

Press Release: 15th February

St PATRICK'S FESTIVAL

St. Patrick's Festival Celebrates 'Ireland You Are' Across 4 Days & 30 Events in Biggest Ever Festival Programme

16th – 19th March 2017: www.stpatricksfestival.ie

Celebrating our national holiday, St. Patrick's Festival will bring together 3,000 artists, musicians, dancers, poets and performers in a stunning programme with over 30 events spanning four days and nights. Launched today (15th February) by Lord Mayor of Dublin Brendan Carr, the theme for St. Patrick's Festival 2017 is ***Ireland You Are***. It looks to celebrate who we are as a culturally diverse, complex and brave society, not withstanding its challenges, yet with strengths and characteristic traits that are many. From cathedrals to classrooms, the city will reverberate with an evocative programme of mesmerising music, powerful performances, intriguing walks and inspiring talks.

The Festival has commissioned ***Stephen James Smith***, a Dublin poet and playwright central to the rise of the vibrant spoken word genre, to write a new poem, entitled '***My Ireland***' in response to the theme. An overarching, edgy, yet celebratory narrative of Ireland, the poem is accompanied by a short film by Director Myles O'Reilly, arranged and mixed by Conor O'Brien (Villagers), music by Colm Mac Con Iomaire and Loah, Saint Sister, Eithne Ní Chatháin aka Inni-K and Ye Vagabonds accompanying. [Insert link]. His imaginative interpretation of the theme was also the inspiration behind ***Young Blood: The Beats & Voices of Our Generation***, taking place in the National Concert Hall on 18th March. It promises to be a powerful performance of our young, hip-hop and spoken word artists as they dissect and celebrate Ireland today. Curated by music producer Aoife Woodlock, it amplifies the voice of a generation through the smartest, most articulate, expressive young musicians and poets of their time including music from ***Rusangano Family, Hare Squead*** and UK hip-hop peer ***Kojey Radical***, and spoken word from Irish artists ***Emmet Kirwan, John Cummins*** and 16 year old ***Natalya O'Flaherty***.

Attracting over 100,000 overseas visitors, the four day Festival is funded by Fáilte Ireland, Dublin City Council and Department Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Without doubt one of the highlights of the national celebrations, the ***Festival Parade*** at 12 noon, 17th March, manifests the vision and talents of artists, designers and performers of all ages in response to the Festival theme. Community groups and pageant companies from across Ireland will present the rich textures of Irish heritage through a variety of performances and street theatre around such subjects as Ireland's magical faerie stories, ancient mythical tribes, trailblazing pirates and the splendid living landscape. It will wind through the heart of Dublin City bursting with colour, whimsical theatrics and lively musical scores from Irish and international bands alike.

Another Festival highlight, ***The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*** on Saturday 18th March is a specially curated day of panel discussions and performances that show revolution is taking place in our daily lives through the roles of philosophy, comedy, history, sport, economics, culture and creativity and features performance artist Amanda Coogan, writer Anne Chambers, academic Professor Mike Cronin, broadcaster Donal Dineen and novelist Julian Gough among others.

Speaking at the launch of the Festival, Lord Mayor of Dublin Brendan Carr said, “As first citizen of Dublin I am delighted to be launching the 2017 national St. Patrick’s Festival programme. In celebration of Ireland’s National Holiday, Dublin is set for four really great days and nights from 16th to 19th March. I invite people from Dublin and all around the country to engage with the programme, there truly is something for everyone to experience and enjoy. We extend a cead míle fáilte to all overseas visitors who will travel to Ireland for the festivities; they will undoubtedly leave with lasting memories of their time spent here.”

Susan Kirby, St. Patrick’s Festival CEO said “During this important decade of commemoration St. Patrick’s Festival prepares to create a snapshot of contemporary Ireland through our programme of creative cultural events. Ireland’s rich history has been reflected upon in recent years and has shown our resilience, humour and compassion as a people. Being Irish today extends beyond these shores through our diaspora and through the new and emerging cultures in our country today. We want the 2017 programme to showcase an authentic picture of contemporary Ireland with an inspiring myriad of events that capture this moment in time.”

It is Ireland’s distinct cultural identity that gives this nation its exceptional reputation and strength of character and this will be evident across the Festival programme. Hundreds of thousands of people, both nationally and internationally, will enjoy this spectacle of Irish creativity and celebration. Speaking today, Noel John McLoughlin, Fáilte Ireland’s Marketing Director said: “St Patrick’s Festival is much more than a parade and this year’s event will provide four days of exciting events with a fantastic mix of Irish cultural experiences. It is great to see the Festival expanding this year outside of Dublin city centre with events in Swords, Blanchardstown, Howth and even a mystery train to the Wild Atlantic Way. Easily the largest festival in Ireland, as a flagship tourism event the St Patrick’s Festival attracts over 112,000 overseas visitors and benefits the economy by more than €70m. It truly is the perfect way to begin the tourist season.”

Take the opportunity at the time of our national holiday celebrations to explore our capital city and join over 4,000 other explorers on this year’s ***Treasure Hunt*** (Saturday, March 18th) traversing the Liffey and visiting places of historical and contemporary interest. Still outdoors enjoy the unique experience of a free outdoor film screening of the Oscar nominated *In America*, in the beautiful surrounds of the newly renovated medieval Swords Castle in partnership with Fingal County Council on Thursday 16th March. Enjoy the finest of our island cuisine up the road in Howth Village, at the Dublin Bay Prawn Festival from Friday 17th to Sunday 19th March.

Sunday, 19th March will see Merrion Square come alive with a vibrant day-long street carnival; the ***Festival Big Day Out*** is set to burst with street theatre, music, aerial performances, arts and crafts, circus, science in the Science Foundation Ireland Science Zone ... AND a 50FT giant whale and real-life mermaid! Enter a world of fantasy, sword fighting and monster making, where the Dublin UNESCO City of Literature’s Citywide Read 'Knights of the Borrowed Dark' takes up residence.

As Ireland has evolved in many incarnations in recent years so too has St. Patrick’s Festival. This year for the first time in 9 years the Festival has a new brand identity that reflects the confidence of a contemporary Ireland inspired and informed by its past and looking positively towards its future and its place and people in an international context.

The full programme of events for St. Patrick's Festival is available on www.stpatricksfestival.ie

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NOTES TO EDITOR

St. Patrick's Festival's principal funders are Fáilte Ireland, Dublin City Council and the Department Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The principal aim of St. Patrick's Festival is to develop a major annual international festival around the national holiday over which the Irish people can stand proud. It reflects the talents and achievements of Irish people on national and world stages, showcasing the skills of every age and social background.

There were over 105,000 out-of-state visitors at the Festival in 2016, spending an average of 8.8 days in Ireland, and 6.5 days in Dublin. During the 2015 Festival, out-of-state visitors generated an estimated total expenditure of €73m while in Ireland, including expenditure of €51.3m while in Dublin, and circa €22m which was spent in the rest of Ireland. (Independent research conducted in 2015 & 2016 by Behaviour and Attitudes on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.)

The first St Patrick's Festival was held over one day, and night, on March 17th 1996. Preparation for the St. Patrick's Festival used to take 5 months, but with its subsequent growth, it now takes 18 months to plan for Ireland's biggest annual celebration.

Why was it started?

- To offer a national festival that ranks as one of the greatest celebrations in the world
- To create energy and excitement throughout Ireland via innovation, creativity and grassroots involvement, and marketing activity
- To provide the opportunity and motivation for people of Irish descent (and those who sometimes wish they were Irish) to attend and join in the imaginative and expressive celebrations
- To project, internationally, an accurate image of Ireland as a creative, professional and sophisticated country with wide appeal