

What: “*New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* - Smithsonian exhibit travels to Moab”
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Presented By: Utah Humanities Council

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New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music travels to Moab, the next stop on its Utah tour. The Smithsonian traveling exhibit, brought to Utah by the Utah Humanities Council, examines the cultural significance of roots music in America. Moab will celebrate the grand opening of *New Harmonies* on **Saturday, September 18**, at the **Museum of Moab**. The exhibit and all associated events are free and open to the public. The exhibit tour in Moab runs from September 18 – November 3.

The Utah Humanities Council is partnering with five museums from around the state to showcase *New Harmonies*, which highlights the nation’s unique musical traditions and provides communities in Utah with an opportunity to celebrate their own local music traditions. Each exhibit host will feature local musical history, docent-led tours, workshops for children and adults, concerts, public speakers, and public humanities programs. The exhibit began in Park City, then on to Boulder and Cedar City, and will now tour to Moab and West Jordan through January 2011.

In addition to the Smithsonian exhibit, explore the musical history of Moab: early dance halls built on dug-outs, high school bands, and the modern music scene of the community told through activities, workshops, and performances. The Moab run of *New Harmonies* is bookended by the [Moab Music Festival](#) (September 2-13th) and the [Moab Folk Festival](#) (November 5-7th); a full schedule of Moab events may be found at <http://www.moabmuseum.org>.

New Harmonies is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and the Utah Humanities Council. The Utah tour of *New Harmonies* is made possible by generous support from Zions Bank, the Utah Office of Tourism, the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, EnergySolutions, Utah Public Radio, KUER, and KRCL. For more information, contact Megan van Frank at 801.359.9670 or visit: <http://www.utahhumanities.org/newharmonies.htm>.

About the *New Harmonies* Exhibit

The Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street exhibit *New Harmonies* tells the American musical story through photographs, instruments, lyrics, and artist profiles. Although “roots music” is a relatively new term that generally applies to forms of folk music, its influences run deep throughout American culture and can be heard in today’s commercial country, gospel, pop, and hip-hop genres. The exhibit explores the work of well-known folk, gospel, country, and blues artists who have inspired generations of musicians, like Ma Rainey, B.B. King, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, Mahalia Jackson, Woody Guthrie, and Joan Baez, and captures the spirit of musical styles that are at the heart of local heritage in the United States—Tejano, zydeco, polka, Cajun, conjunto, and klezmer. *New Harmonies* focuses on how roots music gives Americans a soundtrack and a voice for their stories.

The main beat of the exhibit is the ongoing cultural process that has made America the birthplace of more music than any place on earth. The exhibit provides a fascinating, inspiring, and toe-tapping listen to the American story of multi-cultural exchange. The story is full of surprises about familiar songs, histories of instruments, the roles of religion and technology, and the continuity of musical roots from "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to the latest hip hop CD.

About Utah Roots Music

According to Elaine Thatcher, state scholar for the Utah tour of *New Harmonies*, "When people talk about 'roots music,' they often think of the American South and its abundance of African-American, white, and mixed-influence music. Utah doesn't immediately come to mind." But, says Thatcher, "We have a rich heritage of traditional music in this state, beginning with Utah's first inhabitants." The Navajo, Paiute, Goshute, Ute, and Shoshone of Utah "possess lively traditions of music that go back centuries."

"The most dominant genre of European-American music to take root in Utah is Mormon music," says Thatcher. "Welsh, English, and Scottish people were among some of the earliest converts to Mormonism, and when they came to America, they brought their music with them." Newer immigrant groups have also brought their musical traditions to Utah. According to Thatcher, people of Hispanic, Pacific Islander, African, and Asian ancestry have enriched "Utah's musical palette" and have helped make it "much more diverse than it once was."

See <http://www.utahhumanities.org/newharmoniesroots.htm> for more information about Utah roots music.

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About the Utah Humanities Council

The Utah Humanities Council is a nonprofit organization that provides lifelong learning across the state through programs that explore diverse traditions, values, and ideas. UHC is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Salt Lake County Zoo, Arts, and Parks Fund, the State of Utah, and gifts from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Each year, the Council underwrites hundreds of educational and cultural programs throughout Utah. For more information, visit www.utahhumanities.org.