



FESTIVAL TIME IN DUBLIN!

Irish capital hoping to emulate its rival in Edinburgh, says **FRANK MURPHY**

Dublin is in full swing with its very own festival season which organisers hope will go on to rival its bigger brother in Edinburgh.

For some time now the powers that be in Ireland have marvelled at the success each August on the festival held in the Scottish capital and this year decided to put something together as a test event for Dublin.

Previously, autumn festival time in the Irish capital has been a fragmented collection of events which were difficult to exploit for tourism. The introduction of the Dublin Festival Season reflects a Fáilte Ireland strategy to develop a new umbrella brand to drive increased domestic and overseas tourism.

This approach is influenced by Edinburgh's successful marketing of its cultural events, where a number of separate festivals taking place in August have become known overseas as the Edinburgh Festival.

The Edinburgh Festival attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors and contributes over £123 million to the Scottish economy each year.

Now Dublin is hoping to do the same with its festival season which began on September 1 and runs until the end of October.

Speaking at the launch, Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring, said: "I'm pleased to welcome Fáilte Ireland's initiative for a new 'Dublin Festival Season' brand. This brings together a number of events under one umbrella, and boosts tourism in the city.

"With tourism playing such a central role in re-generating our economy, we always need to look at how different sectors can benefit each other.

"Festivals, wherever they are, offer a valuable contribution to the development of tourism in Ireland and I look forward to the development of the Dublin Festival Season over the coming years."

Keith McCormack, Fáilte Ireland's head of business tourism and events, added: "We believe we can build both domestic and international awareness of the Dublin Festival Season as an iconic 'must see' event.

"From the beginning of September to the end of October, they can experience the very

best of contemporary culture in one of the most sociable, easy-going and fun cities in Europe."

The key events taking place in Dublin during Festival Season include the Ulster Bank Dublin Theatre Festival, from September 29 until October 16, and ABSOLUT Fringe.

The Dublin Theatre Festival will present 553 performances of 28 cutting-edge shows, while ABSOLUT Fringe will present 84 shows - with 535 scheduled performances - and involve 895 artists.

Another well-established event is Culture



Night, which is offering over 100,000 free evening visits to 156 visitor attractions and rarely seen cultural gems. Culture night takes place on September 23.

Dublin Festival Season will also showcase a number of other events including; The Mountains to Sea Book Festival in Dun

Laoghaire, featuring Michael Ondaatje, Emma Donoghue, Sebastian Barry, Edna O'Brien and Melvyn Bragg among others.

The **Dublin Fashion Festival**, Dublin Contemporary 2011, which is a major exhibition and will feature over 90 artists in exhibitions across the city; Open House Dublin,

when hundreds of Dublin buildings – new and old – open their doors for free guided tours.

There will also be an Indi music festival, Hard Working Class Heroes, where the youth of Ireland's music industry will showcase their talent.

These cultural events will also be complemented by other commercial and festive events including Arthur's Day when some of the world's top acts will play in pubs all over the Capital, as well as the 18-day party Oktoberfest in Dublin's Docklands from September 22 to October 9. It will give visitors the opportunity to try a range of Bavarian beverages

and foods.

Music fans will also find something to interest them in Ireland's capital this autumn, with dozens of up-and-coming bands set to be showcased during the Hard Working Class Heroes event.

To view the full listing of festivals and events go to: www.discoverireland.ie/dublin-festivalseason.

• *Frank Murphy travelled to Dublin as a guest of Aer Lingus (www.aerlingus.com). He stayed at The Harcourt Hotel 60 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2. Telephone: 0800-912 0021, or go to www.harcourt-hotel-dublin.com.*

