

EMILY SWEET LANDEGENT | STAFF WRITER

Group connects with crowd

George Maurer Group on free stage for days of fair

“Why so serious?”

Surely the late Heath Ledger would never have asked the George Maurer Group this question.

Laid-back and in-tune, the rock-in' variety group promises to have a good time at the Clay County Fair Friday, Sept. 12-Sunday, Sept. 14.

“We don't just stand up there and perform music,” said frontman George Maurer, who plays piano for the group that sometimes expands for jazz-only gigs.

Rather, the core group of five has known each other for 10 years, Maurer said, and their onstage/off-stage camaraderie is very evident.

“We're engaging to the audience and very spontaneous,” Maurer said. “We just go with the flow and enjoy the music.”

Though well-read jazz musicians, the George Maurer Group is equally at home with rock 'n' roll and Motown, Maurer said, bringing their own jazzy improv twists while still keeping Beatles and Van Morrison favorites familiar.

The group is no stranger to the fair stage, either; the jazz portion just hit the Minnesota State Fair, where they were warmly, yet subtly, well-received.

“Minnesotans will show their appreciation by not leaving,” Mau-



rer said with tongue-in-cheek, “so if we can keep them in their chairs . . .”

As for Clay County, the group has

performed several times at the fair. Though Iowans are more apt to get up and dance or sing along, Maurer recalls some who, Minnesotan-like,

At a Glance:

- **WHAT:** George Maurer Group
- **WHERE:** Northwest Bank East Tent Theatre
- **WHEN:** 10 a.m., 1 and 4 p.m., Friday, Sept. 12-Sunday, Sept. 14
- **COST:** Free
- **CONTACT:** (712) 262-4740
- **ONLINE:** www.georgemaurer.com

sit, cross their arms and just listen.

However, the George Maurer group doesn't care what their audience's listening style is, as long as they're having fun.

“We've been to Clay County a few times before; we know what they'll like,” Maurer said.

“We're going to go with the feel of it.” ♦

Spencer | Iowa

Teen rocks classic songs

Crowds loved him on Labor Day, now Lee is back

Richie Lee and Starfire will take a trip down memory lane with a dinner show and dance devoted to the fabulous 50s & 60s.

Blue Water Cabaret in Arnolds Park will host the two bands Friday, Sept. 12.

The show will run from 5-7 p.m. and a dance will be held from 7-10 p.m.

Richie Lee, just 18 years-old and already well-read in the likes of Buddy Holly, Elvis and Ritchie Valens, will perform a mix of those greats as well as other sounds from the 1950s-60s.

Starfire, also a nostalgic rock 'n' roll band, will open for Richie Lee.

The young rock 'n' roller got his start in music early on, drawn to



the sounds of his parent's youth which were “always around” his house growing up, he said.

“I always wanted to play guitar and sing,” Lee said.

As for why he picked the songs of a generation before his time, it all

comes down to the music:

“The music has a rhythm and a good melody to it,” Lee said. “It's just happy music. It has a good sound.”

“It's always the kind of music that intrigued me the most.”

For the young man who has been singing like Buddy Holly since he was 8 years old, was growing up all that different for him, than say, any other teenager?

“I dunno, my hair's kinda 50s-style and stuff,” Lee said.

Big hair or not, the young singer/songwriter from Des Moines has been drawing crowds for years.

Recently, he performed during Labor Day weekend at the Iowa Rock 'n' Roll Music Association Hall of Fame Induction Spectacular

in Arnolds Park.

Saturday night, Lee played with Mario Ramirez, Ritchie Valens' brother, and with James Freeman, an original member of The Five Satins.

What's more, Lee was asked to play the original Johnny Cash guitar, which is on display at the Museum of Iowa Rock and Roll History at Arnolds Park.

He played “Burning Ring of Fire.”

With the concert and dance at Blue Water Cabaret, Lee hopes the audience walks away with memories.

“It was a neat generation,” he said.

“Good generation, good music.” ♦

At a Glance:

- **WHAT:** Richie Lee's Tribute to Classic Rock 'n' Roll and Starfire
- **WHERE:** Blue Water Cabaret, 316 N. Okoboji Grove Rd., Arnolds Park
- **WHEN:** Dinner Show 5-7 p.m., Dance 7-10 p.m., Friday, Sept. 12
- **COST:** \$35, includes show and five course meal
- **CONTACT:** (712) 332-6090
- **ONLINE:** www.richieleeproductions.com

Quotable:

“I want to bring back this sound for kids so it's not forgotten. I want them to hear what real rock music sounds like.”

Richie Lee

18 YEAR-OLD SINGER/MUSICIAN

Arnolds Park | Iowa