

Folk scene veterans coming to Evanston

Mark Dvorak & Michael Smith

7 pm Sunday, Oct. 18 at SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave. Evanston. \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door, \$22.50 for reserved table seating. (847)492-8860 or www.evanstonspace.com.

By DAN PEARSON

Contributor

Chicago folk scene veterans Mark Dvorak and Michael Smith will present a special evening of original songs and traditional Americana music at SPACE in Evanston on October 18.

"This will be the first time we will share the stage in a long, long time as individual performers, so I am really excited," said Dvorak. "I will probably go up and do a set, and then Michael will do a set. It remains to be seen whether we will do anything together. We haven't had the chance to touch base. If we do, it will more than likely be off the cuff."

Dvorak, who lives in Riverside, IL, said each will play for about an hour. He credits David Specter, one of the owners of SPACE, with making the show happen.

"David is one of Chicago's great blues guitarists," Dvorak said.

This will be Dvorak's second appearance at SPACE, which stands for "the Society for the Preservation of Art & Culture in Evanston."

In June, he performed there with the Mark Dvorak Trio, which also consists of Ellen Shepard and Christopher Walz.

"At SPACE, the emphasis is really on the performance. The venue can be set up for any number of different events. They have had barn dances in there, and they can set up tables for a cabaret show."

Dvorak who teaches class in guitar, banjo and the blues at the Old Town School of Folk Music, will perform a



number of new songs for the Sunday show.

"I have a new one called, 'The Middle Years,' which is getting some nice audience response. And I have a new song inspired by a couple who met in one of my classes, called 'We Become' and a brand new one I wrote about my first guitar."

New Jersey native Michael Smith moved to Chicago in 1976 with his wife after gaining success with collaborations with Chicago folk legend Steve Goodman on such songs as "The Dutchman" and "Spoon River."

"Sadly, Steve didn't live too much longer. I didn't know who Michael was then, but over time, I had come to admire him a whole lot," Dvorak said. "And I knew his wife Barbara Barrow, from the Old Town School where we were both on the faculty. In 1998 Michael phoned me about an idea he had for a show centered around the folk group, The Weavers. He asked me to be in it and I jumped at the chance."

"Weavermania!," a tribute to the sounds and songs of the legendary folk group toured from 1999 through 2007. Dvorak sang Pete Seeger's role, Michael Smith sang Lee Hays, Barbara



Barrow sang Ronnie Gilbert's parts and Tom Dundee voiced Fred Hellerman. Their CD *Weavermania! LIVE* was recorded at the First Congregational Church of Evanston.

"It was mostly under Michael's leadership that we arranged the songs, but we were all contributors," said Dvorak. "Sometimes when we would take a break from rehearsing, Michael would step into the other room and begin writing song lyrics down on a piece of paper. It seems Michael is always working on something new." Dvorak said he is often asked what Michael Smith is really like.

"He is one of the sweetest, nicest, most gentle human beings you would ever meet. He is thoughtful about everything he says and everything he does," he said. "He enjoys a great meal. He lives, I think, for music and he reserves a certain space for himself that I have always tried to honor."

Dvorak said Smith sent him a nice note when he released "Every Step of the Way" in 2006.

"That was the first time I ever recorded my own stuff and he told me how much he liked it. That meant a great deal."