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For immediate release:

Folk-Rock Star Roger McGuinn to Play Mondavi Center

January 7, 2008; Davis, California—Guitarist, singer, and songwriter **Roger McGuinn** is an American music icon. Best-known as the mastermind behind the pioneering folk-rock band the **Byrds** and 1960s hits including “Mr. Tambourine Man,” “Turn, Turn, Turn,” and “Eight Miles High,” McGuinn’s brilliant rock and roll arrangements of traditional folk material and unique guitar style have influenced generation after generation of musicians. McGuinn will perform a solo concert next month at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts** at **UC Davis**.

The concert will begin at 8 pm on Friday, February 1, in the Mondavi Center’s Jackson Hall on the UC Davis campus. 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 the Mondavi Center’s **American Heritage Series**.

Roger McGuinn, born James Joseph McGuinn III on July 13, 1942, in Chicago, is one of the key figures of American popular music in the 1960s. His vocals, guitar playing, and arrangements as a founding member and leader of the Byrds virtually defined folk-rock and influenced a long list of musicians including many of the most popular and influential stars of the 1960s and beyond, including the **Beatles**, **Bruce Springsteen**, **Tom Petty**, **R.E.M.**, **Wilco**, and many others. McGuinn’s arrangements of folk material—typically featuring soaring group harmonies and his own jangling 12-string Rickenbacker electric guitar—established folk-rock as a musical genre, just as the Byrds’ early forays into country music paved the way for later country-rock groups such as the **Eagles**. “Music would be a very, very different place if it weren’t for Roger McGuinn,” wrote *Rolling Stone*.

McGuinn was already a veteran of the New York and Los Angeles folk music scenes when he co-founded the group that would become the Byrds with **Gene Clark** and **David Crosby** in 1964. As a teenager, McGuinn had studied banjo and guitar at Chicago’s **Old Town School of Folk Music** and performed in local clubs. He toured and recorded with the famed **Limelighters** folk group and the **Chad Mitchell Trio**, until pop singer-songwriter **Bobby Darin** lured him away with an offer of a job as a session musician and songwriter. By 1963, McGuinn had worked as a sideman and arranger for a variety of acts including **Hoyt Axton**, the **Irish Rovers**, **Judy Collins**, and **Tom and Jerry** (later known as **Simon and Garfunkel**), but by 1963, he was taken by the desire to strike out on his own.

Having heard the exuberant rock and roll of the early Beatles, McGuinn wanted to meld traditional folk music with electrified, heavily rhythmic arrangements similar to what the Beatles had done with American rhythm

and blues. He moved to California and began performing in this new style in Los Angeles clubs, and was soon joined by singer-songwriter Gene Clark, a former member of the **New Christy Minstrels**, and then David Crosby, another folk singer-songwriter who was ready to absorb the influences of the “British Invasion” rock groups. (Both Clark and Crosby would go on to significant post-Byrds careers, with Crosby achieving superstardom as a member of **Crosby, Stills, and Nash**.) Around this time, McGuinn adopted the electric 12-string Rickenbacker guitar that would become his trademark, and developed the unique, chiming sound that has echoed through the work of countless guitarists since.

Initially known as the **Jet Set**, the trio added drummer **Mike Clarke** and drafted bluegrass mandolinist **Chris Hillman** to play bass guitar. After a false-start single for Elektra Records in 1964 under the name the **Beefeaters**, the band changed its name to the Byrds and was signed by Columbia Records in January 1965. With a group of studio musicians and McGuinn providing the instrumentation, McGuinn, Clark, and Crosby harmonized on the **Bob Dylan** song “Mr. Tambourine Man,” and the rest is history: The song shot to the top of the charts, and led to a string of hit singles including “Turn, Turn, Turn,” “I’ll Feel a Whole Lot Better,” “So You Want to be a Rock ‘n’ Roll Star,” and “Eight Miles High,” a tune that featured a remarkable, groundbreaking guitar solo by McGuinn. Inspired by the modal jazz excursions of saxophonist **John Coltrane**, McGuinn’s free-flowing improvisation prompted countless imitations by rock guitarists of the mid-1960s psychedelic era.

The Byrds’ explosive popularity and creative innovations prompted some to label the band as “the American Beatles”—a title the band members rejected—but the group’s chemistry proved fragile. By the end of 1967, only McGuinn and Hillman remained from the original line-up, and the group was poised to move in a new direction with new members **Gram Parsons**, a legendary country-rock pioneer, and the extraordinary country/bluegrass guitarist **Clarence White**. In 1968, the group became the first rock band to play the *Grand Ole Opry* radio show and released the landmark *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* album, a recording often credited as inspiring Bob Dylan and many other leading figures in rock to reconsider country music.

McGuinn disbanded the Byrds in 1973 and began to work as a sideman for the likes of Bob Dylan, joining Dylan’s legendary Rolling Thunder Revue (which included **Joan Baez**, **Ramblin’ Jack Elliott**, **Joni Mitchell**, and many others), and launched a solo career, releasing a series of solo albums including *Cardiff Rose* (1976), which features many of the Rolling Thunder Revue musicians and is often considered a classic.

Over the years, McGuinn has periodically performed with various ex-members of the original Byrds, recording an album and touring with Clark and Hillman in the late 1970s and recording a few songs with Crosby and Hillman for release with *The Byrds* boxed set CD collection issued by Sony in 1990. He toured extensively with a back-up band in support of the album *Back from Rio*, issued by Arista in 1991, which sold 500,000 copies. Much of the time, however, McGuinn has worked as a solo artist performing concerts accompanied only by his own acoustic and electric guitar and revisiting Byrds hits and classic folk tunes.

Most recently, McGuinn has devoted himself to recording an ongoing series of traditional folk songs and uploading them onto the internet site folkden.com, part of his home page, <http://mcguinn.com>. He has posted a new solo recording of traditional folk material every month for the past several years, complete with lyrics, guitar tablature, personal reminiscences and even illustrative artwork. His most recent album, *Treasures from the Folk Den* on Appleseed Records, grew out of this practice, as he re-recorded 18 Folk Den songs with many of his musical heroes, including **Pete Seeger**, **Judy Collins**, and **Odetta**.

“Roger McGuinn’s band mate in the Byrds has said, ‘If you can remember the ‘60s, you weren’t there,’” said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center’s executive director. “Roger McGuinn not only remembers the ‘60s, but continues to deliver the powerful guitar playing, singing, and arranging which made the Byrds a seminal force in American popular music during a time of great change, growth, and promise. We look forward to hosting him as part of our American Heritage Series.”

What: Roger McGuinn
When: February 1, 2008 ▪ 8 pm
Where: Jackson Hall
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts
University of California, Davis
Admission: \$42/\$37/\$32 Adults • \$21/\$18.50/\$16 Students & Children
Tickets/Info: 530.754.ARTS (2787)
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)
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