

Indianapolis plans a summer cultural extravaganza

[by Randy Mink]

INDIANAPOLIS - Best known for its world famous speedway, America's 12th-largest city is on the fast track to a dynamic cultural scene that promises to rival its reputation for auto racing, basketball and other sports.



A huge arts explosion, sparked by museum expansions and block-

buster exhibitions, culminates this summer as millions of dollars in cultural investment comes to fruition. The Big Red Arrow, an 18-foot-high, 750-pound, mobile marketing icon, guides the public to openings and other events that mark Indianapolis 2005, a year-long campaign coordinated by the Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission.

Happily for tourists who don't like driving from place to place, many of the city's cultural institutions are concentrated in White River State Park, a downtown oasis with expansive lawns, gardens, sculptures, fountains and reflecting pools. A short walk west of their downtown hotel, visitors can catch a summer concert in the park, rent a bike or pedal boat, be serenaded on a gondola ride or just take a walk along the winding Central Canal. Among the park's attractions are the Indianapolis Zoo, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indiana State Museum and NCAA Hall of Champions.

For minor league baseball with stunning views of the skyline, families flock to Victory Field, home of the Indianapolis Indians, an affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers. Nearby are the RCA Dome, where the NFL Indianapolis

Colts play football, and Conseco Fieldhouse, home court of basketball's Indiana Pacers and the site of the Aug. 10-13 Visa Championships, which will identify front-runners for gymnastics gold at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.



Monument Circle, a traffic circle punctuated by the 284-foot-tall Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument,

is the hub of downtown and just two blocks from the Indiana state capitol. Ringing the circle are the curved facades of buildings like the historic Hilbert Circle Theatre, home of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, which is observing its 75th anniversary. Carriages drawn by massive white Percherons provide clip-clopping rides on the brick streets around the limestone monument, a tribute to Civil and Spanish American War veterans. An observation platform atop the elaborate 1902 shrine offers panoramic views.

Circle Centre, a linear, three-level shopping mall, is another downtown magnet. Its Artsgarden, a glass bubble suspended over a busy intersection, hosts art exhibitions and musical performances. Displayed on sidewalks and plazas throughout the downtown area are 25 whimsical bronze pieces from "Tom Otterness in Indianapolis," the city's largest-ever public sculpture exhibition, which runs through July 31. The show, straight from New York City, is a major part of

Indianapolis 2005.

One of the nation's best showplaces of Native American and Western heritage - and the only one of its kind in the Midwest - the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art has launched the Perelman Wing, an addition that doubles its public space. A new cafe overlooks gardens and terraces leading down to the canal. An outdoor learning center provides space for artist demonstrations, pit-firing ceramics, Puebloan bread baking, tipi construction and performing arts.



In addition to classic paintings and bronzes of the Old West by late 19th-century artists like Charles M. Russell and Frederic S.

Remington, the adobe-style Eiteljorg spotlights contemporary art by Native Americans. Video stations show how tribes carry on their traditions.

The Indianapolis Zoo's \$10 million Dolphin Adventure, unveiled with a splash over Memorial Day weekend, boasts the world's first fully submerged dolphin-viewing experience. Visitors watch the marine mammals from inside an acrylic dome in the middle of the performance pool. Later this year, guests will have a chance to interact with dolphins in the water.

The Indianapolis Children's Museum is the largest children's museum in the country and is hosting the largest exhibition of Norman Rockwell's Saturday Evening Post covers ever assembled. The illustrator's career with the magazine, now published in Indianapolis, spanned 40 years and reflected his vision of family life in small-town America. A pioneer in hands-on learning, the museum last year opened the \$25 million Dinosphere, one of the largest displays of dinosaur fossils in the United States.

One of the Midwest's best and largest art museums just became even better with the May opening of the Indianapolis Museum of Art's \$74 million expansion that doubled its size. The museum also has unveiled Puck's, a restaurant operated by celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck. Views of the museum's new tree-lined mall heighten the dining experience.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary, the Herron



School of Art and Design recently opened its \$26.5 million home on the

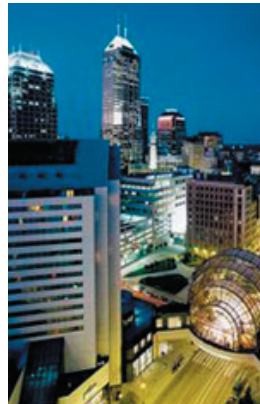
downtown campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Through July 20, an exhibition will showcase work by Herron alumnus Don Gummer, an Indianapolis native and the husband of actress Meryl Streep. Art meets nature when the Indianapolis Art Center's ARTSPARK makes its debut Aug. 21 in Broad Ripple Village, a mellow neighborhood about 20 minutes north of downtown. Visitors can view artwork, take open-air classes and stroll along the south bank of the White River. The Art Center building and ARTSPARK were designed by renowned architect Michael Graves, who grew up just blocks away. Movie fans will come for "The Lord of the

Rings Motion Picture Trilogy" exhibition from Oct. 6 to Jan. 3, 2006, at the Indiana State Museum. The three-year-old museum also draws crowds with giant-screen movies in its IMAX theater. Popular exhibits focus on Hoosiers' passion for basketball and famous folks with Indiana roots, including TV star David Letterman, popcorn king Orville Redenbacher and former Vice President Dan Quayle.

A trip to Indianapolis is not complete without a pilgrimage to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, site of the Indianapolis 500 on Memorial Day weekend. Even those visiting when no racing events are scheduled can capture much of the excitement at the speedway's Hall of Fame Museum and on a minibus tour of the 96-year-old track.

IF YOU GO

Here is a look at some of the major cultural and sporting events in Indianapolis this summer:



Through July 31: "Tom Otterness in Indianapolis" outdoor sculpture exhibition.

Through Jan. 14: "Rockwell's America: Celebrating the Art of Norman Rockwell," Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

Aug. 7: Brickyard 400, Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Aug. 10-13: Visa Championships (gymnastics), Conesco Fieldhouse.

Aug. 21: Grand opening of Indianapolis Art Center's ARTSPARK, Broad Ripple Village district.

For information on tourist attractions and Indianapolis 2005 events, contact the Indianapolis Convention and Visitors Association, (800) 996-INDY; www.indy.org.

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