

# Chris Vallillo to Premier *Forgottonia*, a Multi-Media Show Taking the Stage at Hainline Theater in Macomb, Illinois

MACOMB, ILLINOIS, USA, July 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Saturday, July 20th at 7:00 pm, singer songwriter Chris Vallillo will take to the stage at the Hainline Theater in Macomb, Illinois to premier his latest project, a multi-media show called *Forgottonia*.

*Forgottonia* offers a reflective look at rural Illinois over the past forty years through the lens of Vallillo's original music and storytelling, while being enhanced by award winning photographer Tim Schroll's poignant photographs.



In *Forgottonia*, Chris Vallillo draws on 35 years of original material to tell the story of West Central Illinois, an area that has been lovingly referred to as "Forgottonia."

With a body of work spanning four decades that features a song repertoire rooted as firmly in Americana as July corn in Illinois soil, singer/songwriter Chris Vallillo intones from the heart of the Midwest in virtually everything he does.

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*Chris Vallillo*

His exploration of what he calls "Unmetropolitan" America has seen him co-produce and act as performing host for public radio's award winning Rural Route 3 program, serve as the Illinois State Scholar for The Smithsonian Institute's traveling roots music exhibit, and contribute to the US Library of Congress' American Folklife Collection.

His primary focus, however, has been songwriting, performing, and recording a series of albums that have garnered praise from music scholars, glowing reviews from

national magazines, and occasionally landed him in the Billboard music charts.

Those albums are often graced with cover photos created by fellow McDonough County artist Tim Schroll, whose images capture visually the lazy rivers, small country diners, and humid fields that populate the lyrics of Vallillo's songs.

Given that the two men crossed paths roughly 30 years ago in Rushville, Illinois and had admired each other's art along the way, it seemed almost fated for Vallillo to tap into Schroll's photographic archives to augment his musical performances. And with *Forgottonia*, Vallillo has done just that.

"Frequently Tim was taking shots of the very things I was writing about, so I've always said that he does visually what I try to do musically," Vallillo confirmed, speaking from his home in Macomb, Illinois. "I'd done several historical projects and decided I wanted to get back to doing original material," Vallillo recalls.

That bigger story is of the mythical "nation" of *Forgottonia*, which takes its name and partial inspiration from a political stunt dreamed up in 1972 by McDonough County residents Jack Horn, John Armstrong, and Neil Gamm.

As Vallillo explains, "Sixteen Illinois counties banded together to protest of the lack of infrastructure dollars coming to West Central Illinois. They created the independent nation of *Forgottonia* and planned to secede from the union, declare war on the United States, and then immediately surrender. The goal being that they would then apply for foreign aid. It was nothing more than political theater to highlight the lack of funding for this region of Illinois, but to everyone's utter surprise it ultimately worked. As a result of this humorous stunt, almost a quarter of a million dollars' worth of free PR came into the region."

But that's simply where the story of the show *Forgottonia* begins. Vallillo took into consideration the region of Illinois that was coined *Forgottonia* in the 70s and used that as a jumping-off point to forge an audio-visual love letter to the area's past, present, and future. "The fact that these communities were somewhat isolated meant that they retained a great deal of an older era in their culture," he says. "I think that is a very positive thing, but over the past 40 years we've seen so much of that old way of life erode away."

The show premieres on July 20th, at 7:00 pm at the Hainline Theater, 621 N Western Ave, Macomb, IL 61455. On stage, Vallillo will be augmented by musicians Don Steirnberg (mandolin) and Marc Edelstein (bass), Schroll's rich photographs, and lighting sequences designed by Vallillo and the Hainline Theatre's Dan Schmidt.

Tickets are \$20.00 and are on sale through Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chris-vallillo-forgottonia-tickets-787373223507>

This project is supported by "Visit Unforgettable *Forgottonia*" and a grant from Illinois Humanities.

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