

Take a journey with the 2024 Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

Edinburgh Castle has been transformed into the Taj Mahal in a Bollywood extravaganza, a rolling ocean with ships and sea shanties and a kaleidoscopic Highland rave complete with DJ, glow stick-twirling dancers and flame-throwing bagpipes – as part of this year's stunning Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

The world-famous annual event opened officially on Friday night featuring over 850 performers from around the world.

Journeys, which features the Royal Navy as the Lead Service, honours the seafarers who traverse the oceans to connect people and cultures across continents.

The show, which will run on the castle's iconic esplanade until August 24 in its 74th year, takes crowds on "an epic journey of connection through music, dance, culture, and military traditions".

Performers have travelled from the USA, India, Switzerland, Australia, Canada and around the UK to perform over 23 nights

to a live audience of 230,000 people and a global TV audience of over 100 million.

This year's show combines the stirring sounds of the Massed Pipes and Drums and poise of the Tattoo Dancers with, among others, the musical talents of the US Citadel Regimental Band and Pipes and the United States Sea Service Band created especially for the 2024 Tattoo.

Crowds gasped at the dazzling precision rifle drill of the United States Navy Ceremonial Guard from Washington DC and cheered the spectacular timing, showmanship and humour of Majesticks Drum Corps, making their Tattoo debut from Switzerland.

The show also includes the colour and glamour of Teamwork Arts India and The Rajasthani Bagpiper, The Bhangra Queens and the Bollywood Ensemble, and the excitement of a Highland rave by the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performers, culminating in flaming bagpipes.

As Lead Service, the Royal Navy takes centre stage alongside the Royal Marines as The Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines, performing a grand finale befitting one of the greatest shows on earth, before the famous Lone Piper, silhouetted on the ramparts of the castle.

Michael Braithwaite, Creative Director, said: "Journeys is a vibrant celebration of connection between peoples and cultures. As the Tattoo continues to evolve, so do the performers who light up the stage in August.

"Journeys merges the traditional military elements that the Tattoo is known and loved for, along with modern touches through creative projection, technology, costume design and music inspirations to create a truly impactful performance.

"I can't wait for audiences to see the results of the hard

work put in over the last year from everyone involved in the show. Audiences are in for a night to remember.”

Jason Barrett, the Tattoo’s chief executive, said: “This is the culmination of over a year’s work, coming together. With a cast of 850 people we are delighted to launch what will be an amazing show which keeps getting better and better.

“Audiences can expect excitement, an atmospheric spectacular, incredible entertainment – dance, music, projection and the story of journeys, which is our theme.”

Performers also celebrated their stunning opening night.

Gunnery Sergeant Eduardo Espinosa, band leader with the United States Sea Service Band, likened the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo to the Super Bowl.

GySgt Espinosa, from Quantico in Virginia, said: “The Edinburgh Tattoo is world renowned – it’s like performing at the Super Bowl. I’ve played in different tattoos but Edinburgh feels like where it all started. With the backdrop of the castle, we are living the dream here.”

Steven Stanley, director of Brisbane Boys’ College Pipes and Drums, part of the Massed Pipes and Drums, who moved to Queensland, Australia from Scotland 25 years ago, said: “I performed in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo as a teenager in the Edinburgh Boys’ Brigade and later returned as part of the Lothian and Borders Police and the Queensland Police.

“Now it makes me very proud to bring a group of 50 boys aged from 12 to 18 over from Australia and give them the same opportunity. They’ve done a huge amount of work and are excited to be in Edinburgh – it’s massive for them. When the drawbridge comes down the hairs on the back of your neck stand up.”

Musicians Ella Hughes and Beth McGregor of the Massed Bands of

His Majesty's Royal Marines, both performing for the first time in Edinburgh, said: "It's incredibly exciting. It's a gig like no other."

The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo first performed in 1950. In 2010, the Queen bestowed the Royal title in honour of its 60th birthday, and HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne, is Patron.

As part of the Edinburgh Festivals, The Tattoo helps contribute £407m economic impact to Edinburgh and £313 million to Scotland.



All photos Ian Georgeson

















