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NADAS

Des Moines Rockers Return To Yankton For 2012 Ribfest

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As organizers make final preparations for next weekend's Rockin' Ribfest in Yankton, a bigger music budget has allowed them to get a bigger name band, which could help attract record numbers to the festival this year.

The Nadas, a Des Moines rock band that played in Yankton last year during the 150th anniversary celebration, will be the headline act on Saturday, Sept. 1, playing after several local bands and a ZZ Top tribute band.

Yankton will be the latest stop on what has become a productive road for the band.

"We started as a college band in Ames, Iowa, and did that all throughout our college careers and have just kept going since starting up in 1993," said Jason Walsmith, a founder of the band who plays guitar and does vocals. Other members of the band include Mike Butterworth (guitar, vocals), Brian Duffey (bass) and Brandon Stone (drums).

By the time 2009 rolled around, the highly acclaimed band had sold hundreds of thousands of copies of its albums and had played in cities across the country.

One of the things The Nadas are noted for is the close connection they have with fans.

When the band recorded its album "Almanac" in 2010, the members wrote, recorded and released one song for the album in each month that year. They even went as far as to video stream every step of the process of making an album on their Website, which allowed fans an unprecedented look into the music industry and the creative process of recording songs and making a record. The Nadas also allowed fans to comment on the music. Some comments even affected songs and were incorporated into the music that was put on the album.

Despite the success the band has had to this point, the members have faced many challenges along the way.

"There has been that challenge of sticking out in this crazy career and the crazy business we're in," Walsmith said. "A lot of our friends' bands haven't been able to remain independent or even stick around like we have through the years."

The Nadas have also faced the challenge of vehicle breakdowns and flat tires. Walsmith noted they

have had over 50 flat tires in their career and have had to travel in some unconventional ways to get to shows, including chartering vans, planes, taking a train or even buying a new van in order to make a show.

"You name it, we've had to do it," Walsmith said. "We've been doing it long enough, and have had enough breakdowns, to make it to a show so many different ways."

Butterworth said free shows help them significantly grow their fan base.

"Usually when people are paying for the concert, they are coming to see us. When it's a free show, they are there for a bigger reason," Butterworth said.

"We always appreciate the chance to play in front of new people and make new fans," Walsmith added. "We played in Yankton last year and had no idea we had so many fans there. People were really excited to have us in town and we felt right at home being there."

The main markets The Nadas reach out to are from Chicago to Denver and Minneapolis to Kansas City, with large followings in Omaha and their home state of Iowa.

"We'll play all over the country, but we mainly stick to the Midwest," Walsmith said. "Having said that, we'll have shows on both coasts this year."

They will also be featuring songs from their upcoming album, which could attract a larger number of their fans than usual traveling into Yankton to see them perform.

"We like to have fun on stage and play good music," Butterworth said.

"We've played so many shows over the years, with some being better than others, but each being special in a number of different ways," Walsmith said. "We like to have fun on stage and play good music that we think people will enjoy."

Ben Hanten, who is an organizer for Ribfest and helps with the music bookings, thinks The Nadas will help draw a larger crowd to Ribfest.

"I'm really excited for them to perform," he said. "They appeal to a younger audience and are also a regional draw, so there is the potential for their fans to travel into Yankton to see them play at Ribfest."

Hanten added there also the possibility for increased crowds with the date of Ribfest moving up from the middle of September to Labor Day weekend this year.

"I think this year's Ribfest will be the best yet," he said. "We're setting ourselves up for better weather with the date change."

He added the date change could help save people money for campers and vacationers in Yankton for the Labor Day weekend. Having Ribfest that weekend allows people to stay at home for the weekend, as

opposed to going elsewhere for something to do for the holiday.

"We want to bill Yankton as a prime destination for Labor Day weekend," Hanten said.

Potential drawbacks of the date change include people already having obligations for the weekend, including going to parks across the state or attending the South Dakota State Fair in Huron. However, he said this should be offset by the increased number of people coming to town for Ribfest and the Triple V Triathlon, which takes place the next day.

Ribfest organizers are still seeking more amateur ribbers, with the deadline coming up prior to the start of the festival. This is also the first year for non-food vendors to take part in the festivities for a \$100 fee.

The Nadas are scheduled to take the stage around 9 p.m. during Ribfest on Saturday, Sept. 1.


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