

For immediate release: April 15, 2008

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### **Persimmon Sisters Perform for Packed House at Album Release Party**

*Green Persimmon Trees* Street Date: April 15, 2008

Owensboro, KY A standing room only crowd of more than 70 gathered last Sunday afternoon at the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Owensboro, Ky. to help a locally-based bluegrass band, The Persimmon Sisters, celebrate the the release of their debut album, *Green Persimmon Trees*. The mixed, but enthusiastic group of fans included attendees from the Bluegrass Returns to its Roots festival staged a few blocks down the street at the Executive Inn, industry reps in town for the Bluegrass Museum board of trustees meeting, and a number of local friends and fans who see the Persimmon Sisters play regularly at the city's Fridays After 5 summer concert series and IBMM's annual ROMP "River of Music Party" festival.

After sampling not one, but *two* kinds of homemade ice cream and a half dozen varieties of cookies, dark chocolate peppermint fudge and iced peach tea the band brought to share, the audience listened as Nancy Cardwell (bass), Cathy Rogier (fiddle), Anita Owens (guitar), Martha Gipson (vocals), Joel Whittinghill ("the bearded Persimmon Sister" on mandolin) and Robin Roller (sitting in on banjo) presented a mix of original songs and favorite tunes from their new release, followed by a jam session. The band donated 1/3 of CD sales to IBMM and encouraged all present to consider joining the Bluegrass Museum. At one point Cardwell invited a former member of her Owensboro Girl Scout troop, Christa Walker, to the stage to sing harmony on a song called "Rainbow River," written by John Dillon of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils. Christa is the daughter of one of the original Persimmon Sisters, Tinita Walker.

In a review for his syndicated "Bluegrass Notes" column April 11, *Messenger-Inquirer* reporter Keith Lawrence noted, "Persimmons ripen slowly and aren't ready for market until well into fall. And like the fruit from which they took their name, the Persimmon Sisters have taken their time ripening their sound before moving onto the national stage....Great album by a band that's ready for some national attention."

Timing is important in bluegrass. It took seven years for the band to record, and it's also interesting that the album release party took place on a Sunday afternoon--the time of the week the ladies used to gather at Nancy's house to rehearse, sip some hot blackberry tea, munch a few oatmeal raisin cookies and just catch up with each other. Nancy, Martha and Cathy's daughters are all college students now, but the band first got together back when they were in middle school. The girls would play upstairs and occasionally pop into the living room to sing a song or two, while their mothers picked and sang.

The Persimmon Sisters' easy-going friendship and subtle humor translate well to a live audience. Like a favorite old patchwork quilt pieced from scraps of material that bring back specific memories, the band's music is a combination of original songs and old familiar tunes from all their musical influences. Sister and brother Anita Owens and Joel Whittinghill grew up in a family band in nearby Ohio County and have been playing bluegrass music longer than they can remember. The same is true of Nancy Cardwell, who grew up in a family bluegrass band in the Missouri Ozarks and has been on stage since the age of seven. Martha Gipson grew up singing in church--she's famous locally for her heart-catching a capella hymns--and Cathy Rogier is a former member of Arnold Chin, a progressive Owensboro-based bluegrass band that toured nationally in the 1970s and '80s.

Rogier is also a science teacher and an avid bird watcher who travels the world during summer vacation to add to her list of species spotted, Anita supervises school nurses for the county health department and caters to a spoiled rotten basset hound named Sophie, and Martha is teacher's assistant in Owensboro who helps student perfect their writing portfolios. Cardwell moved to town in 1994 from Branson, Mo. to take a job as the Special Projects Director for the International Bluegrass

Music Association. When the IBMA office moved to Nashville in 2003 and rehearsals became a bit more difficult to manage, the band made the decision to stay together and continue to perform as often as possible. Some patchwork quilts survive generations, and some friendships can just as easily survive a few miles.

The CD, which originally started out as a four-song demo at Scott Partridge's Savona South studio near Nashville, Tenn., expanded during a weekend in February 2007 into a 12-song album recorded live in a circle, with bluegrass legend Vic Jordan dubbing in the five-string banjo later. Jordan, known for his influential work as a sideman in bands like Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys, Jimmy Martin's Sunny Mountain Boys and Jim & Jesse's Virginia Boys, as well as extensive studio work on records and television, met Cardwell when he moved to Branson, Mo. in the early '90s to perform with the Wayne Newton Orchestra. The two ended up playing bluegrass together in a group called Pure Heart, that continues to headline at Silver Dollar City.

The Persimmon Sisters are content to be a local band that performs mostly in the Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana area--although they say they wouldn't turn down a European tour or a gig on a bluegrass cruise! The new CD, named for the title cut Nancy wrote as a college student homesick for the Ozarks, is an audio patchwork of the Persimmons' shared friendship and favorite tunes. They invite you into the circle to listen.

For info on CDs for radio broadcast, copies for review, distribution or booking info, contact the band at 615-260-4807 or [nancycardwell@comcast.net](mailto:nancycardwell@comcast.net) Fans may purchase the CD at [www.persimmonsisters.com](http://www.persimmonsisters.com), CDBaby.com (soon!), County Sales, The Music Shed, or the gift shop at the International Bluegrass Music Museum in Owensboro, Ky. ([www.bluegrassmuseum.org](http://www.bluegrassmuseum.org))

**Suggested for airplay:**

#4 Green Persimmon Trees

#3 Rainbow River

#1 When I Shall Read My Title Clear/ Unclouded Day

#5 El Cumbanchero

**What they're saying about The Persimmon Sisters:**

"Green Persimmon Trees' has the feel of a shady porch on a warm spring day and a sound that melts stress away. So do the beautiful 'Ashokan Farewell' and Cardwell's 'Comin' Home.' But don't get too relaxed. Tunes like 'Jerusalem Ridge,' 'El Cumbanchero,' 'Lost Indian' and 'Muleskinner Blues' will get the blood flowing again. Anita Owens, who does a mean yodel on the latter, can hold a note as long as Bobby Osborne. And that's a long time." -Keith Lawrence, *The Messenger-Inquirer*, Owensboro, Ky.

"The fruit this band is named for is edible only for a few weeks out of the year, but these Persimmons, with their strong vocal, instrumental and writing abilities, can be enjoyed year round. The Persimmon Sisters have a permanent place on my playlist." --Mike Smith, Seldom Heard Music, KSMU-FM, Springfield, Mo.

"Once in a while there comes a band whose offerings reveal a rich education over a broad range of styles. From heartfelt blues and haunting harmonies to hard-driving bluegrass, The Persimmon Sisters' sounds are those of persons well traveled. In a world of sound-alikes and wannabes, that is a very good thing." --D.A. Callaway, Silver Dollar City, Mo.

"This is one of the best debut CDs I've heard in years! The instrumentation is hypnotic and their rhythmic perfection will have you swaying to the music, as you 'grove' on their beautiful harmonies and lead vocals. The Persimmon Sisters draw their music from a wide variety of sources, but the results are 'made-to-order' bluegrass that will appeal to all bluegrass fans." --Wayne Bledsoe, *Bluegrass Now* magazine, KMST-FM, Rolla, Mo.