

Review of the 15th Annual Virginia International Tattoo – A Celebration of Freedom

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The centerpiece of the Virginia Arts Festival, the Virginia International Tattoo, celebrated its 15th anniversary this past weekend. Once again, the feeling of pride and inspiration was nothing short of mesmerizing and emotional. And this year's theme, "A Celebration of Freedom", couldn't be more appropriate given developing victories across the world in the war on terrorism.

tattooDerived from the Dutch phrase for "Turn off the taps"-doe den tap toe-Tattoo evolved from 17th and 18th century traditional ceremonies to a celebration of music, mass, and more. The Virginia International Tattoo invites military and non-military bands, drill teams, and performances from across the globe to put on a unified and spectacular performance .

This year's featured performances included the German Mountain Army Band with its thunderous brass presents, etched with fun German mountain polka, yodelers, and axmen. Another fun spectacle included the Pacific Islanders of the Tonga Defense Services Royal Corps of Musicians, which included native music, song, and dance. But what really thrilled the crowd was their entertaining rendition of Michael Jackson's "Thriller". Another outstanding performance came shortly after when the Nepali-based Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas took the floor. Not only did the band display their amazing talent as artists, but the knife-wielding performers gave the showcase its cutting edge. To add to the Brigades credit of bravery and strength, can be included talented.

And, of course, the Tattoo featured its centerpiece of Massed Pipes, Drums, and Dancers with flawless

perfection. Hailing from Scotland, Great Britain, Canada, and the US, these performers always know how to put on a stunning performance. One of the crowd favorites was Williamsburg's own Colonial

Williamsburg Fifes and Drums with special guests, Colonial Williamsburg Youth Dancers. How about mixing a little bagpipe with calypso? That's exactly what Portsmouth's own The Rhythm Project brought to the show as the elementary and middle school performers drummed away at their steel pans, accompanied by the Pipes and Dancers.

As always, each branch of the US military, from Coasties to Airmen, was represented within the Armed Forces Medley. It came to no surprise, given the area, that the Navy was highly represented throughout the crowd. However, the most inspirational, the most moving, the most humbling moment in the performance came at the finale with the honoring of the surviving members of the Tuskegee Airmen that brought every person in the packed Norfolk Scope to their feet for a warming 10 minute standing ovation.

To say this Tattoo was great would be an understatement. Not only was it entertaining, but also unified all in attendance, regardless of age, race, creed, nationality, or branch. It taught us the value of freedom and the need to not only defend it, but to celebrate it every day

