

Prairie Village Scores Big Country Music Festival | MadvilleTimes.blogspot.com | April 21, 2008

Speaking of big events in Madison, Prairie Village has announced that it has signed a 10-year deal to host Motongator Joe's Country Music Festival on June 27-29, right here on the beautiful shores of Lake Herman. Upper Peninsula Michigan native Joseph Grinsteiner -- Motongator Joe -- styles himself an "in your face" performer of "hillbilly testosterone outlaw country." To spotlight such music, Motongator Joe started his country music festival in Michigan 11 years ago. Held on 120 acres near Wallace, MI, Joe's festival draws an average 5,000 camping country fans (the 2005 event drew over 6,000, says Joe).

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He's performed up and down the Dakotas, and now he's bringing his music festival here. I'm not sure how eager the Chamber will be to see Madison become your summer capital for "Hillbilly Testosterone Outlaw Country" and redneck goat-ropin' good times (those are some of Joe's terms, not mine), but I say yee-haw! The guy cut his teeth on Merle Haggard and Johnny Cash, and on his webpage soliciting acts for the Prairie Village event, he says "Preference is given to 'Non-Pop-Country' acts" -- that's all right by me! Bring it -- brang it on and get 'er done! Enjoy the music and beer, fellas... and try not to kick the crap out of the threshing machines.

A couple years ago, Mrs. Madville Times and I talked with the local Chamber about the idea of starting a big music festival to anchor a larger community event. We heard some positive responses, but it was mostly, "Go ahead, do what you like, you're on your own, and it's going to take a long time to get something like that going."

Looks like Prairie Village and Motongator Joe are ready to prove that if you just show a little foresight, make the right connections, and order lots of porta-potties, you can put together a big event that can draw thousands of people to Lake County in its first year. Maybe I won't sound so eager come the end of June, when I'm lying awake listening to the music blaring across Lake Herman each night "until the beer runs out." But for now, I say good thinking, Prairie Village! Let's start the marketing, make this show as big as the Steam Threshing Jamboree!

Now Joe's website says another festival is scheduled for the Michigan site July 23-27 and there's already a solid slate of acts. While it's unclear whether Joe plans to continue staging the Michigan event along with the new South Dakota event, a cached webpage gives some insight as to why he might consider moving the show out here to the prairie: I tell everybody I enjoy the work but I don't have as much fun as when it was smaller. I thought maybe it was because I was younger back then... but in reality it's not. See I always try to keep things simple and fun but the fact is, people are attracted to fun! (go figure) So crowds get bigger and the insurance company wants more every year as the crowd grows. On top of that I'm sure you're all aware that the price of fuel, utilities and general resources are more expensive than ever. Our lovely State of Michigan has increased our permit costs over 1600% in the past 4 years alone. (no that's not a typo) I think the first year's permits and requirements cost around \$25-\$50 dollars. This past year it was in the thousands.

With the State of Michigan in a slump and the increasing state cutbacks, in my opinion most of the state's employees have to prove to the higher-ups that they are relevant, so the bureaucracy for this type of business is now staggering. In 2007 after the Motongator's 11 years of operation, the Michigan DEQ has changed the rules pertaining to us altogether and decided that we had to closely match the infrastructure of a permanent campground in order to receive the same annually renewed Temporary Campground Permit we had been operating under for over a decade. There goes another \$10,000.00! (I should have started a sulfide mine, there would have been less DEQ bureaucracy, and a permit would have been in the mail) [Motongator Joe, "Joe's Word," cached by Google, retrieved 2008.04.21].

I'll admit, regulations do stand in the way of a good time. Let's hope Prairie Village can make Motongator Joe feel right at home and bring us some good entertainment, some good press, and some good revenue. Readers in state and out, mark your calendars: June 27-29, Prairie Village, two miles west of Madison -- Motongator Joe and all sorts of boot-stompin', straw-chompin' fun!

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