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Something for (almost) everyone in Infringement Fest lineup

By Colin Dabkowski

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The underground is coming up for air.

For the next nine days, in more than 92 venues across the city, hundreds of artistic projects nurtured in basements and garages will briefly appear, like some cultural version of **the Perseids**, before retreating back into their subterranean caves of creativity.

This annual occurrence is thanks to the Buffalo Infringement Festival, a defiantly anti-corporate, egalitarian and open-source affair designed to excavate and display the latent creative energy of the Buffalo Niagara Region. It operates on the passion and energy of a group of tireless volunteer organizers, who spend much of the year matching up musicians, artists, comedians, burlesque performers and theater troupes with free venues in which to perform and sidewalk spaces to transform.

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Though it was founded as a theater-based enterprise in 2005 by Subversive Theatre founder Kurt Schneiderman, it has since expanded to include nearly all conceivable types of creative expression, from avant garde improvisational musical comedy to neo-futurist poetry and puppetry of questionable origin. At the same time, it has served as a showcase and catalyst for the adaptive reuse of old structures and spaces as performance venues, from new pocket parks to out-of-the-way industrial buildings.

Impressive as the festival is in scope and variety, it can seem too sprawling to fully grasp. To look at its schedule – presented in full on **Infringebuffalo.org** – is to gaze into a tangled network of creative activity, each off-beat activity or performance its own synapse leading to yet stranger and more inscrutable offerings.

To help sort through the multitude of oddities that constitute Infringement, what follows are suggestions for performances to check out on each remaining day of the festival. And if you're interested in delving even deeper into the weirdness, check **Buffalo.com** each day of the festival for a list of five suggested events.

Saturday

Few events capture the exploratory nature of the festival more than the Broadway Market Rooftop Party, which runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. atop one of Buffalo's most iconic historic institutions at 999 Broadway. While in this case the venue itself is the main attraction, the event features 14 musical acts ranging from the crooning of New York City-based singer-songwriter Randy Niles to the psychedelic tunes of Pink Ride, which describes itself as “the Zombies meets Pink Floyd meets Stevie Wonder meets Hella meets Kenny G.”

If the sweltering rooftop of the Broadway Market isn't exactly your speed, check out Kidfringement, a child-friendly compendium of music, art and dance running from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Bidwell Park.

Sunday

During the past few festivals, busking has played an increasingly important role. And why shouldn't it? Far from the dank back rooms of Allen Street bars in which many Infringement shows take place, the patch of sidewalk outside Caffè Aroma (957 Elmwood Ave.) where Buskfest 5,000½ runs from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday has a much friendlier and more low-pressure vibe.

Stop for a set, a song or just a snippet from 15 singer-songwriters, each, according to the Infringement website, with “guitar cases strategically left open.”

Monday

Like its various busking events, the Infringement Festival's dozens of showcases are beneficial to the cultural consumer who seeks to broaden his or her surroundings without making a total commitment. A case in point is the group hip-hop showcase “You Breakbeat, You Buybeat” from 5 to 10 p.m. Monday outside Hostel Buffalo Niagara (667 Main St.), which features six acts including a performance at 7 p.m. by Buffalo DJ Spruke, host of the popular “Bump in the Night” podcast. It will be accompanied by a **series of short films** projected from the Hostel's window from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Tuesday

No Infringement Fest experience would be complete without taking in a puppetry performance from the peerless Michele Costa, who this year presents a piece called “MUSE.” This show, in which Costa performs as a mouse, features the ruminations of “a small creature” who “muses on small things.” She performs at 5 p.m. Tuesday on the steps of the Karpeles Manuscript Library (220 North St.), with remaining performances at 6:30 p.m. July 28, 29, 31 and Aug. 2 in the Unitarian Universalist Church garden at 695 Elmwood Ave. (Check **Infringebuffalo.org** for a full list of Costa's performances.)

Wednesday

True to the festival's theatrical roots, PUSH Buffalo, Roc Da Mic and the Buffalo Anti-Racist Coalition set up shop at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday in the Grant Street Community Center (271 Grant St.) to present a piece of activist theater called "The Lynch Pen," a play about "a black man living in the modern technical age" who has "a series of conversations with the greatest fictional antagonist that black people have ever known – **Willie Lynch.**"

Thursday

The artistic smash hit of last year's festival was a show called "Wet Dreamland," presented at titular Allentown venue for which the event was a kind of coming-out party. This year's version, from 8 to 10 p.m. Thursday, features a variety of art installations of a salacious enough nature that they are better left out of print. Suffice it to say, they include risqué photographs, drawings of unmentionable things and mixed media works "created to repulse, disgust, and shock their audience."

Friday

Eugene Ionesco's absurdist masterpiece "Rhinoceros" is this year's Infringement selection by the Subversive Theatre Collective, whose founder Kurt Schneiderman got this eclectic venture started. A commentary on conformity and divergence, it features a cast of characters who gradually turn into rhinoceri. It runs from July 23 to Aug. 15 in the Manny Fried Playhouse at 8 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Aug. 1

Typically one of the busiest days of the festival, one of your best bets for Saturday is to merely take a stroll through Allentown. Start at around 10 a.m. at Symphony Circle, where the group music show "Food Not Brahms" runs all day until 4 p.m. There's open busking outside of the Antique Man store at 234 Allen St. from 12 to 4:30 p.m., and finally a fire-dancing show from Hoopnosis in Days Park from 9 to 10 p.m.

Aug. 2

“Car Stories,” an interactive theater project devised by Montreal-based troupe Optative Theatrical Laboratores, is the event that started the Infringement phenomenon. It runs from 4 to 7 p.m. July 31, Aug. 1 and Aug. 2. Email **optatif@gmail.com** to make a reservation.

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