

Rock the Hills deemed a success despite late summer date

By Neil McKenzie-Sutter
Special to The IFP

On many levels Rock the Hills, held on Saturday in the Georgetown Fairgrounds, was a success, say organizers.

"I think it went really well. It was a tremendous success," said Co-lead of Event Management for Rock the Hills Curtis Papetti, 17.

The 2015 music festival, featured more acts than 2014, including solo performances by John Muirhead and Sanjay B., as well as local bands Casual Disaster, Silver Creek Folk, and Standby.

"It's so great to see all our friends come and surprisingly know all the lyrics to our songs," said Rhys Evans, member of another local band, Small Towns.

"It was really fun. I hope we continue on and do it for many more years to come," said Erica Knox, another local solo performer.

The Georgetown crowd was also treated to several regional bands from elsewhere in the GTA and Hamilton such as The May-sides, Cheap Date, and Of Gentle-



Sanjay Baboolal played a mix of ballads and up tempo tunes at the Rock the Hills summer music festival at the Georgetown Fairgrounds.

Photo by Ray Lavender

men and Cowards.

Significantly, the show also featured the first live performance of nationally-renowned band Young Empires's new single, *Uncover Your Eyes*, and a unique performance by the other headliner, Vir-

ginia to Vegas. ViiV didn't have his regular guitar or bass players on hand for the August 22 show, and needed to play with substitutes.

"It's fun because I'm so used to playing the songs the way we always play them," said Derik Baker of Virginia to Vegas. "It's nice to have a little twist. So even though it's a smaller audience, it was great that that audience got to see this little thing, because it's pretty rare. I probably won't play with them again."

From an audience perspective the festival ran smoothly, but behind the scenes organizers faced some challenges.

Organizers had planned the festival for mid-July, similar to 2014, but needed to reschedule to August 22.

"The biggest thing in the GTA this summer was obviously the Pan-Am Games," said Rock the Hills Executive Director Beatrice Sharkey. "June 20th and August 20th was a blackout period for any events requiring any kind of security or extra police support."

Rock the Hills had approxi-



Ben Hannah, in the band Silver Creek Folk.

Photo by Neil McKenzie-Sutter mately 650 attendees in 2014 and 2015, a respectable number, but slightly lower than the 800 anticipated for 2015, and organizers believe this date change accounts for why attendance levels didn't increase from 2014.

The Rock the Hills team is already planning for 2016 and they have some changes in mind, including moving the date back to mid-July, expanding the number of acts, and are considering extending payment to local and re-

gional performers. A large part of the festival's budget is spent on attracting headline acts including bands, Hollerado in 2014, Virginia to Vegas and Young Empires in 2015, but local and regional performers are not currently compensated for participating.

"... it would be nice to see Rock to Hills not only provide the opportunity for local youth bands with exposure to the community, but for the bands to be financially compensated for their time, dedication, and entertainment," Collette Andrea, who participated in Rock the Hills 2015 with the band, Silver Creek Folk.

"Everybody is worth something, especially the musicians when you are putting on a musical event," she said.

Rock the Hills organizers say they hope to compensate local [tier 1] and regional [tier 2] players in the future.

"Once the finances work out to that I think it'd be great to pay the local and tier 2 acts," said Papetti.

"We would hope for that in the future," agreed Sharkey.

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