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All Fired Up

Just when you thought Pride was over...

BY AARON SPENCER

Pride came and went. Then it went to Seattle, and then to Vancouver. Now summer is just catching its stride, with more partying on the way.

Every year, Pride planners around Oregon get the sensitive task of scheduling events when the weather is perfect but nothing major is going on in bigger cities. That is why August, typically Oregon's hottest month, is the catch-up window for the region's smaller communities—as well as one Portland island party that will make your heart twinge for that April in South Beach.

Fire on the Columbia

The beach bash is on for its fourth official year. What started as a yearly pirate-themed get-together has grown into one of the biggest outdoor summer soirées in town. Fire on the Columbia will be held near the river at the usual estate on Sauvie Island.

The kitschy pirate theme has long been dropped for something hotter—this year, it's "Eruption." A giant, fire-spewing volcano will greet guests at the door, and vodka will be served, newly chilled, after traveling down an ice luge beneath a big, ice crater.

Dancers and fire breathers will be milling about to inspire awe and embarrassment in Facebook photos.

"It's a half-acre, overly visual experience," says host and creator Phil Marshall, who describes himself as "a natural party thrower."

The center of the action will be the dance floor on a well-manicured lawn, where Portland's DJ Tronic will drop the

beats in his last set before Burning Man. And it wouldn't be Fire on the Columbia without the giant bonfire, which in 2010 scaled to a dramatic 25 feet.

And the party keeps growing. Last year's attendance was about 150.

"All indications are that this year we will be blasting the doors off that number," Marshall says.

Tickets to the party run \$40 in advance and \$45 at the door, and admission includes specialty vodka drinks, beer and food. The proceeds will also benefit two nonprofits: Oregon Crusaders, a youth performing arts organization, and Q Center, Portland's LGBTQ community center.

The forecast is a factor, of course, as warm weather always makes people crazier and the attendance higher, but planners tried as best they could given the Northwest locale.

"What we have done is taken our calendar of summer and thrown a dart right in the middle of it, and that's August 20," Marshall says.

"It's a half-acre, overly visual experience."

-PHIL MARSHALL,
CREATOR, FIRE ON THE
COLUMBIA

In the supreme event that temperatures are steamy, swimsuits are allowed and even encouraged. A shower will be provided for those

coming straight from the beach. Marshall has one request, however:

"This is not a clothing-optional party. I am not a part of Collins Beach. I have neighbors."

Sat., Aug. 20, 7 p.m.; 22700 NW Gilliban Road, Sauvie Island; \$40 in advance, \$45 at the door; shuttle service from Boxxes/Red Cap Garage and Q Center is \$5; 503-621-3499 or fireonthecolumbia.com.

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