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A decade old, Infringement Festival keeps growing

By Colin Dabkowski

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Melissa Campbell hula-hoops outside of Filigrees Gallery & Boutique on Elmwood, one of the many sites of the 2014 Buffalo Infringement Festival. (Charles Lewis / Buffalo News file photo)

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For the next 11 days, should you venture anywhere near Allentown, you're likely to stumble upon some strange, unexpected and potentially intoxicating sights.

It might be a **motley crew of hula hoopers** swiveling their hips en masse in Days Park. It might be a **clattering parade of body-painted revelers** playing homemade instruments as they march south along Elmwood Avenue from the Nickel City Housing Co-op. It might be a **man dressed in a full red body** suit being controlled via walkie talkie by a crowd gathered in front of the El Museo Gallery on Allen Street.

All these bizarre, unorthodox and often free events along with hundreds more will take place through Aug. 3 as part of the 10th annual Buffalo Infringement Festival. Most of the events will take place along Allentown's streets and in its businesses.

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Infringement, as veteran festivalgoers and participants call it, began as an egalitarian culture jam designed to match up underexposed local artists with free venues and audiences. After a decade of increasingly popular festivals, its slogan, "art under the radar," is less applicable than ever. But its ebullient underground spirit remains in full force, as this year's dizzying schedule of events makes clear.

Infringement organizers estimate that this year's festival will feature some 600 performances in 94 venues, including nearly 150 street performances of music, dance, theater, fashion and practically every other form of creative expression imaginable.

If you're a first-time Infringer, you have two equally viable options: Head to Allentown in the mid-afternoon on any day of the festival and pop into whatever performance or exhibition catches your eye, a guaranteed way to be surprised. Or check out the impressively organized schedule at www.infringebuffalo.org, where you can strategically plan your festival by date, venue or genre.

The following festival highlights represent the tiniest sliver of what's available:

- The visual arts, a quiet counterpart to the festival's dozens of rock bands and theater performances, always have been an understated part of Infringement. But there's plenty to see.

Like last year, the Foundry (298 Northampton St.) will host work from the "8 Bit Buffalo" art collective throughout the festival, with a party celebrating the show from 5 to 8 p.m. Aug. 1. Dreamland (387 Franklin St.), a venue that opened earlier this year, will feature several pornography-themed art exhibitions. Infringement regular Ella Joseph, an annual highlight for many festivalgoers, will present her new piece "The Albatross or Shining Blues" in her home studio and gallery at 293 Linwood Ave.

Other key places to check out for art exhibitions include Glow Gallery (224 Allen St.), Ziggy Starfish (168 Elmwood Ave.), Perk's (36 Broadway), Filigree's Gallery and Boutique (1121 Elmwood Ave.), It's a Mod World (93 Allen St.), Rust Belt Books (202 Allen St.) and all SPoT Coffee locations.

- There are hundreds of bands and musicians performing throughout the festival, and your best bet may be to catch many of them on the spur of the moment. However, the festival also boasts dozens of big group shows worth checking out. These include tonight's opening ceremonies in Nietzsche's (248 Allen St.), the 8 Bit Buffalo music showcase at 5 p.m. Aug. 1 in the Foundry, Infringement Wednesday at 5 p.m. Wednesday in Buffalo Iron Works (49 Illinois St.), and the "Other Side of College Street Block Party" at 2 p.m. Aug. 3. in the parking lot next to Holley Farms (223 Allen St.).

- If it's theater you're after, you'll be faced with an embarrassment of riches.

Highlights include the return of "420: The Musical" in the Manny Fried Playhouse (255 Great Arrow Ave.), American Repertory Theatre of Western New York's annual One-Act Showcase in its theater at 16 Linwood Ave., Subversive Theatre's presentation of the Slawomir Mrozek play "The Police" also in the Manny Fried and "Hecuba Again," Frank Canino's adaptation of Euripedes' play featuring an all-female cast. Michele Costa also will perform a much-anticipated new puppetry piece, as she does every year, an impressive 14 times throughout the festival in various venues.

- Dance-wise, Infringement boasts a wide array of styles, with 32 individuals or groups performing in indoor and outdoor spaces and even more dance performances as part of multidisciplinary group shows. Festival staples Buffalo Contact Improv will hold an hours-long jam starting at 5:30 tonight in front of the Burchfield Penney Art Center. Burlesque also is a huge part of this year's events, with "The Big Beautiful Buffalo Burlesque Collective" performing at 8 p.m. Wednesday in the Manny Fried Theatre along with many other individual performances from troupes that belong to the collective throughout the run.

- If poetry or literature is your thing, you're good to go, with several dozen spoken-word and poetry performances. Must-see events include the return of Franklin LaVoie's "Incident at Deerlick" at 4 p.m. Sunday in Rust Belt Books and 4 p.m. next Thursday in Dreamland and the fourth annual Wham Bam Thank You Slam, a combination of poetry, comedy and burlesque at 7 p.m. next Thursday in the Gypsy Parlor (376 Grant St.).

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