

## New Odyssey back at the Monroe County Fair by popular demand

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New Odyssey Fairgoers seeking an adventurous journey or a spiritual quest in music will find both when New Odyssey returns to the 2008 Monroe County Fair.

"There is something for everyone," said fair entertainment Chairman James B. Miller. "They can make you laugh or make you cry." New Odyssey members play classic rock and roll, country music, bluegrass, gospel, folk genre, songs for dancing, and patriotic medleys. According to Mr. Miller, the troupe's forte is comedy mixed with their assortment of show tunes and others. "They are extremely talented musicians," he said.

Along with good-natured banter among themselves and with fairgoers, the guys in the band have the ability to play 30 instruments, collectively. In addition to singing, Gary Todd plays 15

instruments. Michael Jay also vocalizes and has the potential to entertain on 10 instruments. Publicity shots illustrate Gary Polkow jamming with a trumpet. He began piano lessons at when he was 7. Plus he sings. "We use authentic instruments for appropriate music," Mr. Todd said. "For instance, we use a tuba and accordion for a polka."

The artists have a following.

"They are back by popular demand," Mr. Miller said. New Odyssey last was at the fair in 2005 and the group is among the most loved acts the fair has had. Yet, in an effort to keep offering the public a consistently high quality show bill, performers are mixed. There sometimes is a two- to three-year hiatus between bookings with New Odyssey. "Then, we bring them back," Mr. Miller said. "They are terrific."

During fair week, three performances a day will be the grueling standard set by New Odyssey. Each appearance is different from the previous set. Mr. Miller says that makes big shoes to fill when other acts perform the fair's daily shows.

According to Mr. Todd, the trio has performed together for 30 years, "Plus, we play 30 instruments. That is our shtick," Mr. Todd said.

For other engagements they are known as New Odyssey Show Band. They are organized under an umbrella entity name of New Odyssey Productions and hail from the Chicago area. Of their joining forces, Mr. Todd said, "We were on the same circuit, knew and jammed with each other, and wanted to be the bosses of ourselves."

As entertainment for the Monroe County Fair, the group is billed as novel and family-oriented.

In addition, they bill themselves as being punctual. The asset of being on time is apparent in their loyal following. Mr. Miller says fans come to one show and then schedule their activities so they can be back to catch the next performance. "They are consecutive," Mr. Miller said of New Odyssey. "They have been playing at the Monroe County Fair for 16 or 17 years."