

For Immediate Release

Chuck Prophet, Jello Biafra, and Other Artists to Come Together to Support Wrongfully-Convicted Trio

West Memphis Three Awareness Day Will Attract Defenders from Around the Globe

July xx, 2005: San Francisco, Calif.—On July 23, 2005, Chuck Prophet and other artists will come together at The Swedish American Music Hall (2170 Market Street) at 6:30 p.m. for a night of acoustic music designed to raise money for the defense fund of Damien Echols, Jessie Misskelley, Jr., and Jason Baldwin. The three Arkansas men, dubbed the West Memphis Three, were convicted of the 1993 murders of three elementary school children. Since their trials were chronicled by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky in the HBO documentary, *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills*, a groundswell of support has formed around the Echols, Misskelley, and Baldwin—support that includes a wide array of artists such as Metallica, Henry Rollins, Pearl Jam’s Eddie Vedder, Tom Waits, Winona Ryder, *South Park* creator Trey Parker, Art Alexakis of Everclear, and Chuck Prophet.

“You want to talk about the price of freedom? Not so fast, here’s three boys who are serving life for the crime of nothing more than wearing Metallica T-shirts and a Stephen King novel under their beds,” said Prophet. “Bottom line is, Damien Echols would not be sitting on death row if he wasn’t poor. No one can argue that these boys never got a fair trial. You want to talk about justice? The fate of the West Memphis Three is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Jello Biafra, former lead singer of the Dead Kennedys, is scheduled to make a statement at the event. Biafra is no stranger to political activism: In 1986, the Dead Kennedys were forced to defend their right to free speech against obscenity charges and since the band split, Biafra has used his spoken word material to espouse his political views.

Other acts scheduled to perform at The Swedish American Music Hall on July 23 to raise money for the West Memphis Three’s defense fund are The Famous, Kelley Stoltz, Stephanie Finch, Jonathan Richman, Dr. Frank, Paula Frazer, Eric Drew Feldman, and Mark Kozelek of Sun Kil Moon.

Kozelek said he has been a long-time supporter of the West Memphis Three and jumped at the opportunity to lend his musical talent to their cause.

“I usually don’t get involved in a benefit unless the cause is really important to me. I’ve been following the case as much as I can since the HBO debut of *Paradise Lost* and I’m grateful to have this opportunity,” said Kozelek. “These three guys are innocent, and unfortunately, represent just a few of thousands of people arrested, convicted, jailed, and sometimes executed for crimes they didn’t commit. These kids are in prison for owning Aleister Crowley books, wearing Metallica T-shirts, and because of a coerced confession from a mentally-handicapped teenager who just wanted a can of Coke. The sad thing is,

there are many people in this same situation in jails and prisons all across the country because of prejudice—usually racial—and because of nothing to do with facts.”

Damien Echols, Jessie Misskelley, and Jason Baldwin—all teenagers at the time—were convicted in 1994 for the brutal murders of three eight-year-old boys (Stevie Branch, Michael Moore, and Christopher Byers) in West Memphis, Ark. Despite flimsy circumstantial evidence, the bulk of which centered on the trio’s alleged involvement in a Satanic cult, and a questionable and factually-inaccurate confession extracted from mentally-challenged Misskelley, the three have been serving stiff prison sentences for over a decade. Misskelley was sentenced to life plus 40 years, Baldwin is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole, and Echols—who was deemed the ringleader of the attacks thanks to his love of black clothing and Metallica—is currently on death row as he waits for the outcome of his appeals.

In addition to a night a live music, the event will also offer attendees the opportunity to bid on a variety of artist donated items that will be auctioned to support the West Memphis Three. Among the items up for sale are a commemorative poster designed by Sean Odell (to be signed by all of the artists performing at the event), an autographed guitar from the Counting Crows, and CDs courtesy of Anti Records, New West Records, Y & T, Michael Franti, and the Scissor Sisters, among others.

Events to raise money for the West Memphis Three’s defense fund are scheduled to take place in over 50 cities all over the world. For more information on these events, and the West Memphis Three’s case, log on to www.wm3.org.

For more information on the San Francisco fundraiser, please contact Anje Vela at (415) 948-8391.