



Nina Montaldo struts into Portland for the June 29 Peacock in the Park

The big la-la

Denver's favorite queen takes a walk in the park

BY TIMOTHY KRAUSE

Among the dozens of divas taking the stage at this year's Peacock in the Park will be the beautiful and talented Nina Montaldo.

Fresh from appearances in Sacramento, Calif., and Salt Lake City, Nina (aka James Martinez) will perform two sets at Peacock, one character based on the indomitable Cher and another inspired by Euro-fave Shirley Bassey.

What she will wear for such an occasion, however, remains unknown.

"I'm still deciding," says Nina in a telephone interview from her Denver home. "I don't know—something fabulous! I'll make

sure I bring my good stuff out there so that everybody in Portland will enjoy my performance. I will not disappoint anyone."

This is true not only of her performance but also of her goodwill.

"People keep calling me a diva, an icon and all that because I've been around a long time and raised a lot of money," says Nina without conceit. After more than 30 years in the biz, she is now a homo-household name in Denver, where she's raised funds for numerous organizations ranging from Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays to the national Jewish Hospital to the National Pink Ribbon Campaign.

"I was raised in an orphanage," she shares. "I never had any parents. The nuns and priests that raised me taught me how to help other people. It's more important to give than to receive."

In 1997 Nina reigned as Empress XXIV of the Imperial Court of the Rocky Mountain Empire, but her show business roots go back to

a 1970 amateur night that launched her career in drag. She won a contest to perform with professional impersonators, and soon the role of Nina was born. She later added Montaldo to her moniker, fittingly named after a Denver women's clothing store.

"I enjoy performing in front of people," remarks the queen, who says "big la-la" shows like Peacock are popular because they offer something out of the ordinary. "You don't see this every day—female impersonators onstage with fabulous costumes...even straight people enjoy all that."

By day, Nina works as an apartment leasing manager and a makeup and wig stylist. But by night, this girl still loves the spotlight. In addition to Peacock in the Park, Nina will also be performing onstage June 27 and 28 at Darcelle XV Showplace.

"I don't care for the weather," quips Nina in anticipation of her return to rainy Rosetown, "but everything else is nice."

So is Nina Montaldo. **JM**

With preening, posing and extravagant performances, Peacock in the Park returns once again to Washington Park Amphitheater for the 17th annual staging of Portland's much-adored variety drag show June 29.

Hosted by the ever-radiant Maria and Poison Waters, Peacock is still free, and the event's donations will continue to provide significant support for the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund, granted to queer college students or college kids of queer parents.

But new this year is an expanded menu from the Greek Cusina, which is providing the food at cost as an additional benefit for the scholarship endowment. Of course, you can

Strutting for students

What, when, where is Peacock in the Park?

continue to bring a picnic if you want, but now you don't *have* to. The new bill of fare includes hot dogs, hamburgers, gyros (with veggie options), salads, soda and snacks.

Park rules prohibit canopies, kegs and barbecues. Moderate alcohol consumption will be allowed inside the amphitheater during the show for those 21 and older. Drunken or disorderly conduct won't be tolerated. (Except onstage—ha ha!)

The show begins at 2:30 p.m., but good spots are filled up by noon, so get there early. A complimentary shuttle bus will run continually from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. from Red Cap Garage, 1035 S.W. Stark St.; the Fox & Hounds, 217 N.W. Second Ave.; and Embers, 110 N.W. Broadway.

After the event Embers will play host to a Beer Bust, which also benefits the scholarship

fund. Five bucks gets you all the Miller you can legally be served until 10 p.m.

Established in 1987 by her children Woody Johnson (aka Lady Elaine Peacock) and Misty Waters, the Audria M. Edwards Scholarship Fund serves gay, lesbian, bi and trans people and their children pursuing undergraduate education. An advisory committee reviews applications based on eligibility guidelines, apparent financial need and clarity of educational objectives.

Since the fund's inception, scholarships totaling more than \$100,000 have been awarded, including \$15,000 from last year's event alone. For more information visit www.peacockinthepark.org.

—TK



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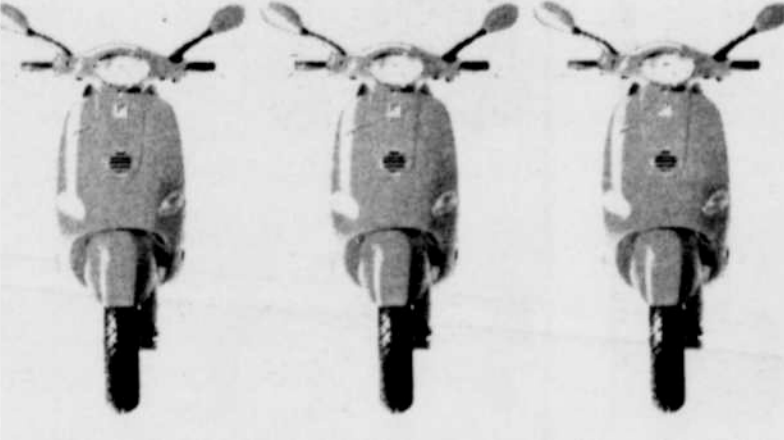


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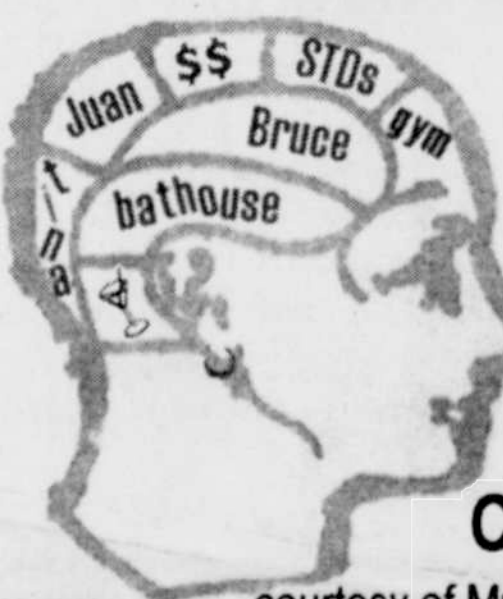

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