



BRISTOL
RENAISSANCE
FAIRE
Where Fantasy Rules!

Media Contact:

Bonni Pear or Carol Vesely,
Miller-Pear Public Relations,
(312) 674-4566;
info@millerpear.com

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Bristol Faires Well Over Two Decades

KENOSHA, Wis. (Summer 2010) ó Over the past 23 years, the Bristol Renaissance Faire has transported more than 3 million guests back to a time when knights were noble, maids were merry, and turkey legs were titanic. New generations of öRenniesö continue to flock to the nine-week festival, despite, or perhaps because of, the high-tech, high-speed diversions of modern life.

öPeople want to be entertained. People want a chance to escape the troubles of the everyday and explore something profoundly different,ö said Linda McFeters, producer and general manager of the Bristol Renaissance Faire. öAt Bristol, people are embraced by a collective entertainment experience unlike anything anywhere else.ö

Bristol is one of the most highly regarded among dozens of high-profile Renaissance festivals across the country. Opened in summer 1988, on a 30-acre wooded site that previously housed King Richard's Renaissance Faire, Bristol management began constructing a permanent village of shops, pubs and performance stages that has become the envy of many Renaissance faires nationwide.

Festivities at the Faire take their framework from the summer day in 1574 when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth visited the English hamlet of Bristol. Queen Elizabeth and other historically based characters are juxtaposed with fictional scenarios, such as the popular street-fighting escapades of Robin Hood and his Merry Men. Scheduled shows feature jousting knights on horseback, swashbuckling swordsmen, dancers, musicians, rope-walkers, jugglers and an eclectic assortment of comedic performers who invite their audiences to become part of the act.

Between stages, faire streets are lined with game and ride areas, food vendors, and merchants selling everything from sterling silver jewelry to rare-edition books and hand-

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caned brooms. Strolling minstrels, jesters and other era characters mingle with faire-goers, many of whom come dressed in their own period costumes.

The Renaissance faire concept began in 1962 in southern California. Since then, Renaissance faires have grown into a national pastime, spawning countless cottage industries and creating a multi-million dollar entertainment industry. The original Renaissance Pleasure Faire is still in operation today in Irwindale, Calif., under the ownership of Renaissance Entertainment Productions, which also produces the Bristol Faire.

Performers and merchants often work the "faire circuit," going from event to event as one faire ends and another begins. Among well-known entertainers who honed their craft on the Renaissance faire circuit are Harry Anderson, Penn & Teller and The Reduced Shakespeare Company.

Why are Renaissance Faires So Popular?

Ann-Elizabeth Shapera, a.k.a. "Jane the Phoole," Bristol Faire performer and Municipal Jester to the City of Milwaukee: "In today's culture, we don't know our neighbors; we're isolated. We live in boxes, work in boxes, transport ourselves from place to place in boxes, and even get most of our entertainment from boxes. Sixteenth-century people didn't know boxes, or self-consciousness; they simply didn't have filters. They lived right out loud, and at the Renaissance Faire, our audience can join us and live that way too."

David Woolley, a.k.a. "Guido Crescendo" of The Swordsmen, and artist in residence at Columbia College of Chicago: "Renaissance faires are beautiful places to go, both physically and emotionally. They're safe, family-oriented, and based in a time when politeness was actually a desired quality."

Philip Earl Johnson, TV/film/stage actor, whose credits include Michael Keaton's newest movie, *The Merry Gentleman*, the national theatrical tour of *Angels in America*, and a 15-year run as MoonNiE the Magnif'Cent at the Bristol Renaissance Faire: "Where else can

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you see a knight chew a turkey leg, as a queen walks by followed by 40 people in *really* expensive and historically accurate clothes! see guys jump in the mud, watch little kids dream in real time, washing well wenches climb all over a willing male patron, and laugh so hard it hurts?ö

Located just west of I-94ø Russell Road exit, near Kenosha, Wis., the Bristol Renaissance Faire is open rain or shine, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., every Saturday and Sunday, July 10 - Sep. 5, and on Labor Day Monday, Sept. 6. Tickets purchased at the gate are \$18.95 for adults and \$9.50 for children age 5 to 12. Advance ticket discounts are available online at renfair.com or by phone, (847) 395-7773.