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Cousteau brings 'Great Ocean Adventure' to Keith-Albee

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Explorer, environmentalist, educator, film producer, for more than four decades Jean-Michel Cousteau has used his vast experiences to communicate to people of all nations and generations his love and concern for the planet.

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Ready or not but downtown Huntington is going underwater.

It's not another 1937 Flood, just a friendly reminder that Jean-Michel Cousteau, the world-famous ocean explorer, environmentalist and maker of more than 75 films, performs at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15, taking the crowd around the globe on "The Great Ocean Adventure."

Cousteau, who just created "OceanWorld 3-D," the feature-length nature documentary filmed and released in 3D, will share his amazing life story in the ocean and its wonders as part of the Marshall Artists Series.

Tickets to the show at the Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center are \$50, \$45 and \$40.

Cousteau, whose educational outreach in film has included everything from executive producer of "Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Adventures," a six-part television series airing around the globe in 2006 to special features that accompanied the "Spongebob" and "Finding Nemo" movies, will be armed with the drive-in-movie-sized Keith-Albee screen to show his photos and amazing video footage of the colorful bounty of ocean life.

Speaking by phone last week, Cousteau said he is excited to come to Huntington as he loves to share his treasure chest of photos, video, stories and to interact with a live audience.

"Television and the Internet is entertaining and hopefully educating," said Cousteau. "It can be a little bit superficial but you can reach millions of people. If you can go to a university you have more time and you are face to face. When you talk you are not learning, so I like to listen and be challenged, and I am always learning things from other people all the time and that makes me better and more efficient. It is not only about having a presentation and showing pictures but offering a dialogue with questions."

In addition to the Thursday night show, Cousteau will also be performing a sold-out Friday show for more than 2,300 school kids in Cabell and Wayne counties.

Angela Jones, director of marketing and external affairs for the Artists Series, said she can't think of a better way to start the Artists Series run at the Keith-Albee.

The Artists Series started the year with a Mike Birbiglia Homecoming Weekend show on campus and had a Smoke on the Water fundraiser last weekend.

"The Keith-Albee is our home and we're always excited to have event there because people come not only for the event but they come for the experience of being in that theater," Jones said. "The Cousteau footage that will be on the big screen will have an impact like no other."

Jones said bringing in Cousteau, one of the world's leading environmentalists and who is known as "The Voice of the Ocean," is part of the unique educational mission of the Artists Series, which is the nation's second oldest college-based artists series.

Two years ago, the Artists Series brought in TV personality and director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo, Jack Hanna.

"We are all connected to the animals, and we are all connected to the oceans," Jones said. "We're all excited for him to educate us. There are some things we all know to do but there is so much more we can learn. I think it's that kind of show that will appeal to everybody and that is interesting and educational and entertaining. It's different from any other show, any Broadway or dance, it is something we are all connected to. He has been so prolific with this work and has always been ahead of the curve but very connected to the Earth with his finger on its pulse."

For the Keith-Albee, the Cousteau show kicks off a super-busy season as the historic 1920s-built theater hosts a half dozen shows in the next four weeks including Mountain Stage, the first Huntington Symphony Orchestra concert, The Avett Brothers, "Avenue Q" and the Fall International Film Festival.

Closing out this weekend is a Mountain Stage with Larry Groce taping that features Cross Lanes native country star Kathy Mattea, as well as The Ahs, The Songcatchers, Shannon Whitworth and Or and The Whale, at 7 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18, to kick off the Create West Virginia Conference.

Tickets are \$20 in advance or at the door. Go online at www.mountainstage.org.

Although Mountain Stage makes a wide touring schedule with stops in area cities like Ashland, Athens, Ohio, Bristol, Tenn., and Morgantown, this is Mountain Stage's first show in the Keith-Albee since October 2004 when k.d. lang and Bruce Cockburn headlined a show.

Mountain Stage was last in Huntington in September 2005 when Buddy Guy and Shemekia Copeland played a blues-themed show.

The show's host and musical director Larry Groce, who also oversees FestivALL Charleston each summer, said this is a special Mountain Stage. He noted that they have three acts from West Virginia on the bill - Kathy Mattea, Everett Lilly Jr.'s multi-generational group The Songcatchers, and the Ahs (banjo and cello) - with North Carolina act Shannon Whitworth and Or, The Whale, the seven-piece, vocals-driven San Francisco indie folk rock band.

Groce said the rare booking of three Mountain State acts on the show heard weekly 'round the world is in part due to the show kicking off the Create West Virginia Conference, which runs Oct. 18-20, in downtown Huntington.

"It's in concert with their purpose," Groce said. "We're featuring West Virginia talent, both old and new, and Create West Virginia, one of their points is that West Virginia needs to take its own traditions and its own way of doing things and to transplant that to a very contemporary economic approach, and so what we are looking at gave us an opportunity to spotlight some more West Virginia talent."

Cross Lanes native, Kathy Mattea, whose latest CD, "Coal," was nominated for a Grammy and whose grandfathers were coal miners, said her latest project has woven an even deeper and stronger tie to the Mountain State.

Mattea is excited to be in Huntington with her old friends at Mountain Stage.

"Making this record and getting to come back and play those songs on Mountain Stage is a deeper layer of connections than I even had before," Mattea said. "It feels very full circle, and I feel like I am just beginning to explore this link in the chain that is musically about where I am from. No one taught me this where I am from, so I feel like I was thirsty for something and not knowing I was thirsty until I got into it and got to do these songs."

If you go

WHAT: Jean-Michel Cousteau, marine explorer, filmmaker, environmental advocate and educator performs his multi-media show, "The Great Ocean Adventure."

WHERE: The Keith-Albee Performing Arts Center, 4th Avenue, Huntington

WHEN: At 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 15

HOW MUCH: Adult tickets are \$50, \$45 and \$40

GET TICKETS: Call 304-696-6656, or Ticketmaster at 304-523-5757. In person at the Marshall Artists Series box office, located in the Joan C. Edwards Performing Arts Center, noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Tickets may also be purchased online at www.marshallartistsseries.org or www.ticketmaster.com.

ON FILM: Jean-Michel Cousteau has produced more than 75 films, received the Emmy, the Peabody Award, the 7 d'Or, and the Cable Ace Award. In partnership with KQED, a PBS affiliate, Jean-Michel is executive producer of "Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Adventures," a six-part television series that aired in 2006 on PBS and internationally. Recognized as a voice for the ocean who communicates to a new generation, Jean-Michel appeared in a DVD special feature for Pixar/Disney's "Finding Nemo" ("Exploring the Reef with Jean-Michel Cousteau" and in "Coral Reef Adventure," a MacGillvray Freeman Films IMAX production). In addition, he produced and appeared in a DVD special feature, "Case of the Sponge Bob, for Paramount Pictures' 'SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie'." He also was a presenter and consultant for "Sharks 3-D," an IMAX feature film.

OTHER ARTISTS SERIES SHOWS: Just a couple of the upcoming Artists Series shows include: Broadway's smash hit "Avenue Q," on Tuesday, Nov. 3; the Fall International Film Festival runs Nov. 6-8, and "The Rat Pack is Back! - Here for the Holidays," at 8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 30.

Upcoming shows at the Keith-Albee

Welcome to the discussion.

Keep it Clean. Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language.

PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CAPS LOCK.

Don't Threaten. Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated.

Be Truthful. Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.

Be Nice. No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.

Be Proactive. Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.

Share with Us. We'd love to hear eyewitness accounts, the history behind an article.