



Renaissance Pleasure Faire

by Paul W. Faust

Come all ye lads and lasses, for once again it's time for the Annual Renaissance Pleasure Faires across the country. The faire will be a feast for your eye, your stomach, and your funny bone. Jesters will clown for you, fair maids will dance, and royalty will parade before your presence. It is time again to go back over 400 years to the 16th century Elizabethan Renaissance and party with royalty.

For the first-time visitor, it is an experience to long be remembered, but for the serious photographer, it can be an unbelievable opportunity to photograph not just dozens but hundreds of costumed participants. Every type of character, from the highest nobility on down to the village peasants, will be there for you to mingle with, and photograph up close.

Many times there are several hundred artisans, who will not only have their fine wares available to purchase, but a great many of them will also be practicing their crafts for all to see, learn from, and of course, photograph. There are usually blacksmiths, candle makers, gold and silversmiths, basket weavers, and leather workers. Learn how paper is made by actually doing it yourself, or for the less ambitious, just watch as a blacksmith works on a piece of armor. For those looking for that unique gift for someone special, there are weavers, flute makers, bota bags, masks of all sorts and expressions, plus all of the usual items like jewelry, pewter and ceramic goods in the many crafts booths all over the faire village. Although the prices of many items can be on the high side, the quality of the materials and workmanship are not cheap either. This is one place that craftsmanship is the order of the day, and not just the exception. Everything is made as it was 400 years ago and you are sure to get your money's worth and more.

Besides the many arts and crafts, there is a whole host of spectator events that will be sure to use up a lot of your film. (Take plenty!) Everyday of the faire there are many equestrian events, all of which are in the full costumes of the times, and that goes for both man & horse alike. The most attended event is the full contact jousting battles. Held in full armour that can weigh 100 lbs or more, they will fight with the long lance just as it was done 400 years ago, only this time it won't be to the death as in days of old. As you've seen it done in the movies, they will race towards each other on horseback with lances aimed at one another in an attempt to knock each other off of their mounts. That done, they will then fight on the ground with sword and shield until one of them is bested.

Some of the other things that will catch your interest are the many stage shows where Elizabethan plays are put on, jugglers perform their acts, and even animals perform for your entertainment. You may even find yourself up on stage as a part of the act. Then there are the fortunetellers and tarot card readers in the gypsy village. You can even sit in the presence of the royal court as they conduct their daily business affairs, or join the huge tug-of-war contests that the villagers will drag you in on. At times special contests will be held for visitors, such as 'Pirates costume competition' with daily prizes .

When all of this has made you as hungry as a horse, there is just about everything you could imagine to eat at one tent or another. Items such as old world Piroshki, Yorkshire curd tarts, beggars pudding, haggis neeps and tatties, chatneys, falafel, baklava, and cornish cockles and mussels. If all of these sound as foreign to you as they were to me, that's because they are, being from such places as Arabia, Turkey, Russia, and all over the Far East and Old World Europe. If you like good food, you will want to try several of these, but if all you like is old fashion American food there are some of the biggest turkey legs you have ever seen and plenty of drink to wash it down with.

If you have never been to a Renaissance Faire, you have definitely missed one of the most interesting events that are held anywhere. (This is one place that if you can't go home with dozens of great shots, then you shouldn't be allowed to own a camera.) There are so many good subjects here that the only real advice that one could give is to take plenty of film & several lenses, zooms being preferable. If you have more than one camera body, take at least two so that you can have a quick pick of lenses always at hand, or use one for color & load the



other with B&W. The many different costumes make excellent subjects for graphic high contrast B&W images.

There are several events over the summer season in both California and New York, and some events and faire features may be at one place and not at another. What I have described here is what is, or has been at the faire in California in past years, but which are usually found at all of these faires. For more up to date info on each event go to their web site at www.renfaire.com.

The 2005 Southern California Faire runs every weekend from April 16th- May 22nd. Admission is \$22.00 for Adults; \$19.50 Seniors (62+) Military, & Students w/ID; \$12.00 children (5-11), and under 5 are free. The two other Renaissance Faires this year will be held in Bristol, NY and Tuxedo, NY.

GOOD SHOOTING!

About the Author

Paul W. Faust is a self-taught Photographer, Writer, Digital Imaging, Photo Restoration, and Photo Stock Service professional.

His work has been published in American Photographer, Camera 35, Camera and Darkroom, Popular Photography, Photographic, Photographers Forum, www.apogeephoto.com and here at TPN. Past assignments have included four cover images assignments and shooting stills on both Hollywood movie sets, and for star hopefuls including Bo Derick, Heather Locklear, and Pricilla Barnes. Paul's images have also been used by the NikonNet, Bogen Photo Imaging, East Tennessee Film Commission, and The Knoxville Zoo, including their web sites.

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