

Top Irish Businessman Praises Spraoi Parade



Pat McDonagh, Managing Director, Supermacs.

ONE of Ireland's top businessmen, and founder of Supermacs, Pat McDonagh has praised the organisation and planning behind this year's Spraoi Parade To The Waters and The Wild. "There's not a town or city in the country that would not want an event like this," he said.

The parade will bring this year's festival to a climax, followed by fireworks. The parade starts in Johnstown at 9.30 p.m., it will move through the city centre to the Clock Tower, before turning-down the quay to the G.P.O. The parade follows three days of international street entertainment throughout waterford's city centre. Spraoi 2014 features acts from Sierra Leon to the USA.

"The parade is a highlight; it's a real experience for spectators. We will have hundreds of costumed performers, specially built floats, lighting, sound, music and special-effects," says Spraoi Artistic Director, Mike Leahy. "The parade is the result of months of work. It's all created and built in Waterford. The performers are all local people who become stars for a day. The Spraoi Parade is a genuine expression of Waterford's contemporary culture and creativity," he continues.

This year's parade is themed To The Waters and The Wild. Spraoi's studios bustle with activity. The studios are like an imaginative engineering works: under constriction are a fox, a hare, an owl, horses and deer, all sculpted from metal. Through a door off one vast workshop wall a costume designer is fitting costumes, each crafted for individual parade performers. Another door opens to reveal polystyrene panels being shaped into animal limbs. Meanwhile in Spraoi's rehearsal room a team of junior drummers (10-15 years of age) is rehearsing for festival performances.

"I love the studios at this time of year; the bustle of creativity is infectious. There are so many animals in this year's parade visitors get a real sense of the characters as they take shape," says Spraoi Director T.V. Honan. There are over 15 people working in the studios throughout July making the parade and other elements of the festival, it's like a fun factory.

Volunteers, mostly secondary school students, assist Spraoi's professional staff. There is a real sense of community enterprise about festival preparations. Spraoi's studios opened in 2003. They are Ireland's only purposebuilt street arts and spectacle development facility. On July 3rd and 4th street artists from other parts of Ireland will avail of the facilities to rehearse new shows to be premiered at Spraoi.

“We’re very proud Spraoi is rooted in Waterford,” Says Director Honan. “We’re equally proud of the fact that Spraoi performs at events throughout Ireland and that Waterford is now establishing itself nationally as an R&D centre for street arts.” The positive energy in Spraoi studios is an antidote to economic gloom. The free Spraoi is an example of roots-up community activism. It uses creativity to positively express Waterford City as a vibrant centre of contemporary Irish and international culture.