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## **Steve Azar and The Four Tops to Close Out A Taste of Colorado**

**DENVER** – Country singer-songwriter Steve Azar and Motown sensation The Four Tops will fill the Main Stage at the 27<sup>th</sup> annual A Taste of Colorado, Monday, Sept. 6. Steve Azar, presented by 98.5 KYGO, will perform at 1 p.m. and The Four Tops, presented by KOOL 105, will play at 5:30 p.m. The four-day, free admission, food, music, and entertainment Festival will take place Labor Day weekend, Sept. 3 through Sept. 6, in Downtown Denver’s Civic Center Park.

Azar’s love for music began at an early age. He grew up in Greenville, Miss., where he was tutored by local blues musicians and developed as a guitarist. By age 14, Azar had completed his first recording session in Nashville. He continued to actively pursue music throughout his teenage years. One of his most notable early performances was when he sang “Livin’ Life to its Fullest” on a national telethon for St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital. Although he hoped to pursue music full time after high school, his parents urged him to go to college.

Life at Delta State University quickly became all about music and performances. Azar was playing 200 shows a year by the time he graduated and was a regional headliner at some of Delta’s biggest clubs and festivals, one of which included the 1984 World’s Fair in New Orleans.

In 1993, Azar moved to Nashville. He was offered three song-publishing contracts within his first few days there; however, finding a recording contract took longer. Although he sang and produced with Mercury Records, Azar considers his first album to be 2001’s “Waitin’ on Joe.” Azar made headlines with this album when Oscar-winning actor Morgan Freeman agreed to guest star in the 2002 video for the title-track song, “Waitin’ on Joe.” The hugely successful “I Don’t Have to Be Me (‘Til Monday)” became a hit single on that record as well.

In 2006, he formed his own independent label, Dang Records. That same year, he recorded “You Don’t Know a Thing,” which put Azar and his record label in the spotlight again. The song also appeared on his 2008 CD, “Indianola,” which reached number one on XM Radio’s “Country Outlaw” channel.

In addition to touring in support of his latest album, “Slide On Over Here,” Azar stays busy with a host of other projects. He continually donates his time and talent to numerous charity events across the country. In 2006, he and his wife founded “The Steve Azar St. Cecilia Foundation” to assist charitable organizations in providing aid to disadvantaged, sick, and abused children, particularly in the Delta and Nashville areas where he and his family resides. In the past two years, Azar has opened shows for Bob Seger, Carrie Underwood, Tim McGraw, Hootie & The Blowfish, and Montgomery Gentry.

Levi Stubbs, Renaldo ‘Obie’ Benson, Lawrence Payton, and Abdul ‘Duke’ Fakir, the original Four Tops, performed together for the first time at a party in Detroit in 1954. Since their inception, the group has had considerable success and a long-running history.

Between 1954 and 1962, The Four Tops steadily entertained the Detroit club scene. In 1963, the group signed with Motown Records’ jazz subsidiary, Workshop, and had their big break. They began working with the label’s writing and production team of Holland/Dozier/Holland, who became synonymous with creating the Motown sound. The initial collaboration between The Four Tops and Holland/Dozier/Holland was “Baby I Need Your Lovin’.” The song showcased the group’s strong harmonies and reached Top 20 on the charts. The following year, another Holland/Dozier/Holland song, “I Can’t Help Myself (Sugar Pie, Honey Bunch),” topped the charts and established The Four Tops as one of Motown’s most successful groups. The band continued to work with Holland/Dozier/Holland until 1967. The peak of their collaboration was the song, “Reach Out, I’ll Be There,” a 1966 sensation.

By 1970, The Four Tops sought a resurgence of their classic Motown style, and producers such as Smokey Robinson and Frank Wilson helped them regain their hit status. One of the songs that put the group back on top was a rendition of Tommy Edward’s hit, “It’s All In The Game.” Around this same time, The Four Tops also teamed up with the Supremes and co-wrote Marvin Gaye’s hit single, “What’s Going On.”

The group relocated from Detroit to California in 1972. Throughout the ’70s, The Four Tops continued to produce and tour. In 1983, they resumed collaboration with Holland/Dozier/Holland but later left Motown and signed with Arista Records. In 1988, the group found success with the singles “Indestructible” and “Loco In Acapulco.” Two years later, they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Throughout the '90s, The Four Tops continued to perform and produce until the death of group member Lawrence Payton in 1997. Payton was replaced by former Temptations vocalist Theo Peoples. Ronnie McNeir took over Levi Stubbs position when Stubbs fell ill. In 2005, Obie Benson succumbed to lung cancer and was replaced by Roquel Payton, Lawrence Payton's son.

Today, The Four Tops continue to bring their signature style to venues and crowds throughout the country.

In addition to the Main Stage, four other entertainment stages located throughout the Festival will serve up a continuous menu of music, featuring rock, country, jazz, classic rock, blues, and ethnic music and dance groups.

More than 50 of Colorado's favorite food establishments will be selling a wide variety of small portions to full meals, ensuring that there will be something for every palate. The Fine Dining area will host some of Denver's finest restaurants. The Culinary Showcase features local and nationally-renowned chef demonstrations creating simple, yet elegant meals.

Festivalgoers can shop in more than 270 Marketplace booths for original arts and crafts, home and gift items, furniture, jewelry, imports, and more. Shoppers also can explore the Home & Lifestyles area, which features a variety of exhibitors displaying products and services such as window installation, kitchen remodeling, cookware, basement refinishing, and salons and spas.

There will be plenty of music, magic, clowns, and puppets on the KidzStage, and the KidZone features play equipment and hands-on craft activities. Kids and adults also can enjoy carnival rides and games Saturday through Monday.

In the Festival of Mountain and Plain area, families can learn about the state's pioneer past, nature, and the environment. Featured artisans will demonstrate Navajo weaving and culture, spinning, rug braiding, lace crocheting, papermaking, and quilting, along with the popular blacksmith demonstration. At the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program exhibit, children can learn about birds and their environment, along with their interactions with humans. Free gold panning and educational materials about dinosaurs, volcanoes, rocks and minerals, and energy production and conservation are available at the Colorado Mining Exhibit.

Sponsors of this year's Festival are: 9NEWS, Aggreko, All Copy Products, American Medical Response, American Satellite – An Authorized DIRECTV Dealer, Aspen Pure, Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, Blue Moon, Boy Scouts of America, CarterEnergy, Cascadian Farm, Colorado Native, Coors Banquet, *The Denver Post*, Downtown Denver Partnership, Inc., Dunkin' Donuts, Fage Greek Yogurt, Famous Dave's Bar-B-Que, Ford Fiesta Lounge, Grand Lodge on Peak 7, KRAFT HOMESTYLE Macaroni & Cheese, LÄRABAR, LBA Realty, Levinson Eye Clinic, Mike's Hard Lemonade, Mission Foods, Muir Glen, Nintendo DSi™ XL Discovery Zone, PEPSI, Purina® Pro Plan® Rally to Rescue®, Residence Inn Denver City Center, Sturgeon Electric, Texas on Tour, and XingTea.

Festival hours are Friday, Sept. 3, 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Saturday, Sept. 4, and Sunday, Sept. 5, 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and Monday, Sept. 6, 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Festival of Mountain and Plain ... A Taste of Colorado is a community celebration that is produced by and benefits Downtown Denver Events, Inc., the Downtown Denver Partnership family's community events non-profit organization. The Festival is an opportunity for people throughout the region to come together to experience and appreciate our diverse cultural traditions, and to learn more about our state's Western heritage. The Festival highlights visual and performing arts in addition to featuring educational programs and culinary demonstrations.

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