

Alameda: Celtic bands ready to rock Rooster's Roadhouse

By Maggie Sharpe, Correspondent

POSTED: 03/12/2014 06:30:13 PM PDT

ALAMEDA -- Rooster's Roadhouse in Alameda revs up for St. Patrick's Day with three Celtic bands rocking the house Friday night.

Local bagpiper Andy McKay will join the bands in a warm-up to St. Patrick's Day, complete with traditional Scottish pipes and the wearing of the kilt.

"We're hoping lots of folks will come out and kick off St. Patrick's Day weekend with great music and special guests and surprises," said Damian Breen, the vocalist for Another Tangent, who also plays guitar and harmonica.

He describes Another Tangent's music as original rock 'n' roll, "much like Rory Gallagher, Cream or Thin Lizzy."

"There's a lot of poetry going on in our music," said Breen, who hails from County Kildare in Ireland. "We're influenced by the tradition of Irish storytelling and songwriting."

Breen left Ireland about 18 years ago to find work in New York and now lives in Crockett.

"It's a little bit like my hometown -- a couple of traffic lights and a few pubs," Breen said.

Rounding out the band are Jim Diehl on bass and vocals and Alameda resident Michael McGrath on drums and backup vocals. Breen said this is the first time his band has performed at Rooster's Roadhouse, but they're excited to play there.

"It's a nice size for people to hear music," Breen said.

John Doyle, guitarist, singer and songwriter for The Guverment, said the band has been performing with different lineups off and on for about 16 years. He grew up in Dublin, Ireland, and now lives in San Francisco. His cousin, Damien Martin, a native of County Kildare who now lives in San Francisco, plays bass. Drummer Darko comes from Serbia and lead guitarist Rich Fisanick is a native of New Jersey.

"We're what you might call a good international band," said Doyle, who recently added keyboardist Bill Widdess to The Guverment mix.

Doyle doesn't mess around.

"We play straight-up rock 'n' roll, a little bit punk but we also throw in a few ballads," said Doyle, who writes most of the band's material. "I'd say we're truthful. Write the song, get it off your chest and play it."

He's played Rooster's Roadhouse before and plans to knock things up a notch Friday.

"We'll bring a few folks with us and we'll rip the roof off," Doyle said. "It will be a great

show. If you're into drinking and rock n' roll -- or even if you're not into drinking and just want a glass of water -- it will be a great night."

Fraser McGill, who plays guitar, bango and sings lead vocals for McCrae's Battalion, grew up in South Queensferry in Scotland, on the Firth of Forth and about 10 miles northwest of Edinburgh. He now lives in San Francisco.

"Our music has a lot of traditional Celtic feel to it," said McGill, who writes the band's songs. "My songwriting is based on traditional music with a kind of indie sound to it."

McGill has been playing music since he was 14 years old -- he's 50 now.

"It's in my blood to play. It keeps me out of trouble," said McGill, whose band will throw in a couple of traditional Irish numbers at the Rooster's concert as a nod to St. Patrick.

His fellow musicians include Colin Hall, a Dubliner, on bass; Drew Mayo, from Pacifica, on drums; and Oregon native Kristen Vandling on fiddle, mandolin and "bazooka." It's not confirmed, but McCrae's Battalion may be joined by David O'Keefe, from Los Angeles, on whistle.

"There are so many brilliant Celtic musicians in the area that you could go somewhere every night and hear great music," McGill said.

He said this is the first time that his band has played at Rooster's Roadhouse.

"I'm looking forward to it, I've heard it's a fun place to play," McGill said.

If you go:

What: Another Tangent, The Guverment and McCrae's Battalion play at Rooster's Roadhouse

Where: Rooster's Roadhouse, 1700 Clement Ave., Alameda

When: 9 p.m. Friday

Contact: 510-337-9190

Band information:

<http://mccraes-battalion.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/the.guverment>

www.Another-Tangent.com