



OFFICIAL RULES AND SCORING GUIDELINES

Downloadable participant application available at <https://bourbonstpub.com/iftheshoefits/>

Thank you in advance for your time and talent in consideration in participating in the second-annual “If the Shoe Fits” Drag Star Search for the 2026/2027 Key West High Heel Shoe Drop. Here we have done our best to detail the run-of-show expectations for each of the three competitive rounds and explain scoring. While protocol is somewhat modeled on a traditional pageant system, “If the Shoe Fits” is uniquely Key West and pays homage to 29 years of Key West High Heel Shoe Drop History. Think of ITSF as less about earrings matching the shoes and more about the positive energy and professionalism you bring to the art of sharing joy with your audience.

IF THE SHOE FITS returns for its second year, offering Professional Entertainers and Drag Stars around the United States the chance to become the STAR of the world-famous Key West High Heel Shoe Drop, one of the world’s most iconic New Year’s Eve celebrations and covered internationally by CNN. Presented by Bourbon Street Pub and the Monroe County Tourist Development Council (TDC) with support from Island House Key West, “If the Shoe Fits” will visit seven cities across the United States between the end of August and October. We are looking for entertainers with outstanding stage presence and the ability to command spectators by the thousands.

The finalist who best embodies the glamour, charisma, professionalism, and spirit established by the iconic Queens of New Year’s Eve—including the legendary Sushi, who reigned as the original Queen of New Year’s Eve for 25 years, Christopher Peterson, Randy Roberts, and reigning national champion Mulan Alexander—will earn the honor of becoming the 2026 Queen of New Year’s Eve and riding in the iconic Shoe Drop on December 31, 2026.

Now, while the shoe is metaphorically speaking a “big shoe to fill”, once in Key West it does have some very real dimensions and potential limits for safety based on how much muscle the manual shoe operators can provide. *The winner must be able to be in the shoe for up to 90 minutes in total. The seating dimensions in the shoe are: 16 inches wide and 12 inches deep. All are welcome to compete and win the finale trip to Key West, but please keep in mind, in full transparency, that for safety reasons the shoe will literally have to fit and be tested in Key West while there for the Finals on October 10th, 2026.*

There is a maximum of six participants per city regional event. All judges will be program experts from Key West and/or past participants in the Key West New Years Eve High Heel Shoe Drop/If the Shoe Fits



and may also be local experts in the drag and female impersonation arts. All participants must be 21+ and US citizens or legal residents. There are NO entry fees to competitors.

CATEGORIES (all scores are averaged per category and per judge for one final score between 0-100)

1. Opening Presentation (100 points total, 25 per subcategory): Contestants will be introduced together at start of show, given at least 16 counts of music for a spotlight moment, and then take their pre-assigned mark onstage for this “get to know you” round. Wear something uniquely you, reflecting your personality and brand. This is your first impression.

One at a time, each participant will be recognized in numerical order of entrance and:

- Re-introduce oneself with name and hometown
- Give three (no more and no less) interesting facts about themselves. Can be a title won, a hobby, a favorite show one has done, literally anything interesting.
- Answer the question “Why should YOU be the new “Queen of Key West New Years Eve?”.

After each has completed the above, they will be thanked and dismissed to get ready for round two.

SUBCATEGORIES are **APPEARANCE, PERSONALITY, ANSWER CONTENT, OVERALL FIRST IMPRESSION**

2. Talent Showcase (100 points total, 25 per subcategory): Show us how you will WOW the thousands of people gathered on Duval Street when you are introduced onstage on December 31st before climbing into the shoe. Live vocals, dance, whatever is your forte! Competitors may include additional dancers/performers in their number, but we caution to ensure the focus is all YOU. Performance time is a maximum of 6 minutes and minimum of two minutes and thirty seconds. Music tracks must be submitted to the Production Manager one week in advance of show. Sound checks and mark-throughs/run-throughs will be arranged as needed.

SUBCATEGORIES are **Entertainment Value, Production Value, Quality, Overall Execution**

3. CNN Couture Interview (100 points total, 25 per subcategory): Take to the stage in your most fabulous/outrageous/ “SUSHI-chic” couture outfit and imagine being interviewed live on-air by CNN while seated in the shoe (a smaller traveling version that has an exact model of the actual seat in the shoe in Key West!). *One could consider this a combined evening gown and interview round, but uniquely Key West style.* For round 3, we transport the audience to December 31, 2026, a bit after 10pm on Duval Street and ask them, with noisemakers in hand, to cheer for you as we introduce the NEW Queen of Key West NYE, YOU. We ask you to wear one of your biggest/couture-fun looks, and to pay homage to the 25 years of original Queen of New Years SUSHI and her iconic annual self-made sartorial creations. Big Hats? Yes! Even bigger hair? Totally!!!! You will enter to thunderous applause and join the host next to the shoe center stage and be given a microphone to briefly share with the audience and judges what you are wearing. You will then take your seat in the shoe as we literally find out “IF THE SHOE FITS”! All contestants are welcome to practice sitting in the shoe prior to show start.

We will go “Live to Times Square” with our judges acting as remote CNN correspondent. Each judge will randomly draw one “focus question” on which you will be judged by your response. Just as it is every year on New Years Eve, there may be distractions, and part of this round is to test your ability to focus under pressure and maintain “grace under fire” while suspended high above Duval Street in a Big Red High Heel Shoe. Remember, it is “live tv” seen by millions and there are no second chances! This round

will end with a “midnight countdown” from 10 to 1 with you leading the way and imagining you are dropping down in the shoe to the stage, and then as “Auld Lang Syne” plays, we applaud you one last time as we help you out of the shoe and you gracefully make your exit.

Visit www.facebook.com/iftheshoefitskw for examples of “Sushi Couture” in the shoe over the years as well as photos/video from the 2025 inaugural competition tour.

SUBCATEGORIES are **Style, Personality, Poise Under Pressure, and Focus Interview Question**

***PRIZING**

Every National Finalist Receives

- ✓ Five Days/Four Nights’ Accommodation at New Orleans House Key West October 8-12, 2026
- ✓ Round-trip Airfare to the National Finals in Key West courtesy of Bourbon Street Pub and the TDC
- ✓ \$500 Cash Award (will be mailed from Key West within a week following each regional event) and Premium Gift Basket courtesy of Island House Key West
- ✓ \$200 Expense Stipend

The National Champion Receives

- ✓ Title of “2026 Queen of New Years Eve” and STAR of the Key West High Heel Shoe Drop on December 31st
- ✓ \$2,000 Performance Fee courtesy of Bourbon Street Pub and The Monroe County Tourist Development Council
- ✓ Five days/Four Nights’ Accommodation at New Orleans House Key West
- ✓ Round-trip Airfare to Key West courtesy of Island House
- ✓ Custom New Years Eve Costume by Sushi, the Original Queen of NYE

*All prizing courtesy of the Monroe County Tourism Development Council (TDC), Bourbon Street Pub/New Orleans House, and Island House Key West.



2025 National Winner MULAN ALEXANDER (Dallas, TX) ascending in the shoe, December 31, 2025.

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Direct inquiries: iftheshoefitskw@gmail.com