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Broadway show really hopes to 'Rock' Super Bowl

By MARK KENNEDY

NEW YORK (AP) — On Super Bowl Sunday, there will be a group of people sweating out in the cold in front of millions, doing what they do best. And that group is, of course, the Broadway cast of "Rock of Ages."

Fourteen singers and dancers from the Tony-nominated show will be performing two hair-band-centric 30-minute sets live outside MetLife Stadium in the hours before kickoff, braving the elements but also giving incredible attention to the 5-year-old show.

"Everyone keeps saying it's a once-in-a-lifetime thing that the Super Bowl is in New York, so to have 'Rock of Ages' perform on Super Bowl Sunday is amazing," said Matthew DiCarlo, the show's production stage manager.

The second show will close out the Fox live pre-game show from 5:10-5:40 p.m., a coveted slot. Other musical acts include Phillip Phillips and The Band Perry, and Bill O'Reilly will conduct a live sit-down interview with President Barack Obama. Millions of people will be tuned in.

At a recent rehearsal in midtown, DiCarlo watched as cast members ran through their crowded set, which includes songs such as "I Wanna Rock," "Here I Go Again," "I Can't Fight This Feeling" and "Don't Stop Believin'."

They've had to adjust to a smaller space — masking tape on the floor marked off a new 12-by-32-foot stage — and sing into wooden sticks to help them get familiar with using handheld microphones, which they don't use on Broadway.

They've also learned new choreography — including some nods to the game itself, such as mimicking an extra-point kick — and a new set list, since the songs in the show are in a different order. Thermal underwear may also be needed.



In this Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2014 photo, Kate Rockwell, left, and Joey Calveri rehearse a scene from "Rock of Ages" at a dance studio in New York. The cast of the Broadway show will be part of the televised pregame entertainment from outside MetLife Stadium in New Jersey for Sunday's Super Bowl. (AP Photo/Mark Kennedy)

The cast, which includes Kate Rockwell, Aaron C. Finley, Joey Calveri, Genson Blimline and Adam Dannheisser, says it will be ready. After all, they're Broadway pros.

"It's almost become second nature, in a way," said Blimline, who plays the narrator and, for the record, is a Jets fan. "The venue around you may change but essentially the material is always the same."

Dannheisser, who plays the owner of a rock club in the show, can't let a reference like that pass. He jokingly jumps in with the Bon Jovi lyric from "Dead or Alive": "It's always the same, only the names have changed."

The high exposure for "Rock of Ages" is part of a push by Broadway producers to grab the attention of football fans crowding the New York-New Jersey area. A 13-block stretch of Broadway

encompassing Times Square has been closed to traffic, renamed Super Bowl Boulevard and converted into a rollicking theme park. The cast of "Rock of Ages" will do a 30-minute set there on Thursday afternoon, too.

Other shows including "Pippin," "Newsies," "Motown the Musical," "Rocky," "Mamma Mia!" and "Chicago" will be appearing at nearby Bryant Park. "Jersey Boys" will join "Rock of Ages" on Super Bowl Sunday outside MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

"Rock of Ages," which was made into a film starring Tom Cruise and Alec Baldwin, tells the story of small-town girl and an aspiring rocker who share the dream of fame and whose paths cross at a legendary rock club.

Their glittery romance is set to a rock 'n' roll soundtrack that *(cont'd)*

includes "Every Rose Has Its Thorn," "Cum on Feel The Noize" and "I Wanna Know What Love Is."

Dannheisser, who grew up outside Philadelphia and has been with "Rock of Ages" since it opened in 2009, says the show is a perfect match for fist-pumping football fans who already know the soundtrack.

"There's nothing pretentious about our show. It makes fun of itself," said Dannheisser, who shares a hysterical duet with Blimline of "I Can't Fight This Feeling" in the mini-show while both wear the NFL jerseys of the opposing quarterbacks. "It knows what it is and it's of the people."

More than any show on Broadway, "Rock of Ages" has pulled out the stops when it comes to welcoming football fans. In addition to the new live sets, producers have managed to persuade three current and former NFL stars — Randall Cobb, Joiqee Bell and Ahman Green — to do cameos on Broadway this week. They'll all play a bartender with four short scenes.

"Anybody who knows me knows I'm really random and I do some of the most random things ever. I'll just add this to my list," Cobb, a Green Bay Packer wide receiver, said before his stint. "I want to be as diverse as I can."

Just be careful about hoping he and his fellow players break a leg, as the old theater idiom goes. "I hope not," Cobb said. "I already broke one last year. Let's break something else."



From the top, Joey Calveri as "Stacee Jaxx," and Kate Rockwell as "Sherrie", in scenes from *Rock of Ages*. (AP Photo/Vivacity Media Group, Paul Kolnik)

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/one-broadway-show-really-hopes-rock-super-bowl>

***HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STORY'S NATIONWIDE PICKUP:**

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