

Mardi Gras Follies: a 47-year tradition continues



Mardi Gras Follies performers are featured in a cabaret number for the Las Vegas-style production which will be presented Feb. 28 and March 1 in the Monarch Room of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.



Take a musical journey to Carnivale and other exotic destinations at the 47th Mardi Gras Follies show, a presentation of the Pearl Harbor Performing Arts Association.

Right: Patti Chrzanowski, one of the performers in the 40-member Follies cast, has been dancing with the production for 13 years.



Far right: Follies dancers do some steppin' out to the tune of one of the show's snappy, toe-tapping numbers.



Right: Mardi Gras Follies performers transport the audience to far away places through music and unique costumes.



Far right: Elaborate, sequined "Vegas showgirl-style" costumes are featured in Mardi Gras Follies musical numbers.



Las Vegas-style show to open at Royal Hawaiian Monarch Room

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For 46 years, the Mardi Gras Follies has been a tradition at Pearl Harbor – bringing audiences the glamour and glitz of a Las Vegas-style show and raising proceeds to benefit many local military and civilian charities. Now in its 47th performance, the Follies is sponsored by the Pearl Harbor Performing Arts Association which raises thousands of dollars each year to support numerous charities.

Again this year, the Follies continues...although with a bit of a change. Due to security restrictions at Pearl Harbor, it was necessary to move the annual performance off base. Undaunted by the necessary change in plans and determined that the show would go on, Jack Cione – the production's creative director – arranged for a new venue, the Monarch Room of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikiki. Cione also recently became associated with the "Evening with Sinatra" now showing at the Sheraton.

"Through the generosity of the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel, we were offered the use of the Monarch Room at the Royal Hawaiian," explained Cione. "They're celebrating their 75th anniversary and we're part of that."

It's Cione's 16th year with the Follies – and it's a labor of love for the retired showman who describes the lavish production as his number one hobby.

The curtain opens on Mardi Gras Follies 2002, the only production of its kind in Hawaii, on Feb. 28 and March 1. By combining the talents of more than 40 singers and dancers and the experience and artistic talent of the veteran showman – all set to the tune of toe-tapping and carefully choreographed musical numbers – the Follies offers something for everyone.

In a letter to Cione and the Follies cast, Capt. R. Douglas Hughes, Chief of Staff and Commanding Officer, Naval Station Pearl Harbor, expressed his gratitude that the Mardi Gras Follies show would go on. "Your support of this event provides funds which are channeled to many single service members and family-oriented organizations, such as the YMCA, Friends of the Family Service Center, Marine Corps Relief Society, Joint Military Family Abuse Center and many others," he said.

"In addition to wonderful community support, Mardi Gras Follies provides a great evening of entertainment and a creative opportunity for many of our military members

and their families," he continued.

In a more reflective tone, Hughes added, "I'm delighted that we are able to continue the great Mardi Gras Follies tradition here at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel where so many of our military rested and relaxed during World War II."

A high-energy cast of performers, as well as those working behind the scenes, are all volunteers who contribute their time to participate in the Follies production. They include active duty and retired military, members of the base wives club, military dependents and Department of Defense employees. For some, such as the husband and wife team of Cmdr. Stephen and Cindy Serkies or Cmdr. John Chrzanowski (USN ret.) and wife Patti, it's a family event.

Among the featured performers for this year's show are local celebrities: Randy Smith and Debra Canada, who are currently headlining "An Evening with Sinatra" at the Sheraton Waikiki; Alison Maldonado, talented songstress who is currently serving with the Air National Guard and is an ex-Marine; Jes Robins, a Neil Diamond sound alike who recently appeared in the local Viva Las Vegas show; and Cathy Foy and Kalani Brady.

Although the all-volunteer cast was off to a late start for this year's song and dance Vegas-style revue, they've spent long hours rehearsing for the program – and they're ready to step onto the stage.

With bushels of feathers, yards of dazzling fabrics, thousands of sequins and a sewing machine, Bill Doherty, the show's ingenious costume creator, has designed and fashioned the costumes and elaborate headpieces worn in the show.

Put it all together and you have a stupendous extravaganza of song, dance and sequin-studded costumes – thanks to the hard work and dedicated hours of the Follies cast and crew of volunteers.

For your money, you get a dash of Rio de Janeiro's Carnivale, a splash of cabaret and the tropical sparkle of Hawaii. Combine that with rousing patriotic numbers in a red, white and blue salute to the military. It's a show that you won't want to miss – and remember, proceeds benefit local military and civilian charities.

The \$50 per person cost includes a sit down dinner, the Mardi Gras Follies show, tax, tip and validated parking. Doors open at 6 p.m. Dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. followed by the show at 8 p.m.

Call the events desk at the Royal Hawaiian at 931-7194 for tickets or for more information.

Photos courtesy of Mardi Gras Follies