

***NEW HARMONIES* FEATURES TOURS OF SHOALS RECORDING STUDIOS**

Open-house tours of several historic Shoals recording studios will take place each Saturday in April in conjunction with *New Harmonies: Celebrating America's Roots Music*, a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition that remains on display through Friday, May 8, at the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art in Tusculmbia.

The studio tours begin Saturday, April 4, with an open house from 10 a.m. until noon at **FAME Recording Studios**, 603 E. Avalon Ave., Muscle Shoals. The studio was founded by pioneering Muscle Shoals producer and publisher Rick Hall, who produced the local recording industry's first national hit, Arthur Alexander's Southern soul standard "You Better Move On."

FAME has been operating at the same location since 1962, recording hits for artists as diverse as Alexander, Wilson Pickett, Aretha Franklin, the Osmonds, Alabama, Clarence Carter, Shenandoah, Jimmy Hughes, Paul Anka, Etta James, Mac Davis, Duane Allman, Otis Redding, Bobbie Gentry, Jerry Reed, Candi Staton, Heartland, Drive-by Truckers, Bettye LaVette, Jason Isbell and many others.

Following FAME's groundbreaking success in the early 1960s, other homegrown studios began to open across the Shoals. Spanning the spectrum from soul and rock to country and pop, each studio flourished with its own individualized variation on the world-famous "Muscle Shoals sound." From the early 1970s through the early 1980s, the area became known as the "Hit Recording Capital of the World," generating more hit records per capita than much larger recording meccas like Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Memphis and Nashville.

The *New Harmonies* studio tours will allow the public to see where many of those hits – from Pickett's "Mustang Sally," Franklin's "Do Right Woman, Do Right Man" and Carter's "Patches" to Paul Simon's "Kodachrome," Bob Seger's "Old Time Rock 'n' Roll," Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Somebody" and Hank Williams Jr.'s "Family Tradition" – were either written or recorded. The series also showcases two of the area's newest state-of-the-art recording facilities.

Following the FAME open house, the *New Harmonies* studio tours will feature:

Saturday, April 11: 10 a.m. until noon, **Muscle Shoals Sound Studios** at 3614 Jackson Highway, Sheffield (the first location of Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, where the Rolling Stones, Paul Simon, Bob Seger, Rod Stewart, Traffic, Willie Nelson, the Staple Singers, Jimmy Cliff and many other artists recorded); 1-3 p.m., **Cypress Moon Studios** at 1000 Alabama Ave., Sheffield (the second location of Muscle Shoals Sound, where Seger, Dire Straits, Bob Dylan, the Oak Ridge Boys, Glenn Frey, John Hiatt, Julian Lennon, Melissa Etheridge and many others recorded).

Saturday, April 18: 10 a.m. until noon, **Noiseblock Recording Studios**, 118 W. Tombigbee St., downtown Florence, an all-new recording and publishing facility owned and operated by

Grammy Award-winning Shoals performer, songwriter, producer and publisher Gary Baker (“I Swear,” “I’m Already There”), who has worked with acts ranging from the Backstreet Boys, Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson to Lonestar, Alabama, Reba McEntire and LeAnn Rimes.

Saturday, April 25: 10 a.m. until noon, **Wishbone Recording Studios**, Airport Road near Avalon Avenue, Muscle Shoals (where Hank Williams Jr., the Commodores, Roy Orbison, Waylon Jennings, Charlie Daniels, Thelma Houston, Tom Jones, the Temptations, the Supremes, Mac McAnally and many others recorded); 1-3 p.m., **The Nutt House**, 108 W. 4th St., downtown Sheffield, a new and recently unveiled studio owned and operated by engineer and producer Jimmy Nutt, who has worked with Jimmy Buffett, Little Feat, Drive-by Truckers, Mac McAnally, Jason Isbell, Lenny LeBlanc, Ugli Stick and many others.

The local presentation of the Smithsonian’s *New Harmonies* exhibition is complemented by two additional exhibits at the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art: *Heroes, Hymns, Hard Times and Good Times: The Roots of Traditional Music in Alabama* honors the state’s music heritage while *Muscle Shoals Music: Early Traditions to Rhythm and Blues* salutes the musical legacy of northwest Alabama and the Muscle Shoals region.

The trio of exhibits runs through Friday, May 8, at the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art, 511 N. Water St., across the street from the Helen Keller Birthplace in Tusculumbia. Admission is free.

A number of gallery talks, panel discussions, concerts, studio tours and other performances, presentations and educational activities are planned throughout the exhibitions’ run. A special celebration of the history of Muscle Shoals music – including two panel discussions, a songwriters showcase and a live concert – is scheduled for Saturday, May 2, at the Ritz Theater, 103 W. 3rd St., downtown Sheffield.

The local *New Harmonies* exhibition and related activities are co-sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Art Association, Muscle Shoals Music Association, Alabama Music Hall of Fame and Music Preservation Society. The project is supported by grants from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

For details, the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art at (256) 383-0533 or Terry Pace, of the *New Harmonies* steering committee, at (256) 366-4512.