

Alpine

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Live Nation Entertainment, which owns the theater, say its booking agents are not offering artists anything new to perform at Alpine Valley, only a chance to join the rebirth of a unique Midwestern concert stage.

Jon Reens, vice president of Live Nation Entertainment, said there may be other new additions to the lineup, too, building on what is shaping up to be a summer to remember in Walworth County.

"It's awesome," Reens said. "It is artists who recognize the magic of the venue — and want to be a part of it."

Located just outside East Troy in the town of Lafayette, Alpine Valley opened in 1977 and soon became a premier outdoor concert site, hosting such big names as Bruce Springsteen and Aerosmith. But the excitement faded in recent years, when performers started skipping Alpine Valley in favor of such trendy locales as Chicago's Wrigley Field.

Unable to land any major musical acts in 2017, Live Nation Entertainment closed down the facility for the first time ever, leaving Walworth County almost literally in the dark. Hotels and restaurants slowed down, and teens struggled without summer jobs previously in ample supply at the concert venue.

A couple of shows took the stage in 2018, but it was nothing like the top-tier attractions that are lining up to add Alpine Valley to their 2019 summer tours.

Larry Gaffey, general manager of the Walworth County Fair, said he already is getting reservations from concert goers who want to book campsites for overnight stays at the fairgrounds in Elkhorn. The county fair has about 300 campsites available for those who cannot find hotel rooms or who simply prefer to pitch a tent.

The county fair charges \$40 a night for a campsite.

Gaffey said he is excited to see Alpine Valley bringing crowds back to the area, generating revenue for the county fair and others.

"It is good news," he said. "And we need it."

At a new eatery and drinking spot called East Troy Brewery, workers are making plans to introduce specials and welcome concert goers whenever Jimmy Buffett or another artist brings in a surge of music fans for a weekend.

General manager Brent Fiedor said the prospects for a revival of Alpine Valley's summer concert heyday was one reason he and his partners at East Troy Brewery set up shop this winter inside a former bank building at 2905 Main St., on the East Troy village square.

Fiedor said he and the rest of the staff at the restaurant and tavern can barely wait to see concert

goers fill up the 190-seat establishment, which will add outdoor patio seating in the summer.

"We're ecstatic," Fiedor said of Alpine Valley's resurgence. "They're bringing money into East Troy, and that's awesome."

By the time The Who tops off the summer with the famed British rock band's performance on the weekend after Labor Day, Live Nation Entertainment hopes to be making plans for another summer of outdoor entertainment in 2020.

Reens voiced confidence that Alpine Valley's return to prominence in 2019 is only the start of big things to come in future years.

"It's a completely sustainable venue," he said. "We are fully committed to it."

Seeberg, who recalls her own memorable experiences at Alpine Valley years ago, admits that it was disappointing to watch the concert arena struggle in recent years, and ultimately go dark in 2017.

The visitors bureau director said she is not surprised to see major artists now finding their way back to East Troy. She has high hopes that the facility has turned a corner, and is embarking on a new period of success and relevance for music fans into the future.

"There's a rich history there, and we're very pleased that it's coming back," she said. "It'll serve a new generation."