



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 16, 2025

***Lil Rhody Laugh Riot* Generates Major Economic and Cultural Impact in Providence**

18,000 attendees, 60 comedians, 30 shows, 10 venues, and over \$1.5 million in direct spending in debut year.

PROVIDENCE, RI — The inaugural *Lil Rhody Laugh Riot* comedy festival brought over 18,000 attendees to downtown Providence between March 27–30, 2025, delivering a powerful cultural and economic boost to the city. The four-day event featured 60 comedians, 30 performances, and 10 venues, blending world-class talent with local voices while supporting dozens of local businesses, vendors, and cultural institutions.

Headline Performers included **Matt Rife, Kevin Hart, Josh Johnson, Leslie Jones, Hannah Berner, Aziz Ansari, Jonathan Van Ness and Alex Edelman**, drawing fans from across the region to host venues The VETS, PPAC and Comedy Connection.

The festival was created and produced by the team at The VETS and Providence Performing Arts Center and made possible through funding support from Rhode Island Commerce’s New Attractions Tourism Grant program, along with the generosity of many other supporters and sponsors including the Providence Tourism Council, COX Communications, WPRI, Cumulus, Providence Auto Body and Oak View Group.

“This was more than a comedy festival—it was a celebration of Providence’s creative energy and collaborative spirit,” said the festival’s organizers at The VETS and PPAC. “We’re proud that the city embraced this inaugural event and excited for what’s to come.”

Impact Highlights:

- **18,000** total attendees across the four-day festival.
- **Over \$1 million** in direct spending on tickets, concessions, and merchandise at festival venues.
- **\$500,000** in additional anticipated direct spending by attendees at restaurants, hotels, shops, and transportation providers.
- **\$100,000 in wages** paid to part-time event staff positions to support festival events.
- **60 comedians** featured, including national headliners and local performers.
- **30 shows** across **10 venues**, including The VETS and PPAC.
- **Over 40** Providence-area businesses engaged.
- **18 food trucks** launched their season early in partnership with the festival.



A Community-Wide Celebration

Local comedian and producer Jeremy Pearson of Providence Comedy Underground shared his perspective on the festival's local integration:

"Having the big venues like VETS & PPAC plan an event like this and include the local comics and comedy scene was something I have never seen in any city I have lived in. Lil Rhody Laugh Riot was a festival for the whole community that brought huge talent to Providence but provided a platform to elevate all of us who live here and produce comedy shows year-round in the city. The way all the business collaborated and the buzz around the city and region was incredible. Lil Rhody Laugh Riot was an incredible idea and we cannot wait to continue to be a part of it for years to come."

Providence Comedy Underground also reported a major surge in business.

All five of their shows during the festival weekend sold out, and the organization reported that their revenue doubled compared to a typical weekend. The increased demand enabled them to hire two additional local comedians to perform at each show, directly supporting Rhode Island's creative workforce.

The festival extended its reach beyond the stage. 2 food truck events with PVD Food Truck Events drove significant early-season revenue for local vendors.

"The LRLR was a catalyst for getting the food truck event season started 3 weeks earlier than normal," said Eric Weiner, founder of PVD Food Truck Events. *"In its first year it had a massive impact for over 18 businesses that we worked with. It can only grow and improve. This could be the beginning of a flagship event weekend in Providence."*

Other tourism partners also experienced increased demand. Providence Comedy Bus Tours, which typically operate two Saturday tours, expanded to five tours on the Saturday of the festival to meet the spike in interest from both locals and visitors.

Small businesses across a variety of sectors benefited.

Kent Stetson, a Pawtucket-based handbag designer, was commissioned to create custom bags for several featured comics.

"This festival was a great opportunity for me to deliver something personal to the celebrities and create more awareness for my business," Stetson said.



Melissa Guerra, from Aloft Providence Hotel, noted the success of the opening reception hosted at the property:

"The opening reception was a huge success. Many guests in attendance were local and did not even know that Blu Violet existed. It was great to mix and mingle and spread the word about all Aloft Providence has to offer. We also had lots of guests from out of town enjoying our food and beverage outlets before going to the shows."

Restaurants and bars downtown also reported strong business.

Ron Koller, owner of *The Malted Barley*, shared: *"This was a great event for the city and area businesses and should be done annually."*

With strong attendance, cross-sector collaboration, significant local spending, and broad regional excitement, *Lil Rhody Laugh Riot* has laid the groundwork to become a cornerstone of Providence's annual event calendar and a major cultural driver for Rhode Island.

Lil Rhody Laugh Riot returns to Providence March 26-29, 2026.

Follow Lil Rhody Laugh Riot on [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#).

Or online at www.LilRhodyLaughRiot.com

About Lil Rhody Laugh Riot

Lil Rhody Laugh Riot is Rhode Island's premier comedy festival, delivering big laughs to the smallest state. Presented by the Veterans Memorial Auditorium (The VETS), the Providence Performing Arts Center (PPAC), and Professional Facilities Management (PFM), this four-day celebration highlights comedy in all its forms. Anchored at The VETS and extending to satellite venues including the Providence Performing Arts Center and RI Comedy Connection, Lil Rhody Laugh Riot offers expertly crafted humor, sharp wit, and a dose of self-deprecating charm for every comedy enthusiast. From stand-up to improv and everything in between, this festival promises unforgettable entertainment and a true riot of laughter in the heart of Providence.

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