



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# FIRST NIGHT MONTEREY ANNOUNCES 33rd ANNUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION: "WE'VE GOT THE BEAT!"

## A Family-Friendly, Alcohol-Free Community Arts Festival Returns to Downtown Monterey on December 31

**MONTEREY, CA** — First Night Monterey proudly announces the return of its beloved New Year's Eve community celebration of the arts on **Wednesday, December 31, 2025**, marking the organization's **33rd annual event**. This year's theme, "**We've Got the Beat!**", celebrates rhythm, creativity, and the heartbeat of community connection as families, residents, and visitors come together to welcome 2026 in vibrant downtown Monterey.

A signature tradition since 1993, **First Night Monterey** transforms Historic Downtown Monterey into a lively, multi-venue arts festival featuring **over 40 performances** across music, dance, multimedia arts, theater, cultural showcases, and hands-on creativity for all ages. The alcohol-free event offers a safe, joyful, and inclusive experience that highlights the diverse artistic talent of Monterey County and beyond.

Festivities begin at **3:00 PM** with the beloved **Twilight Procession** on Alvarado Street, showcasing giant puppets, dancers, youth groups, drummers, musicians, and community participants. Indoor and outdoor venues throughout downtown—including the Monterey Conference Center, community churches, and cultural spaces—will host continuous

programming until midnight. Ride the Bus for free to First Night! A Park and Ride at the Del Monte Center in back of Macy's provides free rides downtown from 3:00pm to 1:00am.

**"First Night Monterey is the heartbeat of New Year's Eve on the Central Coast," said Ellen Martin, Executive Director. "This year's theme, 'We've Got the Beat,' honors the rhythm of community, creativity, and celebration. It's a powerful reminder of how the arts bring us together — whether in downtown Monterey, in our Greenfield programs, or at our year-round youth workshops."**

Highlights for 2026 include:

- 🎵 **Live music:** Jazz, Latin rhythms, world music, folk, blues, rock, and emerging youth musicians
- 🎭 **Cultural dance & performance:** Folklórico, hip-hop, contemporary
- 🎨 **Interactive art experiences:** Mural-making, hands-on art stations, creative installations
- 🎪 **Kid-friendly fun:** Art workshops, face painting, and family zones
- 🍲 **Local food vendors** serving warm treats and festival favorites
- 🌟 **Midnight Moments** at the Conference Center and at the Golden State Theatre— a high-energy celebration to welcome 2026!

Entry to all performances and activities is included with an official **First Night Monterey button**, available beginning December 1 at all Monterey County Safeway stores, Grove Market, and online at [firstnightmonterey.org](https://firstnightmonterey.org).

First Night Monterey continues its year-round commitment to arts access through public workshops, the Greenfield Cultural Arts Center, youth art camps, and community partnerships across Monterey County. The New Year's Eve celebration remains the organization's largest and most visible community gathering, bringing thousands together to celebrate creativity in a safe, inclusive environment. To learn about the 20 performing groups, 6 interactive activities and a twilight procession- First Night has something to delight all ages groups!

## **About First Night Monterey**

First Night Monterey is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to building community through creativity. Since 1993, First Night has produced Monterey's New Year's Eve celebration of the arts and provides year-round outreach through camps, workshops, mural projects, and youth-focused programs in Monterey, Greenfield, and surrounding communities.



# First Night Monterey 2026 — Confirmed Performers



## Music Acts

- **Al James Band** – Americana / rock / soul
- **Ashe Ensemble** – Contemporary fusion / world
- **BAD MACHINE** – Rock
- **Everyday People** – Classic soul, Salsa & R&B- FINALE BAND
- **Grumbling Ginger** – Folk
- **Singing Wood Marimba Band** – World marimba ensemble
- **Southbound 101** – Country / Americana
- **Zack Freitas** – Singer-songwriter / acoustic rock
- **Stu Reynolds Saxtet** – Jazz saxophone ensemble
- **Wrockinfoose** – Funk / jam band- FINALE BAND
- **Kevin O’Neal Group** – Jazz with virtuoso bass / fusion
- **Black Irish Band** – Celtic / Americana
- **Miranda Perl & Brice Albert** – Jazz vocals with guitar



## Dance & Cultural Performance

- **DiFranco Dance Troupe** – Contemporary & modern dance
- **Monterey Bay Lion Dance Team** – Traditional Chinese Lion Dance
- **Shinsho Mugen Daiko** – Japanese Taiko drumming



## Specialty Performance

- **Flashpoint Fire Show** – Fire dance / circus arts

Please email us for photos! [ellen@firstnightmonterey.org](mailto:ellen@firstnightmonterey.org),  
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