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Cleveland Named 2018 Fiddlers' Jamboree Blue Blaze Award Winner

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (March 23, 2018) — Award-winning fiddle player Michael Cleveland has been named the 2018 Blue Blaze Award Winner for the Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree & Crafts Festival. This most recent honor will be added to a rather impressive collection of accolades among his musical peers. Cleveland has won more IBMA awards than any other fiddle player including 10 wins for **Fiddle Player of the Year**, six wins for **Instrumental Recorded Performance of the Year**, and fronts their 5-time **Instrumental Group of the Year**. On March 30th, Micheal will be inducted into the National Fiddler Hall of Fame in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Together with Flamekeeper members **Josh Richards** (guitar), **Nathan Livers** (mandolin), **Jasiah Shrode** (banjo) and **Tyler Griffith** (bass), Cleveland makes his way around the country performing and delighting audiences, while leaving them with jaws dropped in complete amazement. Cleveland will be accepting the Blue Blaze Award on Saturday, July 7th, 2018 during the Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree & Crafts Festival at 5pm followed by a mini-concert by **Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper**.

"Michael Cleveland embodies what we look for in a musician when choosing a recipient for the Blue Blaze Award," said Sam Stout, President and Coordinator of the Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree & Crafts Festival, "He started performing at the Jamboree as a young boy, and grew his talent to an impressive career in bluegrass music. The purpose of the Blue Blaze Award is to recognize a group or individual who keeps the embers of bluegrass music glowing for future generations. Michael Cleveland certainly does that, and more. He is an inspiration to all of us. We invite the public to come out and support Michael, while enjoying the best that bluegrass has to offer."

Cleveland has a very loyal fan base, along with an amazing story. Michael was born blind, along with many additional health complications. He has endured over 20 reconstructive surgeries including brain

surgery. In addition to these challenges, he lost 80% of his hearing in his left ear. But Michael Cleveland is not a 'glass half empty' kind of guy. He prefers to focus on his goals, his love of music, and being the best in his field. Although only in his mid-30's, Michael Cleveland, a 2018 Grammy Nominee, has reached plenty of those goals.

Cleveland began his love affair with music by taking violin lessons at only four years old. This passion for the stringed instrument led him to bluegrass music. His teachers quickly labeled him a musical prodigy. "When I started taking lessons at age 4," he remembers, "I told the teacher right up front that I wanted to learn how to play bluegrass and I wanted to play 'Orange Blossom Special.'" Reluctant as they were, his teachers quickly found reason to his rhyme, helping him progress to the point when, at age 9, Michael was invited to sit in with the legendary Bill Monroe at the Bean Blossom Bluegrass Festival. During this time, he visited the Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree and competed alongside fiddle players of all ages and skill levels. Soon after, he brought his virtuosic style to the Grand Ole Opry as a guest of Alison Kraus, and was hand-picked for the International Bluegrass Music Association's (IBMA) Bluegrass Youth All Stars before he was 14. His blistering prowess and technical fluency have since marked him as a sought-after musician, leading to performances with Vince Gill, Marty Stuart, Tim O'Brien, J.D. Crowe and the New South, Andy Statman, and The Kruger Brothers in recent years. However, it wasn't until 2006, when Michael formed his own band **Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper**, that he found the right vehicle for his musical vision, and he hasn't rested since, constantly looking for new ways to push himself and his music forward.

One would think that with all of his life-long accolades, his own award-winning band, a concert tour, and celebrity performances at the Opry, that Cleveland would have no more goals to shoot for...but we know him better than that. 'Flamekeeper - The Michael Cleveland Story' is a feature length documentary film coming in 2018. To follow Michael Cleveland's journey, go to www.flamekeeperband.com or follow his facebook page.

ABOUT THE SMITHVILLE FIDDLERS JAMBOREE

Join us for the 47th Annual Smithville Fiddlers' Jamboree and Crafts Festival coming Friday, July 6th and Saturday, July 7th, 2018 to Downtown Smithville, Tennessee. Each day begins at 9am with over 35 music and dance categories, streets full of hand-made crafts, and food booths galore. Come and see for yourself why this FREE family-friendly festival has been named the official Jamboree & Crafts Festival of the State of Tennessee, along with being named the official Jamboree & Crafts Festival of the United States of America.

The old-time Fiddlers' Jamboree is a DeKalb County tradition that draws musicians, craft artists, and spectators to the Smithville Square each summer around the Independence Day weekend. Over time, the festival became a broader tribute to Appalachian art and culture. Thousands of tourists visit the festival every year, along with television viewers across the country via WCTE-TV and various PBS stations nationwide. For more information on the festival, go to www.fiddlersjamboree.com

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