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Entertainment home

Tork, Dolenz still monkeying around

The Monkees, celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, will be at the Foellinger Outdoor Theatre Tuesday.

By James Grant, nsfeatures@news-sentinel.com
Thursday, June 02, 2016 12:48 AM

Peter Tork and fellow Monkee Micky Dolenz will take to the stage at Foellinger Outdoor Theatre Tuesday to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Monkees.

"The Monkees," for those who are unfamiliar, was a television show about a struggling rock group whose cast morphed into an actual musical group that spawned a dozen Top 40 hits including "Last Train to Clarksville," "I'm a Believer," "Daydream Believer," "Pleasant Valley Sunday," "Valleri" and "A Little Bit Me, A Little Bit You."

With a rich catalog of songs written by the likes of Carole King and Gerry Goffin, Neil Diamond, Boyce and Hart and group member Mike Nesmith, The Monkees also sent four albums to the top of the Billboard charts in 1966-67, and for a time in 1967 were even outselling The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

Since the premiere of "The Monkees" television show on Sept. 12, 1966, the group has gone on to weave itself into a lasting place on the American pop culture landscape reuniting several times over the years to enthusiastic audiences around the world and building a multi-generational fan base that continues to embrace the band.

With this being The Monkees 50th anniversary, all sorts of new Monkees items are being released, including action figures, new CDs and vinyl releases as well as a Blu-Ray set coming out June 27 (available exclusively from www.monkees.com) that remasters the entire Monkees television series in high-definition and also contains loads of previously unreleased and unseen bonus footage.

The Monkees' performance Tuesday is the band's first show in Fort Wayne since 2001, and this time the group is highlighting its legacy with a multimedia show that will feature newly remastered high-definition clips from the group's TV show as well as performances of all the band's hits and a smattering of deep album cuts.

On this tour, Peter Tork says all The Monkees will be represented, including the late Davy Jones, who passed away in 2012, and Mike Nesmith, who is sitting out this tour but possibly will play a show or two later this summer or fall.

"We run video all the time, all show long, and there'll be videos of Michael and Davy of course," Tork said in



Micky Dolenz, left, and Peter Tork, are two of the four original Monkees who will be performing on Tuesday at Foellinger Outdoor Theatre. (Courtesy photo)



Micky Dolenz, left, and Peter Tork, both original members of The Monkees, will perform at the Foellinger Outdoor Theatre on Tuesday. (Courtesy photo by Henry Diltz)

More Information The Monkees

WHAT: The pop band from the '60s that started as a TV show and then became a bona fide band will perform live in concert. Two of the original four Monkees, Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork, will be with the band.

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a telephone interview.

"They'll be part of the show in the sense that their pictures will be there and their music will be there," he said.

"One of the things we're going to be doing is a song called 'What Am I Doing Hanging 'Round?' that Michael brought into the group that I play banjo on.

"And I'll be singing Michael's part, as he won't be there; somebody has to sing it so I'm going to do it," Tork said.

As a special surprise for those who bought VIP tickets to various shows on this tour, Tork says the group will feature plenty of never-performed songs in special VIP pre-show sound check performances.

"Everything's going to be different," Tork said of the VIP performances.

"We're going to do different things every night. We're going to do songs that we've never done before and may never do again," he said.

"And we're going to do some offbeat stuff; I'm going to sing an operatic aria," Tork added followed by a laugh.

This tour also will include some brand new Monkees music as well.

The first new Monkees album since 1996 has just been released, called "Good Times!" that features songs written by indie rock performers such as Adam Schlesinger from Fountain of Wayne, who produced "Good Times!" as well as Andy Partridge from XTC, Ben Gibbard from Death Cab for Cutie and Rivers Cuomo from Weezer.

The album features vocals and instrumental contributions from the three surviving Monkees as well as a song called "Love to Love" that features vocals by Davy Jones that were recorded in the 1960s but never released on record during the group's heyday.

"Good Times!" returns to the sound of The Monkees' best-loved albums from 1966-68, and Tork says that's no accident, as the music from the 1960s represents hope to a lot of music lovers then and now.

"A lot of people look to the '60s as a moment of hope as I do," Tork said.

"I thought that for a while it really looked as though there was really going to be some major changes and maybe there have been.

"They hadn't come as briskly as I could have hoped and maybe I haven't even noticed, but I was a very hopeful guy in the '60s; I'm not that much less hopeful now, but I've become kind of sadly aware that the changes aren't going to happen overnight. But I still have hope."

Tork says it's possible some of the indie performers who wrote songs on this new album may pop up at shows throughout the tour. "Most of these guys, we'd be delighted to have them come join us onstage for a song or two," Tork said.

"I've always had a great time bringing people up. It makes the show much livelier and keeps the audience more involved, and it's always great to work with a new gang of people like that," he said.

"One of these guys (Rivers Cuomo) went to the same school I did ... he went to the high school I graduated from."

Tork is excited by the new Monkees album and says he enjoyed working with producer Adam Schlesinger as well as his Monkees band mates and hopes the future may hold further recordings from the group.

"It was fun, Adam's great," Tork said of recording "Good Times!" with Schlesinger.

"It's tremendous to have the enthusiasm of a gang of people like that, like Adam and the rest of the weird indie rockers that contributed; and of course working in the studio with old Mick (Micky Dolenz) again.

"I wasn't in the studio for Mike's work, but I think his work is wonderful and I'm just so impressed with the way his singing has changed, and Micky still sings as well as he ever did, it's really amazing."

One of the bonus tracks from the "Good Times!" album called "A Better World," sung by Tork, which will be available through exclusive releases from F.Y.E. music stores on CD and Barnes & Noble on vinyl, was written by Tork's brother and is meant to be a call for less fear in this politically charged world.

"I think that the message of the song is reassuring and encouraging and that's the idea," Tork said.

Looking back over the last 50 years, Tork says the best thing about the whole Monkees experience for him was that The Monkees, especially the TV show, celebrated the 1960s counterculture ethos in a subtle and positive way.

"As you know there was no authority figure on "The Monkees," Tork said.

"There was no big daddy, there was no manager telling us what was right and wrong and gently leading us into correct ways of behavior — none of that stuff."

"It was us dealing with the world as best we could, and I thought that said something important at the time and still important — we're alright, we don't need to be beholden to authority."

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

WHERE: Foellinger Outdoor Theatre, 3411 Sherman Blvd.

COST: \$49-\$99. For more information or to buy tickets, go to www.fortwayneparks.org or call Foellinger Outdoor Theatre at 427-6000 or 427-6715 after 6 p.m. day of show. Tickets also can be purchased at any of the Wooden Nickel Record locations around Fort Wayne.

Audio

To hear audio excerpts of our interview with Peter Tork, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnayig6cYQQ>

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