

Rockin' the Suburb: Rock the Hops set to take Alton by swig and shred next weekend

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ALTON – Drew and Hope Mader have been crusaders of Alton culture for years, whether as musicians, artists, advocates, park reformers and the organizers of Rock the Hops, which has become iconic in Alton's branding.

For those who have not attended the last few years of Rock the Hops, it is a festival of some of the city's favorite things: artists, music and, of course, beer. The Maders work with local establishments, artists, musicians and breweries in order to establish something of a sampling platter of entertainment throughout Downtown Alton and the Broadway Corridor. This year, the couple has established 27 bands performing in six different venues throughout the day on Saturday, Aug. 18. Along with the musicians, each of the half dozen venues will feature specific brewers and artists.

This year, there will be a few changes to the already-awesome formula. The Maders said some visual and interactive effects will be added for people attending the event, but those things will not be unveiled until the day of the show.

“We pride ourselves on presenting the best regional beer, musicians and artisans at local bars and restaurants in our historic Downtown District,” the Maders said in an emailed release. “Rock the Hops was named 'Best Festival of 2016' by the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), and has become a major influence over the festival style event culture here in town. In the wake of beating out 10,000 small towns all over the country to earn a feature on season three of Hulu series, “The Small Business Revolution,’ there

is an electricity flowing through Alton right now, which we believe will contribute to 2018 being the biggest year for Rock the Hops yet! The event has sold out every year, and we hope to continue this tradition.”



Also, Post Commons, located at 300 Alby has been added to the list of participating venues, which also includes Old Bakery Beer Company, Germania Brew Haus, Tony's Restaurant and Third Street Cafe, Chez Marilyn and Bottle and Barrel.

The Maders promise more than 35 styles of beer from favorites such as 4 Hands Brewing Company, Belleville-based 4204 Main Street Brewing Company, Grafton Winery and Brew Haus, Edwardsville-based Recess Brewing and Alton's own Old Bakery Beer Company. Newcomers this yer include Narrow Gauge, Rockwell, which does not even have its own building, yet is making a splash in St. Louis brewing culture with beer aficionados, and Heavy Riff, who is bringing “Velvet Underground Ale.”

Musicians are sourced from across the region, including local favorites like Distant Eyes and Biff K'narly and the Reptilians and St. Louis-based acts like the up-and-coming math rock band Junior Clooney, and pop punk revivalists, Church Key. These are only a handful of the 27 bands slated to play, who are of several different styles.

When asked why they work so diligently to put this all together, Hope Mader said they wanted to appeal to the greater culture of creatives in Alton. Many aspects of Alton's

brand appeal to history buffs, bird watchers, retirees and people who love beautiful views and active lifestyles. Rock the Hops, the couple said, emphasized some of Alton's weird and creative aspects, which are not always at the forefront of other events.

“If you are an artist or someone who makes things and want to share those things with an audience, this day is for you,” Hope Mader said. “It's a day for you to have a light on what you've made and done and share them with people. We really strive to show people things they never would have seen otherwise. People who are going to a bar for the beer will end up maybe seeing a great local band they may have never seen otherwise.”

Tickets for Rock the Hops are \$30 online in advance and \$35 at the door, day of show. Ticket price includes entry to all events, a souvenir sampling glass to try the different brews and entry onto a shuttle, which will be taking people to each of the venues participating. Tickets can be purchased at rockthehops2018.brownpapertickets.com

