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FOR RELEASE 4/28

MERLE HAGGARD

To Play Joliet's Rialto Square Theatre

Joliet, IL: Country legend MERLE HAGGARD will perform at the Rialto Square Theatre on Saturday,

June 28th at 8:00pm. **Tickets are on sale Friday May 2nd at 9AM** and are priced at \$35.00 to \$75.00.

Tickets may be purchased at the Rialto Box office located at 102 N. Chicago Street, or ordered by calling 815/726-6600 between 9am and 5pm Monday through Friday or between 9am and 12 Noon on Saturdays.

On performance days the box office remains open until the completion of intermission. Tickets may also be purchased through all Ticketmaster outlets or online at www.rialtosquare.com.

ABOUT MERLE HAGGARD:

Merle Haggard wasn't in the delivery room on the morning country music was born; it simply seems like he was. And you won't hear anybody refer to him as the father of country music. But many will swear he's at least its godfather. Post-prison life, a typical tale of scratching out a meager survival, became the beginning of his untypical musical career. Although he had made his stage debut at 15, sitting in on a Lefty Frizzell performance, it wasn't until after a stint in San Quentin Prison that Merle joined a band as rhythm/bass guitarist in Bakersfield. In one brief stretch his life took a major turnaround. He was signed by Tally Records and in 1963 eventually broke into the top twenty of Billboard's country charts with his first national hit, "Sing A Sad Song." His next few singles -- "(All My Friends Are Gonna Be) Strangers," "Swinging Doors" and "The Bottle Let Me Down" -- all landed within the Top 10. In 1966 he entered the Number One spot for the first time with "I'm A Lonesome Fugitive," and he won his first Top Male Vocalist of the Year award from the Academy of Country Music. His band, The Strangers, have become known as one of country music's finest road bands, and they themselves have been the recipients of a number of industry accolades, including being eight-time winners of the Academy of Country Music's Touring Band of the Year Award, as well as, a pair of Music City News awards for Band of the Year. In '68, the label released "The Legend of Bonnie and Clyde," which, not unexpectedly, soared to Number One on all the trade charts. What *was* unexpected however, was the audience reaction to the "B" side, the song, "Today I Started Loving You Again," which went on to become one of the most important and lucrative songs of his career. And, in 1969, with an assist from then band member Eddie Burris, he ventured into the arena of social commentary, voicing his feelings in "Okie From Muskogee," the song that was to have the most dramatic impact on his career. Released during the height of national conflict over Vietnam, it was also to be his most controversial. In 1977, Haggard signed with MCA Records and continued his long term lease on the #1 position with a string of chart-topping singles, including "Think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink" and "Rainbow Stew." In 1981, he signed with Epic Records, adding more #1 plaques to his wall, including "Yesterday's Wine," the title single from his powerful album duet with country music titan, George Jones. That same year he released another landmark album with Willie Nelson, "Poncho and Lefty," also a Number One record for Merle. Merle signed with Curb Records in 1990. In addition to his vocal performance, he has also spent a great deal of time perfecting his instrumental skills. Over the years he has also developed into a remarkable lead guitarist, as well as a proficient fiddle player, both skills being woven into the fabric of his live performances.

- to date he has written hundreds of songs, including the classics "Sing Me Back Home," "Okie From Muskogee" and "Silver Wings," among others.
- over 40 of his singles have attained the Number One position in the major trade magazines.
- the former "B" side, "Today I Started Loving You Again," has been recorded by over 400 artists to date.
- 56 of his songs have received awards from BMI (47 country, 9 pop).
- three of his songs have logged over a million plays ("Today I Started Loving You Again," "Okie From Muskogee" and "Big City").

- he has released over 65 albums, most of which have charted in the major trades.
- four of his albums have been certified gold.
- he has been nominated 42 times for CMA awards, more than any other male country entertainer.
- his honors from the major country music industry associations and trade publications include:
 - 18 awards from the ACM, including Male Vocalist and Entertainer of the Year
 - six from the CMA, including Top Male Vocalist and Entertainer of the Year;
 - eight from Cash Box; four from Record World; and five from Music City News
- he received Best Country Video in 1983 from the American Video Awards (“Are The Good Times Really Over”).
- he landed a Grammy Award in 1984 for Best Male Country Vocal Performance (“That’s The Way Love Goes”).
- he performed at the White House for Richard Nixon in ‘73 and also performed for Ronald and Nancy Reagan’s anniversary celebration at their “Western White House” ranch in California.
- he was the first country artist ever to appear on the cover of Downbeat, one of the nation’s most influential Jazz publications
- his music was part of the Apollo 16 mission to the moon, via a custom recording, specially requested by the crew.
- he’s been in films, including a cameo appearance in the Clint Eastwood film Bronco Billy, and has had dramatic roles on several network TV productions.

Singer, songwriter, remarkable musician, bandleader and historian, Haggard may well be the most well-rounded country talent ever to take the stage in front of a microphone or an audience. As a result, that music is not only resounded in such typical entertainment channels as radio, records and concert dates, but has also been integrated into the university classroom setting where students examine the sociological implications of his works. His accomplishments would lead some to sum him up with a catchall cliché like “legend,” but legends are about the past, about those who are about to be swept off into some dusty corner record bin somewhere. Haggard can’t be pinpointed in the past. His music speaks to country audiences today, while his mind and talents flirt with a new millennium.

Brought to you by NiteLite Promotions and the Rialto Square Theatre
 For more information go to www.merlehaggard.com