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**UWM HONORS GUITARIST LEO KOTTKE  
Honorary Doctorate in Music Performance to be Awarded, May 18**

The UWM Peck School of the Arts is proud to announce that finger-style guitarist and composer Leo Kottke will be awarded an honorary doctorate in music performance at the university's commencement on Sunday, May 18, 2008. Finger-style guitar is a truly American art form and Leo Kottke, its most illustrious representative, has redefined the potential of the guitar in the United States and beyond.

"His music captures a broad variety of idiomatic sounds from the fullness of American life," observes John Stropes, director of UWM's Guitar Program. Kottke is known for his effortless virtuosity and his technical innovations: "his contributions to guitar technique are staggering and are still not fully understood," Stropes continues. "His brilliant synthesis of vernacular tradition and classical intent has fostered a new tradition in guitar music."

"Kottke is an American musical icon who has extended the traditions established by musical greats such as Chet Atkins, Merle Travis and John Fahey," according to Scott Emmons, interim dean of the Peck School of the Arts. "Over the past 38 years, no single guitarist has influenced an emerging performance style to the extent that Kottke has influenced finger-style guitar."

Kottke has had a longstanding and gracious association with UWM's unique Guitar Program--the only degree program in the world in which a student may choose to specialize in finger-style, jazz, classical or flamenco guitar. At the undergraduate level the Guitar Program offers a multi-style performance Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with requirements in composition and technology, world music and pedagogy, and with repertoire and ensemble classes designed to prepare students for professional life. Candidates for the Master of Music degree in Guitar Performance may pursue intensive studies in finger-style guitar as a logical extension of the curriculum and their career path.

Kottke's relationship to UWM dates back to 1985 when he performed and taught at the first American Finger-style Guitar Festival, held on the UWM campus. Since the guitar area was reconstituted within the Peck School in 2004, Kottke has been an advisor and visitor. In 2006 he spoke to students about "The Realities of a Life Devoted to Music."

"Kottke is a fabulous role model," says Emmons. "His personal integrity, humor, self-effacing style and uncommon musical talent combine to provide many lessons for our aspiring music students."

Leo Kottke was born in Athens, Georgia, in 1945. He moved constantly with his family while he was growing up, graduating from high school in Falls Church, Virginia, and attending the University of Missouri and St. Cloud State College in Minnesota. His 1969 recording, *Leo Kottke/6- and 12-String Guitar*, brought him to national prominence. Since then he has performed approximately 120 concerts each year all around the world. Kottke has overcome a series of personal obstacles, including partial deafness and a nearly career-ending bout of tendon damage, to emerge as a world-class master of his instrument.

Kottke is the recipient of many awards, including *Performance Magazine's* "Best Instrumentalist" (1976) and a Germany Grammy for "Best Instrumentalist" (1977). In 1978, after having been

voted "Best Folk Guitarist" for five consecutive years by the readers of *Guitar Player* magazine, he was inducted into the *Guitar Player* Hall of Fame. He was nominated for Grammys in 1988 and 1991 and his music has been featured in movie and television soundtracks.

Kottke's contribution to music and his influence on other artists is profound. While his reputation rests on his career as a soloist, he has also toured with flamenco and jazz guitar virtuosos Paco de Lucia and Al di Meola and other eminent artists. His composition, *Ice Fields*, a suite for amplified steel-string guitar and chamber orchestra, is a milestone for guitar concerti.

John Stropes will be offering an intensive workshop on Leo Kottke's music this summer. For further information, visit [arts.uwm.edu/outreach](http://arts.uwm.edu/outreach).

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