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MELA PROGRAMME

Family Festival

Described as a glittering mix of live music, dance, arts, culture, fashion and food, the unique outdoor spectacular South Asian arts & Indian cultural festival is the longest running of its kind. The programmes of activities have always been innovative, diverse and challenging, attracting multicultural audiences in Leicester and beyond. There are a vast number of free activities from participatory arts workshops, exhibitions, community performances and prestigious celebrity acts. The festival provides a stage for individuals and groups from different communities to engage in free activities, promoting community cohesion and celebrating the best of Indian culture.

Street Processions

Leicester City Council in partnership with Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre staged the 'Belgrave Carnival' – a fete celebrating cultures and communities. In its first year it saw a 10ft tall Red Elephant, which was the main attraction in a procession that went through the local streets with over 300 people enjoying the atmosphere and wonder of the event. By 1990, the famous road procession had become an intrinsic part of the build up to the Mela. Belgrave Road would be closed for schools, youth and community groups on their decorated trucks and lorries to parade up and down the golden mile, showcasing a variety of themes and costumes.

A festival of fashion

From shoulder pads and perms, to floral sarees and platform shoes, fashion is the thing that is most evident from how styles and trends have changed over the last thirty years. The Mela fashion show has always been a festival highlight and has always featured models, choreographers and designers from the heart of Belgrave.

World Record

At the turn of the Millennium a combination of arts organisations, artists and volunteers came together to design and create the largest Rangoli pattern ever created, at that time. The incredible pattern measured 40ft x 40ft and used traditional designs and symbols. It was created in a large marquee in Abbey Park and visitors to the Mela were able to enjoy the colourful masterpiece.

A platform for local talent

The Leicester Belgrave Mela has always provided a platform for the community to showcase their skills in front of large crowds and TV cameras, not to mention all their friends and family. Many local groups, such as Nilama Devi, Nupar Arts and Desi Masti, have used the Mela to help their students get live performance experience and perform pieces of work they have spent a whole year preparing.

Famous faces

The Leicester Belgrave Mela was the first event of its kind to use big name stars as a way to draw in the crowds. The festival has always attracted the biggest names in Asian entertainment. The performance stage has featured a huge host of internationally recognised artists over the years, including Sonu Nigam, Raghav, Navin Kundra, Preeya Kalidas, H Dhami, Punjabi Hit Squad to name but a few.

Mela Bazaar

Food, jewelry and clothes have always been popular stalls at the festival and in the early days it was a unique opportunity to access traditional Indian retail. Over the years the stalls have grown and more businesses have attended from across the UK. Eventually named the 'Mela Bazaar' it continues to host a mix of fashion, jewelry, arts, crafts and toys. Plus information stands, charity stalls and a huge variety of tantalising snacks, delicious drinks, mouth-watering curries, tasty tiffins and succulent sweets from across the subcontinent.