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Ready To Rumble

Rumbles Ready To Rock Riverboat Days Tonight

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The Rumbles, one of the most popular Midwest dance bands of the past half-century, is kicking off Riverboat Days tonight (Friday) at Riverside Park.

But for band member Todd Henseler, tonight's performance also marks a homecoming celebration.

Henseler, a Yankton native, plays bass, saxophone and keyboard along with vocals. He joined the Rumbles in early 1987, replacing original member Bud Phillips.

In 1995, Henseler left the band and was replaced by Kris Chelf. In 1999, Chelf exited the band. Henseler returned, and he has remained with the Rumbles ever since.

"Todd does it all for us," said Steve Hough, the last performing member of the original band.

With Henseler, the Rumbles got much more than they realized when he joined the band, Hough said.

"We knew Todd was a bass player. We didn't realize at the time that this guy was also such a great sax player, which is hard to find," Hough said. "He's an excellent bass player, excellent keyboard player, fantastic saxophone player and a great singer. He can do all those things."

Henseler is looking forward to playing again in his hometown before a large crowd, Hough said.

"With this as Todd's homecoming, it adds still more to playing at Riverboat Days," Hough said. "Todd's mother has passed away, but his dad used to be principal of the high school and still lives in Yankton. Most of Todd's family plans to be there Friday night."

The Rumbles started in 1963, taking its name from the slang term for a fight, Hough said. The band was inducted into the Iowa Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2001.

In addition to Hough and Henseler, the current line-up includes guitarist Gayle Adams and keyboardist/guitarist Tim Vasquez.

MEMORABLE VISITS

The Rumbles have been booked twice before for Riverboat Days, and both occasions were memorable, Hough said.

The first time, more than two decades ago, came to an abrupt end, he explained.

"It was a good crowd. It's just that we had a bad experience during the concert," he said. "Things were going great, and we were going into the third set. A gal was out there dancing, and she fell and broke her leg. They waved for us to stop playing. We thought she had just fallen down, but they needed the ambulance to carry her away."

The band stopped the show at that point and didn't return to the stage, Hough said.

"We were trying to build up the show as the night went on, but that (stoppage) turned out to be the grand finale," he said. "By the time we were ready to go into the next section of the program, that was the end of it. The break lasted a half-hour to 45 minutes, and we never did go back (on stage)."

Undaunted, the Rumbles booked a return performance for Riverboat Days, Hough said.

"The last time we were supposed to be there, it was about 20 years ago. We got up there (to Yankton) and it started storming so bad. About the last 20 miles into town, it was pounding down rain and we just sat there," he said.

"One of the guys in charge (at Riverboat Days) was talking to us and said, 'If it quit raining right now, you couldn't get your truck down there (to the concert site). The whole area is nothing but mud.' It was raining buckets and the wind was blasting sideways, so there was no way we were going to play that night."

While tonight's weather forecast calls for a chance of thunderstorms, Hough re-

mains optimistic the show will go on without a hitch.

"Hopefully, the third time (in Yankton) is a charm," he said with a chuckle.

SAYING FAREWELL

Tonight's Riverboat Days performance is part of a "farewell tour" that started in 2012, Hough said.

"We thought that we needed to give everyone a final chance to see us. We wanted to go to all these places that we had played before we would quit the band," he explained. "All of sudden, more and more people said, 'You've got to do our celebration, we're planning on you for our Q125' or some other event. We decided to go longer (with the farewell tour) and try to cut back the schedule. We have done 130 shows a year in the past, but this year we're doing around 100. We're getting through the year, and we still have a few things lined up for next year."

The Rumbles will bring their trademark assortment of rock and roll classics to the stage tonight, Hough said.



The Rumbles, one of the Midwest's most popular cover bands, performs at Riverboat Days in Yankton's Riverside Park tonight (Friday). The band has been performing since the early 1960s, but its appeal spans generations.

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