



University of Nevada, Reno

NEVADA Today

“Nevada Writers Hall of Fame” honors cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell

Mitchell to be inducted at the University of Nevada, Reno Nov. 17, 2011

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By Claudene Wharton, Media Relations Officer

Acclaimed cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell has come a long way since growing up and working on Nevada's ranches, now performing internationally for audiences across the globe. But, he will be home in Nevada to be inducted into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame next month at the annual Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Awards, 6–8 p.m., Nov. 17, at the University of Nevada, Reno's Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center. David Philip Mullins and Matthew O'Brien, two emerging writers who shed light on the darker sides of Las Vegas in their books, will receive this year's Silver Pen Awards.



Nevada cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell will be inducted into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Nov. 17 at the University of Nevada, Reno's Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center.

Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Award: Waddie Mitchell

Waddie Mitchell liked the cowboy life he experienced as a child with his father so much that at age 16, he quit school to follow his heart and make a living as a cowboy himself. But, cowboy life didn't include much television or radio, so Mitchell and his cowboy cohorts learned how to entertain each other, he recalled.

"When you live in close proximity like that with the same folks month after month, one of your duties is to entertain each other, and I suppose that's where the whole tradition of cowboy poetry started," he said. "You find that if you have a rhyme and a meter to start that story, people will listen to it over and over again."

Audiences are indeed listening to Mitchell again and again these days, everywhere from Melbourne to Zurich, and even at New York's Carnegie Hall. Since helping to organize the Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering in 1984 and giving his first performance, he has become something of a phenomenon.

Mitchell has appeared on *The Tonight Show*, *Good Morning America*, *Larry King Live*, the *BBC* and numerous other broadcast programs. He and his work have been featured in *People*, *Life*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, as well as in the official programs for Super Bowl XXX and the XIX Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City.

Mitchell's series of recordings for Warner Bros. Records and the Western Jubilee Recording Company have also received critical acclaim. And in 2001, he was honored by a different Hall of Fame, receiving the Wrangler Award from the Cowboy Hall of Fame and National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. He is also receiving the 2012 Nevada Heritage Award from the Nevada Arts Council.

In 2003, Mitchell produced *Elko - A Cowboy's Gathering*, a double disc that features 40 artists saluting the gathering he cofounded almost 20 years prior. Still dedicated to supporting the cowboy way of life, Mitchell founded the Working Ranch Cowboys Association in 1994 to create scholarships and crisis funds for cowboys and their families, and today the organization sanctions 22 regional rodeos throughout the West, with the world championships held each November in Amarillo, Tex.

Selection of honorees and Hall of Fame Awards Program Nov. 17

This is the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Awards 24th year of helping to build the literary culture of Nevada, and some past Hall of Fame inductees include Robert Laxalt, Rollan Melton and Will James. At this year's event, the reception and silent auction will begin at 6 p.m., with the program beginning at 7 p.m. The \$40 ticket includes beverages and hors d'oeuvres and supports the services of the University Libraries. Complimentary parking for the event is available in the metered lot on the west side of the Knowledge Center, adjacent to the Brian Whalen Parking Complex. For more information or reservations, call the Friends of the University of Nevada, Reno Library at 775-682-6014.

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