

How Casting Crown's Mark Hall Came Full Circle to Rock the Universe

Chart-topping Christian music group Casting Crowns will return to the Universal Studios stage on as part of the lineup for the theme park's annual Rock the Universe music festival happening Sept. 7-8 in Orlando, Florida.

For lead singer and songwriter Mark Hall, the chance to perform during the event is "surreal," because he brought his youth group students long before the group hit the main stage.

"I was a youth pastor in Daytona Beach (Florida), and we would load up the kids in buses and bring them to Rock the Universe," he said. "It is pretty surreal to be performing and think that 'I used to stand out in that spot in the crowd.'"

Hall, who still serves as a youth pastor in a local church outside of Atlanta, sees the event as a special opportunity to other youth workers to bring their students away for special ministry.

"I know how important youth camp is, because you get the kids away from their element for a week," he said. "With Rock the Universe, you have a festival that really is kind of like a youth camp for the family, because you also have all the fun that comes with theme parks."

Additionally, he believes the event offers a great outreach opportunity by offering a fun day at the parks followed by a night of ministry.

"As a youth pastor, I would say, 'You ride all the rides you want, but at night time we're all going to be right in front of the stage'," he explained. "They were exposed to different

styles of Christian music. They usually all went home liking a new band that you knew was going to be saying something positive and they all heard the gospel. You always knew that was gonna' happen. It wasn't just going to be music, the gospel's also going to be shared."

Before and after the event, Casting Crowns is working on its newest project, to be released this fall. Last week, the group debuted the new song, "Only Jesus," on digital media outlets and streaming services. Hall says the idea from the song originated from what he's teaching his students about leaving a legacy and always pointing people to Jesus.

"We talk a lot about leaving legacy and making a name for ourselves and how do we want to be remembered and, and being a hero, all these things," Hall said. "And when I look at Scripture and I see that every hero of the faith, I'm not sure one of them ever set out to be one, right? No leader in the faith ever set out to be a leader. Everybody just got up and said, 'Lord, I love you with all my heart and my heart is broken for this. My heart is broken for these people. What would you have me do?'"

Rock the Universe will take place Sept. 7-8, 2018, at Universal Studios Florida and will also feature 11 other artists including TobyMac, Lauren Daigle, Jesus Culture, For King and Country and Zach Williams. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit .

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