a lifelong ambition for Price. In less than 12 months, he went from relative obscurity to become one of the biggest names in Australian music.

With four ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) nominations and numerous Australian Music Awards behind him, Price wrote and recorded his critically acclaimed second album, *Tamborine Mountain*, in 1995. The album was an experimental return to Price’s country/rhythm and blues roots and it also achieved platinum status. In November and December 1995, following the release of the album, Price then toured with Australia’s legendary guitarist Tommy Emmanuel. The tour – “Rick Price & Tommy Emmanuel - Together & Alone” – was a sell-out. It received rave reviews from critics and the public alike.

When he isn’t recording his own material, Rick has spent much of his time writing with, recording and producing for other Australian artists such as Tamara Stewart, Lisa Chappell and David Franj. Most recently Price has been working in TV and film. He wrote and recorded with Mitch Grainger, who performed Rick’s song, “Nobody Knows My Name,” for the movie *December Boys*.

His latest album, released in 2008, is called *Revisited* and contains a collection of his greatest hits recorded in an intimate acoustic style. A talented multi-instrumentalist, as well as a vocalist, Rick plays nearly all the instruments on *Revisited*. The album was recorded in his own studio and released under his own label, Clarice Records, named after his late mother. Price is currently touring the U.S. with fellow Aussie Tommy Emmanuel in support of *Revisited*.

TOMMY EMMANUEL

Selected Discography

Center Stage (2008)
The Mystery (2006)
Live One (2005)
Endless Road (2004)
Greatest Hits (2001)
Only (2000)
Collaboration - with Various Guests (1998)
The Day Finger Pickers Took Over the World - duets with Chet Atkins (1997)
Can't Get Enough - with Larry Carlton, Chet Atkins and Robben Ford
/Released as Midnight Drive in US (1996)
Terra Firma - with Phil Emmanuel (1995)
Classical Gas - with the Australian Philharmonic Orchestra (1995)
Initiation (Asian release) (1995)
The Journey Continues (1993)
The Journey (1993)
Determination (1992)
Dare to Be Different (1990)
Up From Down Under (1987)
From Out of Nowhere - with Pee Wee Clark (1979)

Honors & Awards

2009 Guitar Legend Award, *Guitar Player Magazine*
2008 Best Acoustic Guitarist in *Guitar Player Magazine's* Reader's Choice Awards
Gold Medal - Fingerstyle category, *Acoustic Guitar Magazine's* Player's Choice Awards
2007 Instrumental of the Year, "Gameshow Rag," Country Music Association of Australia
2006 Grammy Nomination, Best Country Instrumental Performance, "Gameshow Rag"
2005 Album of the Year & Thumbpicker of the Year, National Thumb pickers Hall of Fame
Induction into the Thumbpickers Hall of Fame (Muhlenberg, KY).
Instrumental of the Year, "Tall Fiddler," Country Music Association of Australia
2000 Appearance with Phil Emmanuel at the Closing Ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games
1999 Chet Atkins "Certified Guitar Player" Award for lifetime contribution to fingerstyle guitar playing
1998 Best Country Instrumental Album - Nashville Music Awards
1997 Grammy Nomination with Chet Atkins, Best Country Instrumental Performance for "Smokey Mountain Lullabye," *The Day Fingerpickers Took Over the World*
Most Added Artist on Smooth Jazz Radio, North America
MO award for Australian Performer of the Year
1996 Gold Record for *Classical Gas* sales of 35,000 copies
1995 MO award for Australian Performer of the Year
Paul Harris Fellow, fundraising for the Rotary Club
1994 Best Adult Contemporary album, *The Journey*, Australian Record Industry Association
1992 Best Adult Contemporary album, *Determination*, Australian Record Industry Association
Three Platinum Records for album sales in Australia, New Zealand and Asia of *Up From Down Under*, *Dare to Be Different*, and *Determination*.
1991-94 Best Guitarist - *Rolling Stone* (Australia)
1991 Australian Performing Right Association (APRA) Songwriting Award for "Stevie's Blues" (*Determination*).
1989-90 Ambassador of Music in Australia
1988 Best Studio Musician, Bi-Centennial Music Week Award (Australia)
1986-88 Australia's Best Guitarist - *Juke Magazine* (Australia)