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Cheese for Charity

by Chris Clark

Just in time for this year's holiday season, Boulder's favorite live musical act, the String Cheese Incident, returns to their old stomping grounds for their annual Christmas benefit show. This year's show, the third annual Holiday Conscious Alliance Toy Drive, benefits the Pine Ridge and Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservations of South Dakota and Montana. As in years past, SCI will put their talent into helping both local and national causes. Along with the help of Conscious Alliance, a nonprofit organization heavily connected to the live music community, the band encourages attendees to bring gift-wrapped toys for the less fortunate this holiday season.

It's been more than a decade since the String Cheese Incident arrived in today's jamband world. With their roots deeply seeded in Rocky Mountain bluegrass traditions, the band has seen their popularity skyrocket in the last five years. The band has sold almost 600,000 albums, performed in front of more than a half million people in their career and possesses one of the strongest and most loyal fan bases of any band touring today. To many, they're Boulder's darlings.

"We've had a great fan base here," says SCI bassist Keith Mossley. "It's always been home to us and our management. The community here has been very supportive of us from the very beginning."

Possessing five distinct musical personalities who all contribute to the writing process and dynamic live show, SCI is a multifaceted group with diverse influences and a sound that's capable of traveling in many directions. What began as a jam grass quartet from the mountains of Colorado has become an internationally recognized enterprise

with their own record label (SCI Fidelity), ticketing system (Baseline Ticketing), philanthropic organization (Gouda Causes) and a management company (Madison House Inc.y) that's at the top of the game.

After releasing *One Step Closer* in June, SCI have further solidified themselves as heavyweights in today's scene. Working with super-producer Malcolm Burn, the band took a completely fresh approach to the new album. Recorded over a couple months at a friend's house in Colorado's foothills, the album is a departure from the norm—especially when compared to SCI's live show.

"It was nice to have Malcolm on site. We had time to experiment with the songs," says Mossley. "We'd eat some lunch, then start playing and recording. It was kind of the best possible scenario to record the album."

The band is focusing on disadvantaged children and music programs for the holiday benefit.

"We've done a local benefit concert since '99 with the exception of last year," says Mossley. "It's just a chance for us to play at home and pick out some good local organizations that can use our help."

All toys donated at the benefit must be of at least \$10 to \$20 value. The band asks that all toys be gift-wrapped with a label specifying boy or girl and the age range for the present. Every gift of at least \$10 will receive a free limited-edition SCI poster. Proceeds from the event will go to Kids Connect, Project Reach, Tipitina's Artist Relief Fund and Legacy of Learning. For more information about the charities go to www.stringcheeseincident.com.