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Maine Telemark Festival at Sunday River

Newry, ME - Sunday River's slopes will be filled with upwards of 500 people dressed in strange costumes, occasionally skiing uphill, and taking long arcing turns down the fall line, bringing one knee to the snow each time, when the resort hosts the 2003 Maine Telemark Festival. The event is slated for January 11 and 12, 2003, and is presented by New England Telemark (NET), Sunday River Ski Resort, and Red Hook Brewery.

Bif Higgison and Matt DiBenedetto, started NET to help promote the sport of telemark skiing after many resorts began to do away with tele programs. "Matt and I started New England Telemark to give a venue for telemarkers to gather, try new gear, take lessons, race, partake in frivolous costume contests, win prizes, and above all else, celebrate the turn we love," said Higgison, Director of NET. The Maine Telemark Festival is a two-day celebration in honor of that illustrious turn. The festival provides tele skiers with all of the opportunities that Higgison and DiBenedetto had in mind.

The festival features free demos from most telemark companies, as well as rentals from various shops, including Mahoosuc Mountain Sports, located in Locke Mills. NET also offers free 90 minute clinics at the festival, most taught by PSIA instructors, on various tele topics. Look for clinics specific to crossing over from both alpine skiing and snowboarding, as well as moguls, back country rescue, and women-specific clinics, headed up by Heather Paul, two-time national telemark champion and former World Cup team member.

Contests include the uphill/downhill race on Saturday, in which competitors must don climbing skins and head up the mountain before racing down. On Sunday, a mogul contest will be held on a bumped-up 3D. A costume contest, encouraging outrageous tele garb, will take place both days.

"We see telemark on a big upswing, and New England Telemark providing a much needed hinge for the gate," joked Higgison. He points out that the sport of telemark skiing is indeed growing, as is NET. "We're getting more known by the minute, actually," said DiBenedetto. "Hopefully, with the River behind us, we'll have nice turn out." Sunday River is the largest resort to hold a NET festival. "The incredible terrain, a possibility of having a mogul contest, and most of all, the guarantee of lots of snow covered slopes convinced us that Sunday River was the place to go," said Higgison.

For more information on the 2003 Maine Telemark Festival at Sunday River Ski Resort, please visit <http://www.sundayriver.com/eventscalendar.html>, or <http://www.netelemark.com/>.

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