

# The Twelfth Annual Music is Art Festival 2014

by Marty McGee

Listening to MIA founder Robby Takac describe this Saturday's Music Is Art Festival was one of those "wow!" moments for me. Burmese dancers, a Punk Rock Puppet Show, the Fire Faery, DJs in the woods, the amazing menu of entertainment is endless.

If you've never been to a Music Is Art Festival, or haven't been since it's early years in Allentown, you'll be blown away by MIA 2014. From it's humble block party beginnings in a Franklin St. parking lot with one tiny stage and art work hung on a chain-link fence, the festival has grown into a large and eagerly anticipated end-of-summer cultural celebration, summer's grand finale. And it's all free!

Spread across the back steps of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and extending deep into Delaware Park and wrapping around Hoyt Lake, the festival is an extravaganza of sights and sounds with 13 stages featuring 106 musical acts; 48 DJs; 21 Dance groups; seven performance muralists; six video artists displaying their work on giant projection screens and a psychedelic ten foot tall 3D digital face that will gaze down on the crowd. This is a gargantuan cultural event!

Just in terms of music alone the variety of the jam packed schedule running nonstop from 10am to 10pm is staggering: Blues, Folk, Heavy Metal, Punk Rock, Electronica, Hip Hop, Jazz, Americana, and Spoken Word.

A popular feature, as in past years, will see Buff State's insanely talented fashion students presenting 10 Living Sculptures scattered throughout the grounds. Attractive models climb up inside these towering creations and pose like figurines in a fantasy film. Some of them are lit with LED and other types of lighting. The effect is surreal.

The twenty-eight hardworking members of the Music Is Art committee, under the guidance of Executive Director Tracy Shattuck, have forged together the best aspects of past festivals with new innovations. This year, the trio of main stages featuring only musical acts will all be at the bottom of the Art Gallery stairs, a welcome return to the popular amphitheater seating the wide staircase and adjoining lawns offer. One of the two beer tents will occupy the entire lawn on the right side of the stairs, providing an excellent vantage point of the bands.

There are two VIP areas with complimentary food and beverages, one at the Casino beside Hoyt Lake and the other on the top landing of the grand back staircase of the Albright-Knox. This perk is not free but is available through the purchase of a highly recommended VIP pass at [www.musicisart.org](http://www.musicisart.org). The Music Is Art website is also where you can download the handy app which has the day's entire line-up for planning your personal schedule.

Also new this year is a formal participation by the Infringement Festival folks. Their involvement will add buskers and a further experimental edge to the mix as they randomly perform around the site. Robby points out that this is the true spirit of the festival, where everyone is welcome and encouraged to join in; "I always said this is what it's about. Bring a guitar, bring your tap shoes and find a spot to do your thing."

International headliners, Shonen Knife, the kick-ass female punk/pop trio from Osaka, Japan [have posted a video exclaiming their excitement to be performing at MIA](#) and their promise to ROCK! Also much anticipated are two national bands that originated in Kenmore; Cute Is What We Aim For and Green Jellö (the performers behind the Punk Rock Puppet Show mentioned above).

Fifty-two artists, most are local, will exhibit their inspired work in rows of tents in several areas of the festival grounds where you can view and buy art.

Kids are treated to a whole range of cool activities, their own disco, a parade and the popular MIA Idol challenge. This family friendly aspect of the organization's flagship event reminds us of Music is Art's year-round non-profit efforts to support and encourage music education through diverse programming and musical instrument donations. The heartfelt approach over the years by Robby Takac and his committed team has resulted in a growing list of generous sponsors.

The festival will culminate around 10pm with a hot, new pyro-performance by the Fire Faery, illuminating the fact that with all the exciting things happening in our city these days, Buffalo is not only the City of Light but a City on Fire.