

**Media Contact:** Terence Keane  
(510) 647-2917, [tkeane@berkeleyrep.org](mailto:tkeane@berkeleyrep.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GREEN DAY ANNOUNCES STAGE VERSION OF *AMERICAN IDIOT***  
**Band brings blockbuster album to Berkeley Rep with director of *Spring Awakening***

MARCH 30, 2009 – **Green Day** won two Grammy Awards – Best Rock Album and Record of the Year – with its multi-platinum *American Idiot*, which sold more than 12 million copies worldwide. Today the band announced plans to bring that explosive album to the stage by collaborating with **Michael Mayer**, renowned director of *Spring Awakening*, which grabbed eight Tony Awards including Best Director and Best Musical in 2007. The new show – also titled *American Idiot* – will receive its world premiere right in the guys’ backyard at **Berkeley Repertory Theatre**, the Tony-winning playhouse that launched last year’s provocative rock musical *Passing Strange*. Berkeley Rep will produce the show in association with **Tom Hulce** and **Ira Pittelman**, the lead producers of *Spring Awakening*.

Mr. Mayer and Green Day, along with Olivier Award-winning choreographer **Steven Hoggett**, recently completed a workshop of *American Idiot* in New York, which was also produced by Berkeley Rep. The show includes every song from the album, as well as several new songs from Green Day’s upcoming release, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Breakdown*. *American Idiot* will run from **September 4 through October 11**, opening Berkeley Rep’s 2009/10 season in the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre. A limited number of seats go on sale today at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org) starting at only \$32. Lower prices and prime performance dates are available as part of a subscription to Berkeley Rep’s bold season, which also features five other hot new shows.

*American Idiot* follows working-class characters from the suburbs to the city to the Middle East, as they seek redemption in a world filled with frustration – an exhilarating journey borne along by Green Day’s electrifying songs. As *Time* described the album, “You will hear a story about Jesus of Suburbia, his dangerous friend St. Jimmy, and a heroic girl called Whatsername, who are struggling to express their individuality in a mass-media culture.” This high-octane show will blend an onstage band and an ensemble of 19 young performers with what *Newsweek* calls “a soundtrack for anyone disillusioned by millennial America.” Yet, *Time* concludes, “For an album that bemoans the state of the union, it is irresistibly buoyant.”

(MORE)

“We are really excited to be working with Michael Mayer on this project,” says Green Day’s frontman **Billie Joe Armstrong**. “We’d been thinking of bringing *American Idiot* to the stage, but knew we needed to find the right partners. After meeting with Michael to discuss the possibility, he invited us to see *Spring Awakening*. We were so impressed with that production, as well as his vision for *American Idiot*, that we knew we’d found the perfect collaborator. Plus, doing it in our hometown at Berkeley Rep was an obvious bonus. They’re an amazing theatre group, very adventurous, and their willingness to take chances is in keeping with the spirit of the album. The end result will be terrific, and we’re really proud.”

“When I first heard *American Idiot*, I was struck by its innate theatricality,” **Mayer remarks**. “Here was a new musical drama begging to be staged. Who would have thought that one of the most brutally honest, eloquent, passionate, funny, and poetic theatrical responses to the post 9-11 world would be a Green Day record? The connection I felt to *American Idiot* surprised me. I knew and liked Green Day, but had no clue that I would ever feel so inside their songs. This work of passion and vision and fierce intelligence seemed to me like the heartbeat of a generation of Americans who were fed up. I hear in these amazing songs the articulation of their frustration, anger, longing for a better world – a journey from apathy to action. Collaborating with Billie Joe and the band is a mind-blowing thrill, and I can’t wait to begin production at Berkeley Rep, the perfect home for making a new kind of musical event.”

“Green Day is a band that we’ve long admired here in Berkeley and championed as one of our own,” says **Tony Taccone**, artistic director of Berkeley Rep. “*American Idiot* is an iconic album, and having the opportunity to bring it to the stage is a bit of a dream come true. To preserve the original intention of the album while creating a stage-worthy experience is a challenge that we relish, and bringing a director with the skill and experience of Michael Mayer into our theatre makes it that much sweeter.”

**It is apropos that the show will premiere in Berkeley, which is where the band got its start.**

“The transfiguration of Green Day from punk-pop jesters into outspoken political agitators was mystifying – except to those who knew anything about the band members’ respective childhoods, and their early forging as a band in the cauldron of the gritty Berkeley, California, punk-rock scene, a back story that, in retrospect, makes the emergence of *American Idiot*, and its attendant rebel-rousing riot of a stage show, seem all but inevitable,” asserts **Rolling Stone**. “When they

(MORE)

were 15 years old, Armstrong and Dirnt first ventured to the punk-rock all-ages club 924 Gilman Street Project, and everything changed. Located beside a canning shop in the gritty warehouse district of Berkeley, 924 Gilman was a graffiti-etched nonprofit drop-in center for legions of tattooed and mohawked punkers who ran the place on a volunteer, co-op basis. Gilman was where Armstrong and Dirnt first fell in love with punk music, and it's where they cut their political teeth... Apart from their political awakening, something else happened at the Gilman that would have an incalculable effect on their future. They met a fellow teenager, and Gilman regular, who already bore the stage name Tre Cool... By 1990, Armstrong, Dirnt, and Tre had coalesced into Green Day."

The band's seventh CD earned effusive praise from the press upon its release. "The ambitious *American Idiot* joins an elite list of albums, such as The Who's *Tommy*, Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, and The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band*, that successfully weave a narrative through music," asserts **Amp**. It is "a fearless and politically astute rock album, a richly melodic song suite that gives voice to the disenfranchised suburban underclass of Americans," declares **Rolling Stone**. "What most fans – Democrats, Republicans, and anarchists alike – seem to be connecting with is the irresistible passion, intensity, and hookiness of the music," adds **Entertainment Weekly**. "And *Idiot's* brash sound has done more than just connect with the public. It's also struck a decisive blow for rock music – make that loud, butt-kickin' rock music, the kind that shakes your nerves and rattles your brain." Now this music hits the stage at a nearby theatre that also earned a national reputation following its unlikely birth in a Berkeley storefront.

**Green Day** – vocalist/guitarist **Billie Joe Armstrong**, bassist **Mike Dirnt**, and drummer **Tré Cool** – were loud, snotty, scrappy kids from working-class backgrounds who came of age in the underground punk scene in Berkeley. Even though they had released two records prior (*1039 / Smooth Out Slappy Hours* and *Kerplunk*), they announced their arrival with 1994's *Dookie*, a dynamic blast of exuberant three-chord punk-pop that spoke to bored teenagers everywhere. The album eventually sold 15 million copies, earned the band their first Grammy Award, and inspired a raft of imitators. Over the years, Green Day continued to top the charts with their subsequent studio albums *Insomniac*, *Nimrod*, and *Warning* while entertaining millions of fans with their frenetic live shows. But it was their landmark 2004 album *American Idiot* that launched Green Day into the stratosphere. "Jesus of Suburbia" set the tone by telling a tale of the choice between self-destruction and redemption that resonated with listeners of all ages, nationalities, and

(MORE)

political persuasions. *American Idiot* debuted at No. 1 on the *Billboard* chart. It spawned five hit singles, earned seven Grammy nominations (winning two, including Rock Album of the Year), and raised the bar for modern rock and roll. This year, in addition to the premiere of this show, Green Day will release its new album, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Breakdown*, on Friday, May 15, and then launch a world tour. For more information on Green Day, visit [greenday.com](http://greenday.com).

**Michael Mayer** (director) received a 2007 Tony Award, as well as Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards, for the Tony Award-winning musical *Spring Awakening*. Mr. Mayer's other Broadway credits include *After the Fall*; *An Almost Holy Picture*; *The Lion in Winter*; *'night, Mother*; *Side Man* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards); *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Drama Desk Award and Tony nomination); *Triumph of Love*; *Uncle Vanya*; *A View From the Bridge* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards and Tony nomination); and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Tony nomination). In addition to *Spring Awakening* at Atlantic Theater Company, his off-Broadway credits include *America Dreaming*, *Antigone in New York*, *Baby Anger*, *The Credeaux Canvas*, *Hundreds of Hats*, *Missing Persons*, *Round About*, *Stupid Kids*, and *View of the Dome*. He also directed the national tours for *Spring Awakening* and *Angels in America* (Jefferson and Carbonell Awards). On London's West End, Mr. Mayer staged the current production of *Spring Awakening*, as well as *Side Man* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. His films include *A Home at the End of the World* and *Flicka*.

**Steven Hoggett** (choreographer) won the 2009 Olivier Award for his choreography of the National Theatre of Scotland's acclaimed *Black Watch*. He is co-founder and artistic director of Frantic Assembly, directing and/or performing in all of its shows. His recent Frantic work includes *Dirty Wonderland*, *Hymns*, *Othello*, *(pool) no water*, and *Stockholm*. In his native Britain, his credits as a choreographer and movement director include *Dido Queen of Carthage*, *The Hothouse*, and *Market Boy* for the National Theatre, as well as *365* and *The Bacchae* for the National Theatre of Scotland, *Dalston Songs* at the Royal Opera House's ROH2, *Frankenstein* for Royal and Derngate in Northampton, *The Hothouse* and *Market Boy* for the National Theatre, *Improper* for Bare Bones Dance Company, *Mercury Fur* and *The Straits* for Paines Plough Theatre Company, *Villette* for the Stephen Joseph Theatre, *Waving* for Oily Cart, and *The Wolves in the Walls* for the National Theatre of Scotland and Improbable. He has also provided choreography for Prada, Radio One, Selfridges, and the award-winning TV commercial "Harmonious Dance" for Orange.

(MORE)

Born in a storefront, **Berkeley Rep** has moved to the forefront of American theatre – and is still telling unforgettable stories. Founded in 1968 by Michael Leibert, the Theatre quickly earned respect for presenting the finest plays with top-flight actors. In 1980, with the support of the local community, Berkeley Rep built the 400-seat Thrust Stage where its reputation steadily grew over the next two decades. It gained renown for an adventurous combination of work, presenting important new dramatic voices alongside refreshing adaptations of seldom-seen classics. In recognition of its place on the national stage, Berkeley Rep was honored with the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1997. The company celebrated by unveiling a new 600-seat proscenium stage in 2001, the state-of-the-art Roda Theatre. It also opened the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre, a permanent home for its long tradition of outreach and education programs. The addition of these two buildings transformed a single stage into a vital and versatile performing arts complex, the linchpin of a bustling Downtown Arts District which has helped revitalize Berkeley. **In four decades, four million people have enjoyed more than 300 shows at Berkeley Rep, including 50 world premieres.** The Theatre now welcomes an annual audience of 180,000, serves 20,000 students, and hosts dozens of community groups, thanks to 1,000 volunteers and more than 400 artists, artisans, and administrators. In the last eight years, Berkeley Rep has helped send eight shows to New York: *36 Views*, *Bridge & Tunnel*, *Brundibar*, *Eurydice*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Metamorphoses*, *Passing Strange*, and *Taking Over*.

**Tickets** to *American Idiot* are available now for preview performances on select evenings early in the run: Friday, September 4; Saturday, September 5; Wednesday, September 9; Thursday, September 10; and Sunday, September 13. Tickets to these shows are priced at a special rate – only \$32 to \$54 – and may only be purchased online at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org).

Get lower prices and prime performance dates as part of a subscription to **Berkeley Rep's season**. See three or more shows for as little as \$84 – or see seven shows for only \$25 each. In addition to *American Idiot*, the upcoming season includes these plays:

- The world premiere of *Girlfriend*, a new musical based on **Matthew Sweet's** landmark album with a book by **Todd Almond**
- The West Coast premiere of *Tiny Kushner*, the latest collaboration from legendary playwright **Tony Kushner** and Artistic Director Tony Taccone

(MORE)

- The world premiere of *Concerning Strange Devices from the Distant West*, written by **Naomi Iizuka** and directed by **Les Waters**
- The world premiere of *Five Questions*, which reunites Obie Award-winners **Lisa Kron** and **Leigh Silverman**
- *Aurélia's Oratorio*, a magical holiday show starring the granddaughter of Charlie Chaplin
- And a seventh show to be announced later

For more information on *American Idiot* and these other plays, call 510.647.2949 or toll-free at 888-4-BRT-Tix – or **buy tickets now at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org)**.

# # #

## **AMERICAN IDIOT – Fact Sheet**

- WHO:** Words by Billie Joe Armstrong  
Music by Green Day  
Book by Billie Joe Armstrong and Michael Mayer  
Directed by Michael Mayer
- WHAT:** *American Idiot*, the world premiere of a new show that unites the searing songs of *Green Day* with the director of *Spring Awakening*
- WHERE:** Berkeley Repertory Theatre's Roda Theatre  
2025 Addison Street, Berkeley, CA 94704
- WHEN:** September 4 – October 11, 2009  
Tickets on sale now for preview performances on the following dates:  
Friday 9/4, Saturday 9/5, Wednesday 9/9, Thursday 9/10, and Sunday 9/13
- HOW MUCH:** \$32 - \$54 (for these five dates only)  
Subscriptions to three or more shows in Berkeley Rep's season begin at only \$84  
See the entire season of seven plays for only \$25 each!
- PHOTOS:** <http://www.berkeleyrep.org/press/photos-0910.asp>
- TIX:** Tickets available only at [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org)

# # #