



**Cornerstone - a new home for arts, entertainment and culture in Didcot**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**9th July 2008**

**UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN RAISE THE CURTAIN FOR CORNERSTONE'S OPENING NIGHT**

The new multi-million pound venue for arts, culture and entertainment in Didcot will open its doors to the public for the first time on Friday, August 29 2008 with a performance by the renowned Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain (UOGB). Cornerstone is funded by South Oxfordshire District Council and the concert will launch the venue's autumn season of performances leading up to Christmas.

The UOGB, which has performed at sell-out concerts across the world and collaborated with the likes of 'Madness' and 'The Kaiser Chiefs', will get Cornerstone off to a rip roaring start.

The all strumming, all singing group believe that all genres of music can be re-interpreted when played on the ukulele. The band will perform everything from rock 'n' roll hits and punk music to jazz and classical tunes.

Sitting shoulder to shoulder, the players dress in formal evening wear like a symphony orchestra and comprise of rhythm, bass, baritone, tenor, soprano and lead ukulele players. There are some great vocals during the songs and plenty of banter with the audience

Set up as 'a bit of fun' in 1985, the group bought its instruments with loose change. It was a sell-out at its first concert and has since made hundreds of appearances on national TV and radio programmes, including 'Later with Jools Holland', the 'Today' programme, 'Never Mind the Buzzcocks' and 'Richard and Judy'.

It has collaborated with 'The Ministry of Sound' to produce a compilation album, and recently Radio 4 produced a documentary on UOGB with Phill Jupitus. The UOGB has also performed at venues as diverse as Ronnie Scott's world famous London jazz club, The Royal Festival Hall and the Glastonbury Festival.

The eight musicians and singers include Peter Brooke-Turner, a veteran of TV comedy and Eurovision Song Contest finalist, and TV film-maker Will Grove-White.

Cornerstone, which is funded by South Oxfordshire District Council, has a seated auditorium for drama, music, dance and comedy, plus exhibition and studio spaces and a café, bar and restaurant.

In addition to attracting top quality, national touring acts, it aims to nurture and showcase the best local talent.

It will also host a wide range of cultural and creative activities with everything from photography exhibitions and creative writing sessions to Pilates and hip-

hop classes. There will be a variety of entertainment and classes laid on for children and young people.

Described by South Oxfordshire District Council as the 'jewel in the crown' of the £30m Orchard Centre re-development, Cornerstone is bringing approximately 50 jobs to the town.

Emma Dolman, Centre Director, said: "We are delighted to have attracted such a famous, fun and inspirational act to perform on our opening night, which celebrates the investment, dedication and hard work of South Oxfordshire District Council."

Bill Service, Cabinet member with responsibility for leisure, said: "The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain will be the first of many top class acts to grace the stage at this brilliant new arts venue, which will offer a fun, inspiring and professional environment for local people to enjoy a wide variety of creative and cultural activities."

George Hinchliffe, Director of the UOGB, said: "We are honoured to have been asked to perform at the opening of this splendid new facility for South Oxfordshire. We'll aim to put on an entertaining, thought provoking foot tapping show, which we hope will launch the theatre with a bang!"

The gig starts at 8.00 pm and tickets cost £17.50. They will be available from the Cornerstone box office in advance on 01491 823 823.

**ENDS**

**Notes to Editors: Cornerstone is brought to you by South Oxfordshire District Council**



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