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Concord Music Group Reactivates Stax Records; Famed Soul Label's 50TH Anniversary to Include Reissues, New Artists, Events, More

Year of Releases, Events, Films Mark Milestone; Maurice White/EFW Tribute First Release on Reactivated Stax; Angie Stone, R&B Icon Isaac Hayes Among New Signings

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--In honor of the 50th anniversary of the legendary label Stax -- home to many of soul music's most enduring recordings -- Concord Music Group is pleased to announce a year of activity that will include deluxe reissues, special events and the reactivation of the label with a slate of new signings. Stax's contribution to popular music is enormous. Releasing hit after hit from Otis Redding, Booker T. & the MGs, the Bar-Kays, Isaac Hayes, Sam and Dave, the Staple Singers, Eddie Floyd, Johnnie Taylor, William Bell and Rufus and Carla Thomas, among many, many others, the Memphis soul label established itself as a one-of-a-kind brand. With a grittier sound than Motown's and arguably the greatest house band of all time (Booker T. & the MGs), Stax pushed soul music to new heights. But the strength and commitment of the artists was also socially significant, as was the undeniable symbolism of the MGs' black and white musicians playing together in the segregated South. Stax grew up during years of enormous socio-political turmoil. The label's legacy stands as a testament to their extraordinary commitment and dedication to civil rights, both politically and culturally. Songs like "Hold On" "Comin' (Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay" "Respect Yourself" and "Knock on Wood" defined a generation.

It's a fitting tribute to Stax that not only will its past glories be suitably honored during 2007, but its future will be assured as well. The first new signings to Stax include soul luminary and Stax patriarch Isaac Hayes and superlative vocalist Angie Stone. Isaac Hayes remains an integral force in Stax and beyond, and Angie Stone is widely regarded as one of her generation's few heirs to the grand tradition of R&B.

"Stax always has been and always will be Soul Music, I was a part of that," said Hayes. "I am coming back to Stax because there is still so much to do. It's like coming home."

"The thrill of putting out music on the label that brought the world Otis, Booker T, the Staples and so many other artists who made me want to sing in the first place is simply indescribable," added Stone. "I simply can't believe that I will be a Stax artist" and "I'll be label mates with Isaac Hayes. The staff at Stax share my belief that soul has to stay in touch with its origins. We're going to make beautiful music together."

"These two signings sum up our vision for Stax -- they represent the roots and the future of the soul tradition," noted Concord executive VP of A&R John Burk. "As the co-writer, producer and arranger of Stax hits like "Soul Man" "Hold On" "Comin' as well as the genius behind "Shaft" "Hot Buttered Soul" and other hugely influential records, Isaac has established himself as a visionary of modern music. And Angie Stone, with her extraordinary voice, artistic intelligence and soulful sensibilities, is ideally suited to carry on the tradition. We're thrilled that she's joined us as we enter a new era in which Stax will once again be the home for the greatest artists in soul and R&B."

The first new release on Stax will be Interpretations, a star-studded tribute to the songs of Earth Wind & Fire mastermind Maurice White. The disc will boast performances by such EFW acolytes as Chaka Khan on "Shining Star", Musiq Soulchild "Reasons", Meshell Ndegeocello "Fantasy", Kirk Franklin "September", The Randy Watson Experience (aka "Questlove of The Roots") featuring Bilal "Can't Hide Love", Dwele "That's The Way of the World", and the aforementioned Stax family member Angie Stone on "Be Ever Wonderful" among other stellar artists. "Concord came to me with the Interpretations concept," says Memphis native White, who helped match the artists with his songs for the project. "Right away I felt very positive about it. I could tell it was a labor of love."

Concord, which acquired the legendary Memphis label as part of its purchase of Fantasy Records in 2004, will also honor Stax's 50th year by releasing definitive collections, rare performances, unreleased tracks and more from the Memphis R&B imprint in deluxe new packages. The first of these will be Stax 50: A 50th Anniversary Celebration, a two-CD, 50-track anthology brimming with hits from Sam & Dave ("Soul Man," "Hold On" "Comin' (Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," "Respect"), Booker T. & the MGs ("Green Onions"), Isaac Hayes ("Theme from Shaft," "Never Can Say Goodbye"), The Staple Singers ("Respect Yourself," "I'll Take You There"), Eddie Floyd ("Knock on Wood"), Rufus Thomas ("Walkin' the Dog"), Carla Thomas ("B-A-B-Y"), Jean Knight ("Mr. Big Stuff") and many more. Featuring a unique lenticular cover and extensive notes from Stax historian Rob Bowman's acclaimed book *Soulsville U.S.A.: The Story of Stax*, this extraordinary compilation is an authoritative display of Stax's creative vitality and unbridled chart power.

Plans for digital releases, remixes and other projects are also in the works; the anniversary year's releases are slated to

include more than 20 CDs and DVDs. "This is about honoring an extraordinary legacy," said CMG General Manager Gene Rumsey. "We look forward not only to providing indispensable collections of the most famous Stax recordings, but also to shining a spotlight on many lesser-known and undiscovered gems."

In tandem with Soulsville USA, the City of Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Stax Museum of American Soul, Concord will also participate in numerous live, broadcast and other events as part of an extensive year of activity heralding "Memphis Celebrates 50 Years of Soul" including a feature length documentary illustrating the staggering Stax story.

"Our partnership with the Concord Music Group has been extremely gratifying," said Deanie Parker, President/CEO of Soulsville USA and former Director of Publicity, Artists and Community Relations at Stax. "The people at Concord get it. I appreciate the respect that they have for Stax's music and the legacy, their ability to embrace the spirit and philosophy of Stax, and their marketing savvy."

Concord looks forward to a joyous celebration of Stax's 50th anniversary, a productive relationship with Soulsville USA and the City of Memphis, and an exciting new chapter in the story of one of music's all-time greatest labels

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