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For immediate release:

Los Lobos, Taj Mahal to Play Mondavi Center

January 18, 2008; Davis, California—The three-time Grammy Award-winning Mexican-American rock band **Los Lobos** will put down their electric instruments and pick up their *guitarones*, *jaranas*, and *bajo sextos* to play an acoustic set of classic Los Lobos tunes and traditional folkloric songs from Colombia, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Mexico in a special concert at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** at **UC Davis**. Also appearing will be singer, multi-instrumentalist, two-time Grammy winner, and blues legend **Taj Mahal** with his trio.

The event will begin at 8 pm on February 16 in Mondavi Center's Jackson Hall on the UC Davis campus. A very limited number of tickets are available from the Mondavi Center Ticket Office at 530.754.ARTS (2787) or online at MondaviArts.org. The event is presented as part of Mondavi Center's **American Heritage** series.

Having just celebrated their 30th anniversary as a band, Los Lobos return to their acoustic roots for the current *En Vivo* tour. Founded in 1973 by **David Hidalgo**, **Cesar Rosas**, **Louie Perez**, and **Conrad Lozano**, who met as students at Garfield High School in East Los Angeles, the group's members got their start playing the rock, soul, blues, and funk they heard on the radio, but found their musical identity by studying and incorporating the sounds of the traditional Mexican music their parents played at home. Thirty years later, with 15 CDs, three Grammy Awards, and one *Billboard* no. 1 hit under their belts, Los Lobos is recognized as one of the great American rock bands.

“With the exception of **U2**, no other band has stayed on top of its game as long as Los Lobos,” wrote *Rolling Stone*.

In the beginning, the members of Los Lobos became interested in traditional Mexican music largely as a result of the political and cultural climate of predominately Hispanic East Los Angeles in the late '60s and early '70s, which gave rise to the Chicano Power movement and related efforts toward cultural pride and awareness. The band, calling themselves Los Lobos del Este de Los Angeles (“the Wolves of East Los Angeles”), quickly learned a repertoire of some 150 traditional songs, accompanying themselves on the acoustic instruments employed by their Mexican precursors—*bajo sexto*, *guitarron*, *jarana*, *requinto*, and button accordion.

The group became a fixture in East L.A., playing prolifically at barrio restaurants, parties, and weddings, and in 1977 released an LP of traditional material called *Just another band from East L.A.* But the group never left their rock 'n' roll roots entirely behind, and continued to play amplified shows on a regular basis. Encouraged by **Tito Larriva**, a member of L.A.'s Tex-Mex punk trio the **Plugs**, the group started to play punk rock clubs

around Los Angeles, and gradually won a following. In 1982, Los Lobos were signed to Slash Records and recorded an EP, *And A Time To Dance*, followed by *How Will The Wolf Survive?* (1984) and *By the Light of the Moon* (1987). Both albums reached the national top 50 and topped several critics' year-end lists. They toured nationally and abroad, and in 1987 hit the top of the charts with the soundtrack for the film *La Bamba*, director **Luis Valdez**' feature about **Ritchie Valens**, the first Hispanic rock 'n' roll star. The film became a surprise box-office smash, but the soundtrack album was an even bigger hit, selling two million copies, and Los Lobos' version of the title track reached number one.

Many groups might have tried to capitalize on that success by issuing a series of similar-sounding recordings, but Los Lobos chose to follow their own artistic impulses, producing a body of work as rich and varied as any rock group of the past 30 years. In 1988, the band returned to the foundations of their music with *La Pistola y El Corazón*, an album of acoustic traditional music, winning their second Grammy Award. Their greatest triumph, by general acclaim, came with the recording of *Kiko* in 1992, an album that took their unique mixture of traditional Mexican sounds and contemporary rock to new levels.

The group went into film music, contributing to *Desperado* (resulting in a third Grammy), *From Dusk 'Til Dawn*, *The Mambo Kings*, *Feeling Minnesota* and other films. Recent years have seen the release of several career compilations, as well as exciting new material, including 2003's *The Ride*, which featured guest performances by **Elvis Costello**, **Tom Waits**, **Ruben Blades**, and others, and last year's acclaimed *The Town and the City*, which *The New York Times* described as "some roots-rock, some Caribbean rhythms, some rangy guitar, and some existential reflections creating a rediscovered a sense of mystery."

Personnel for Los Lobos' Mondavi Center concert will be **Steve Berlin** (saxophones, percussion, flute, midisax, harmonica, and melodica), **Louie Pérez** (drums, guitar, percussion, and vocals), **Conrad Lozano**, (bass, guitar, and vocals), **David Hidalgo**, (vocals, guitars, accordion, percussion, bass, keyboards, melodica, drums, violin, and banjo), and **Cesar Rojas** (vocals, guitar, and mandolin).

Born Henry St. Claire Fredericks in Harlem on May 17, 1942, Taj Mahal grew up in Springfield, Massachusetts. His father, a jazz pianist/composer/arranger of Caribbean descent, and his mother, a gospel-singing schoolteacher from South Carolina, encouraged his love of music and exposed him to a wide variety of styles and traditions, and the young musician quickly learned to play piano, clarinet, trombone, and harmonica before discovering his step-father's guitar and becoming serious about that instrument in his early teens. He learned the "Piedmont" blues styles from **Lynnwood Perry**, an accomplished young guitarist from North Carolina who lived nearby, and learned to play the music of blues greats like **Muddy Waters**, **Lightin' Hopkins**, **John Lee Hooker**, and **Jimmy Reed**. He also threw himself into the study of older forms of African-American music, Caribbean music, and African sounds.

While attending the University of Massachusetts at Amherst as an agriculture student in the early 1960s, he began playing with a popular local party band, and left Massachusetts in 1964 for the blues clubs of Los Angeles, where he formed **The Rising Sons** with **Ry Cooder** and opened for **Otis Redding**, **The Temptations**, and others. Mahal played with blues legends such as **Howlin' Wolf**, **Junior Wells**, and **Buddy Guy**, and in the late '60s began releasing recordings under his own name, including the hugely influential *Taj Mahal* (1967), *The Natch'l Blues* (1968), and *Giant Step/De Old Folks at Home* (1969). From his blues beginnings, Mahal went on to forge a style that pulled together a variety of African, Caribbean, Spanish, and African-American influences with adventurous recordings such as *Happy to Be Just Like I Am* (1971), *Recycling the Blues and Other Related Stuff* (1972), the Grammy-nominated soundtrack to the movie *Souther* (1973), *Mo' Roots* (1974), *Music Fuh Ya' (Music Para Tu)* (1977), and *Evolution (The Most Recent)* (1978).

Taj's recorded output slowed during the 1980s as he toured relentlessly and immersed himself in the music and culture of his new home in Hawaii. Still, he has continued to release highly individual recordings such as *Dancing the Blues* (1993), *Phantom Blues* (1996), *An Evening of Acoustic Music* (1996) and the Grammy

Award-winning *Señor Blues* (1997), all of which were commercial and critical successes. Since 2000, he has been a continued presence on the international touring circuit, and has released a second Grammy-winning album, *Shoutin' in Key*. He remains one of the most unique and respected figures in American “roots” music, a genre he helped to define.

For his Mondavi Center concert, Mahal will perform on guitar, piano, and banjo, accompanied by **Bill Rich** (bass) and **Kester Smith** (drums).

“I’ve followed Taj Mahal for decades and he keeps getting better; pairing him with Los Lobos promises to be an awesome evening,” said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center’s executive director.

What: **Taj Mahal & Los Lobos**
When: Friday, February 16, 8 pm
Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis
Admission: \$45/\$40/\$35 Adults • \$22.50/\$20/\$17.50 Students, Children
Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
Patrons with disabilities: 530.754.2787
<http://www.MondaviArts.org>
530.754.5402 [TDD]

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