

For Immediate Release

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NORTH TEXAS IRISH FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 22ND YEAR WITH FRIDAY NIGHT KICK-OFF CONCERT

Indoor Event to be held March 5, 6 and 7, 2004 at Fair Park

DALLAS —The North Texas Irish Festival (NTIF), one of the largest Celtic cultural events in the nation, will kick-off its 22nd annual celebration with a Friday night concert on March 5, 2004. Festivities will continue throughout the weekend, from Saturday, March 6 through Sunday, March 7, and feature some of the very finest in Irish and Scottish entertainment including world famous bands, award-winning dancers, enchanting storytellers and educational workshops. As in the past, the festival will also offer a variety of delicious Irish and international food and drink, cultural crafts, and ethnic vendors. In recognition of the many prominent women in both Celtic fact and fiction, a special tribute to Celtic Women in History will also be a highlight of this year's event.

Performers

The North Texas Irish Festival is known internationally as a showcase for the best in Celtic entertainment. This year's festival will feature a rich blend of traditional and modern Celtic bands and solo artists from Europe, Canada and the US. In keeping with the 2004 festival's tribute to Celtic Women, many of the headline performers are women who have risen to the top of their fields of music, including: The Cathie Ryan Band, Maire Ni Chathasaigh & Chris Newman, The Patty Furlong Band, and Liz Carroll & John Doyle. The Friday Night Kickoff Concert will feature Brothers 3, The Elders and other local bands. Many of the past top performers will also return to the festival this year, including: The Willow Band, Men of Worth and Ed Miller. Some of the popular local and regional entertainers will include the Irish Rogues, Beyond the Pale, Smithfield Fair, Threadneedle Street and many others. Performances by area dance groups will include Emerald School of Dance and McTeggart Irish Dancers.

Cultural

In addition to the musical and dance performances, the festival brings a wide variety of exhibitors, workshops, plays and demonstrations. The popular "Scottish Village" will return to this year's festival where local Scottish clans will feature demonstrations and explanations as to the strong connection between the Irish and Scots in their music, ancestry and culture. The "Urchin Street Faire" will again

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offer a special place where the younger Celts can find entertainment, education, play and fun, including music, dance, storytelling, theater, magic and mystery.

Celtic Women

The cultural area will also explore the strength and importance of "Celtic Women in History" both in fact and legend with displays, entertainment and educational programs. A few of the honored women will include the fabled Lady of Shallot described in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, 15 year old Annie Moore, the first immigrant to be processed at Ellis Island, the famed Celtic warrior, Boredica and Mary McAleese, the 8th President of Ireland.

Hours, Admission and Location

Festival hours are Friday evening, March 5 from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday, March 6 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. and Sunday, March 7 from 11:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Ticket prices are \$15 each day for adults on Saturday or Sunday, \$10 for Friday night, or \$25 for a weekend pass. Children 11 and under are free. Students (with ID) and Senior Citizens receive a \$2 discount. The events will take place at Fair Park's Centennial and Automobile Buildings as well as covered areas, between the Hall of State and the park's main gate on Parry Avenue. Parking is available in and around Fair Park and DART transportation is available from many locations throughout the Metroplex. The public can call **972-943-4624** or visit www.ntif.org for more information or to volunteer to work at the festival.

About the Southwest Celtic Music Association

The Southwest Celtic Music Association (SCMA) is the producing organization for the North Texas Irish Festival (NTIF). Over 600 volunteers will help in organization, promotion and execution of this year's festival. The first such festival was held on March 5, 1983 and was billed as the First Texas Céili. This event was so popular that it has continued every year since on the first weekend in March as the North Texas Irish Festival. Shortly after the first festival, the all-volunteer Southwest Celtic Music Association was formed to promote the study, performance and preservation of traditional Celtic music, dance and culture. In 1984, the event was moved to Fair Park and its name changed to the North Texas Irish Festival. The Southwest Celtic Music Association is a 501(c) 3 corporation headquartered in Dallas, Texas and serves a five-state regional area. The organization maintains a web site at www.scmatax.org.

Sponsors

The North Texas Irish Festival is produced and sponsored by the Southwest Celtic Music Association. Generous additional sponsorship is provided by Guinness, Budweiser, Coca Cola, Tom Thumb, Pernod Ricard/Jameson & Bushmills Irish Whiskey, Sheraton Brookhollow, Sullivan-Perkins, and Trinity Hall Irish Pub and Restaurant. Media support is provided by the AM Journal Express, Cinemark, DCTV Dallas Community Television, Dallas Observer, and Clear Channel stations KDMX 102.9, KISS 106.1, KDGE 102.1, KZPS 92.5.

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