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PRIDEFEST ANNOUNCES FESTIVAL HEADLINERS: BETTY WHO, PEACHES, DJ SHAWNA, MURRAY THE MAJICIAN AND MORE

Milwaukee, WI – Friday, April 28, 2023– Milwaukee Pride, Inc., the parent organization of PrideFest, Wisconsin’s largest LGBTQ+ event announced its festival headliners for the June 1-3, 2023, event. PrideFest is the first of the ethnic and cultural lakefront festivals at Henry Maier Festival Park and will kick off the city’s coveted festival season. After two years of cancelations, PrideFest returned with record breaking attendance numbers in June of 2022. This year marks the 35th edition of Pridefest; the event moved to the park in 1996. This year’s festival will be a three-day event running Thursday-Saturday, June 1-3, 2023.

“An aspect of our festival that I genuinely love (and appreciate) is how our entertainment continues to evolve and change year after year,” said Wes Shaver, Milwaukee Pride President & CEO. He added, “Booking entertainment continues to come with all new sets of challenges, but that didn’t stop us from putting together a fun, energetic, and dynamic line up. It may have slowed some things down at times, but I’m proud of the result and the hard work of our entertainment team, notably Mark Gerber, Director of Entertainment.”

PrideFest is proud to welcome Canadian musician and producer, Peaches, Australian-American musician, singer, and song writer Betty Who, Las Vegas main attraction, direct from the Tropicana, Murray {the Magician} Sawchuck, local sensation, DJ Shawna, Welsh singer-songwriter Bright Light, Bright Light, Big Dipper, DJ J. Worra and more to the top festival performance slots. In addition, on Friday night, guests can enjoy Viva Carnival in the Northwestern Mutual Community Park, a celebration of ball culture and the Ballroom Scene.

Festival organizers are proud to welcome back Dance Pavilion host, local drag personality Melee the Queen. New for 2023, Melee is joined by co-hosts such as RuPaul’s Drag Race Stacy Lane Matthews and local performers Dora Diamond, Montell Infinity Ross, and Malayia Marvel. For the first time in festival history, the Dance Pavilion will feature all female headliners: DJ Shawna, DJ J. Worra and DJ Dripsweat. The Thursday-Saturday Dance Pavilion schedule will feature a variety of new and returning acts featuring drag performances, dance groups, acrobatics, special effects and more. The Dance Pavilion is also under new direction for 2023. Most recently serving on the Board of Directors, Jorna Taylor takes the reigns as the new stage director.

While the Dance Pavilion’s schedule and lineup may appear to be similar to year’s prior, there’s a major difference.

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A re-working of the time slots allows for more performance opportunities. Festival guests should see an approximate 50% increase in acts- that's a large increase of local entertainment and opportunity.

In 2022, festival organizers made a shift from big name entertainment for the sake of having "names," and focused on acts and entertainers that speak to and/or are committed to the LGBTQ+ community. Both 2022 and 2023's lineups are diverse and eclectic and include the longest list of local and statewide entertainment. That's not to say the headliners aren't worthy of star billing; each one of the festival headliners perform in front of hundreds of thousands of people a year and mostly across the country, if not the world.

PrideFest will feature five stages in 2023: The SKYYLine Mainstage, Dance Pavilion, The Intersection Stage, Children's Stage and Stonewall Stage & History Exhibit. The festival will use the north part of the park spanning from the Midgate all the way north, offering new experiences for the festival guest. As always, PrideFest will include a dedicated fireworks display over Lake Michigan.

Some promotions for the festival include a Throwback Thursday & Flashback Friday Happy Hour featuring MolsonCoors products at reduced pricing (1996 festival pricing in honor of the first festival at the park), an Ice Cream Social on Saturday presented by internationally acclaimed burger and custard brand Shake Shack, and a Thursday night food-drive program to benefit VIVENT Health's food pantry. The food-drive is presented by Kroger Delivery proudly serving Pick n' Save; Kroger has committed to a \$1,000 donation of goods for the food pantry to further bolster items collected. Eligible items will be announced shortly. Potawatomi Hotel and Casino return as a festival partner and will serve as the presenting sponsor of the 50/50 raffle, a fundraiser to benefit VIVENT Health.

"2023 marks my 12th festival season with PrideFest and the festival continues to change for the better; we are growing and able to offer so much more to our festival guests. All age groups, all areas of interest and even families and children, more than ever," commented Mark Gerber, PrideFest Director of Entertainment & Milwaukee Pride Board Member. He added, "We reach for the stars as a team and to see the smiling faces on the patrons is an amazing feeling, that alone makes the year-round effort so worth it."

Festival goers are encouraged to follow along on social media for daily updates and announcements as well as visiting www.pridefest.com for updated festival information regarding stage schedules, promotions, admission and more. Organizers will continue to announce acts, programming, and more as we approach the festival.

For more information, please contact Wes Shaver at wshaver@milwaukeepride.org or call 718-962-5639. Follow Milwaukee Pride on Facebook and Instagram for daily updates.