



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Festival goers watch fire performers at the 2015 Festival of the Dark Arts at Fort George Brewery.



Submitted photo

Attendees of the festival are encouraged to bring out their dark side.



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Fort George staff serve thirsty patrons in the Lovell Taproom during last year's festival.

# WELCOME TO THE DARK SIDE:

## FORT GEORGE BREWERY'S FESTIVAL OF DARK ARTS TAKES PLACE SATURDAY, FEB. 13

STORY BY DAN HAAG

On Saturday, Feb. 13, strange and magical forces combine to conjure up a truly magnificent spectacle on the Fort George Brewery block: the fifth annual Festival of Dark Arts, part of the brewery's annual Stout Month.

Here, lovers of some of the Northwest's darkest beers gather to rejoice amid the clang of anvils, the swirl of fire-dancers and the rapid-fire clatter of typewriters.

While the constantly flowing dark beer is the star of the show — 60 to choose from — the eclectic variety of artists and entertainers contribute to the event's beating heart.

"We really look for acts that compliment the festival," says Fort George co-owner and head brewer Jack Harris.

### Beer as art

Ask any self-respecting beer aficionado and they will tell you that beer is already art and cannot be perfected. At the Festival of Dark Arts, that's open to interpretation.

Just ask Bend artist and renowned beer painter Karen Eland, whose unique art is a fixture at the festival. Eland, who creates paintings using only beer and water, has fashioned portraits of famil-

iar North Coast scenes, such as the Peter Iredale wreck and early logging crews.

She will be on hand creating her work — with dark beer only — and will also have an area set up where the public can make their own beer paintings.

"Some of my subjects are a little dark, like shipwrecks of the Oregon Coast," she says.

Now in her third year at the festival, Eland is thankful for the chance to showcase her signature style. "The event is so unique and tasty," she says. "It's also made the list as one of my most successful sales events."

It's also just plain fun for Eland, who doesn't hesitate when asked what comes to mind when she hears "dark arts": "Harry Potter," she laughs.

### Exploring mystery

In her third year at the event, Jessamyn Grace of Astoria is eager to share the mysterious side of dark arts to festival-goers.

Grace, founder and executive director of the Astoria Arts and Movement Center, is a tarot reader and belly dancer, two skills she will display at the festival: She'll read tarot all day long and perform belly dancing in the evening, both in the Lovell Showroom.

"Tarot and belly dance, both elements of my upbringing, are sacred to me, and so I have incorporated ritual in both for the last 20 years," she says. She adds that reading tarot and belly dancing help her maintain a meaningful connection both to herself and to people.

True to the festival's roots, a sense of the unknown dwells in everything Grace does. "There has always been an element of mystery to tarot and belly dance, both in their histories, current manifestations and use of arcane symbolism," she says.

Overall, Grace enjoys being around like-minded and genuinely supportive people.

"The individuals I have had the gift of reading for have been wonderful, and the crowd has been kind and supportive of my performances," she

says. "I feel that the dark arts festival honors this mystery that is reverent in a way that is communal and celebratory."

Grace adds that the festival is an opportunity for her to repay the support the Fort George lends the programs at AAMC during the year.

### Blood, Beers and Typewriters

A new entry into the Festival of Dark Arts repertoire, "Blood, Beers and Typewriters" seeks to bring out dark beer-lovers' inner Dashiell Hammett. A Noir fiction free-writing exercise, it's the creation of Astoria teacher and author Matt Love.

Love, who has gathered together six vintage typewriters, will hold four hour-long writing sessions beginning at 2 p.m. Set among the brewing barrels and metal apparatus that is the guts of Fort George, it promises to be a loud and entertaining gig.

"Crime fiction is huge; it's everywhere on TV" Love says. "What better place to explore murder, mystery and mayhem than the Festival of Dark Arts? Anything can happen."

At each session, Love will start by giving the contestants a practice prompt and allowing them to warm up on the typewriters for a few minutes.

"That prompt will be something goofy, like 'it was a dark and stormy night,'" he says.

After warm-up, Love will give the authors the real prompt — "probably something I've overheard in an Oregon dive bar," he says — and give everyone 10 minutes to type a story on carbon paper Love purchased especially for the occasion.

When time is up, everyone will read their stories, and judges will determine the winner, who will receive a copy of Love's latest book "The Great Birthright."

Participants also take home their story, perhaps with dreams of a forthcoming manuscript.

Love is especially excited about using typewriters, despite the fact that the majority of festival attendees likely have never used one before. "They're such a great teaching tool," he says.

After seeing the spirit of the festival last year, Love says he really wanted to get involved.

He does hope, however, that the weather will be more suited to noir fiction than the mild weather of 2015. "I hope it's just ripping rain," he says.

### OTHER DARK ARTS AROUND THE FORT

- Sisters of Fire fire dancing,
- Trixie the Burlesque Dancer
- Box of Clowns performance art
- DJ Ali Aht
- Middle Eastern
- Dance by Cameron and Derek
- Tarot and Belly Dancing by Jessamyn Grace
- Daylight and the Minstrels
- The Cigar Guy
- The Solstice Blacksmith Forge
- PDX Ice
- Henna Artist Miranda
- Karen the Beer Painter
- Shanghai'd Tattoo
- Blood, beer & typewriters with Matt Love

### 'Playfully sinister'

The Festival of Dark Arts is also about attendees absorbing the spirit of music and performance. Besides a sea of Motorhead and Black Sabbath T-shirts, there's steampunk attire, masks and glitter galore, all of which lend a rock 'n' roll circus vibe to the proceedings.

Portland DJ Eliot Johnson — aka DJ Ali Aht — crafts together beats, melodies and vocals utilizing looping and sampling. He thinks musicians and artists thrive inside the festival's dark spirit.

"It's about celebrating not only great dark beers, but also the arts and music that might be considered fringe to some," he says.

Johnson, who is a first-time performer this year, thinks the crowd who attends the festival embraces that notion.

"The whole environment is so much fun," he says. "It has an almost old-timey carnival feel with a twist of the playfully sinister lurking just below the surface."

The term 'carnival' certainly applies to Portland's Box Of Clowns, performing for the first time at the festival. A physical theater company, Box Of Clowns specializes in creating quirky, eccentric characters.

"If Carol Burnett and the Three Stooges had triplets who were raised by Mr. Bean, you'd get Box of Clowns," says troupe member Laura Loy.

For the dark arts festival, Loy, along with Jeff Desautels, bring the dynamic duo of The Portland Area Paranormal Society, or P.A.P.S.

P.A.P.S. is a drag piece featuring Mysteria, a psychic medium, and Greg Murphy, cat groomer by day and paranormal investigator by night.

Murphy and Mysteria have been "hired" by the Fort George to investigate possible paranormal activity.

"It's comedic, ridiculous and spooky," Loy says.

### No rest for the wicked

If festival attendance is close to the nearly 3,000 people who attended last year, a small army will be on hand to take care of them.

Harris says all his employees and about an equal number of volunteers will be ready.

"Everyone's been told months ahead of time not to even think about asking for that day off," he says.

One element cannot be pre-planned: The weather plays a huge factor in festival's layout, something that is determined almost at the last minute. 2015 was warm and mild, while 2014 saw heavy rain and wind.

Still, Harris thinks people enjoy the novelty of the event compared to the traditional style of other beer festivals.

"It's not just a bunch of guys sitting around under fluorescent lights drinking beer," he says.

The hardest part of the weekends' aftermath? "Cleaning up all the glitter," Harris says.



Submitted photo

At the festival, beer paintings by Karen Eland will include familiar North Coast scenes.



Photo by Joshua Bessex

Jamie Brown sits on a bone altar while modeling for a painter during last year's Festival of the Dark Arts.



Submitted photo

Tarot card readings are on hand for brave souls at the festival.

### UPSTAIRS LIVE MUSIC

- Noon *The Resolectrics: rhythm & funky blues from Portland*
- 2 p.m. *Skamokawa Swamp Opera: historical rock opera from Skamokawa, Wash.*
- 4 p.m. *Jackson Boone and the Ocean Ghosts: psych folk from Portland*
- 6 p.m. *The Builders and the Butchers: twangy roots rock from Portland*
- 8 p.m. *The Thermals: power pop from Portland*