

Benefit

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("States of Grace"), Terrell Tilford ("Days of Our Lives") and Travis Winfrey ("Hannah Montana"). Channel 7's George Pennacchio will be the master of ceremonies.

Soto became involved in the benefit through his association with the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation, an organization that supports children and their families battling serious illnesses through entertainment and other activities. As a child, Soto, an Arizona native, played piano and drums but soon discovered his affinity for the guitar.

"When I was 12, I was playing drums in a Kiss tribute band and I watched the guitarist thinking, 'I can do that,'" Soto said. "One day I just bought a Sears catalogue guitar and started learning some power chords, started rocking away a little bit there. Then my first guitar instructor introduced me to classical guitar and jazz, and I just fell in love with jazz music. It just opened up a whole new world for me. But I think at that time it just clicked for me, 'Wow, I love this instrument.'"

After honing his skills and taking on a director's job at a church, Soto got his first big break when he was a grand finalist in Guitar Center's "Guitarmageddon" competition in 2004, which features hundreds of top unsigned guitarists in the country. After a grueling competition, Soto made the finals that took place at Eric Clapton's Crossroads Guitar festival in Dallas where he played for more than 15,000. Soto followed that up singing the "Star Spangled Banner" for a presidential rally at the Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix.

"The vibe in the air, it was just amazing," said Soto of the festival. "That was the turning point. That's when I said to myself, 'I need to do something with my guitar now,' so I

decided to come out with an album."

His debut album, "Long Time Coming," soon followed, as did songs on TV shows "Sex and the City" and "All About Us." His music is regularly played on TV stations like the Weather Channel and Music Choice.

His latest album, "Stay Awhile," which was released in 2007, features the single "Slammin" that reached No. 2 and has been in the Top 30 on the Radio and Records charts for 42 weeks. Featured on "Stay Awhile" are Jeffrey Osborne, Jeff Lorber, Michael Lington and Euge Groove. His second single, "Stay Awhile," has also received much airplay.

Soto will perform selections from his first two albums at the "Night of Jazz and Fashion by the Sea Benefit Concert" Saturday.

Soto is currently working on his third album as he and wife, Trish, are expecting their first child in early April where they make their home in Glendale, Ariz.

Soto's upcoming dates in Southern California include the Catalina Island JazzTrax Festival on Oct. 5, 10 and 18; and Spaghettini Grill and Jazz Club in Seal Beach Oct. 17.

Tickets range from \$55 reserved seating, which includes regular admission, to \$80 orchestra admission, that includes admission to the meet-and-greet mixer and the eighth to 12th row of theater seating behind the VIP section. There are also \$105 VIP admission tickets that include admission to the red carpet reception, admission to the VIP mixer, backstage passes and the first seven rows of seating.

The mixer with a silent auction will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the benefit begins at 7 p.m. The Hermosa Beach Community Theater is located at 710 Pier Ave.

For more information, visit www.thehushfoundation.org or call (310) 697-8193.



Della Reese, above, and Nancy Wilson will be honored Saturday, Aug. 30, during the 'Night of Jazz and Fashion by the Sea Benefit Concert.'



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