

PRESS RELEASE

Monday 27 April 09
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New Art Exchange and Nottingham Asian Arts Council

Present



Nottingham Mela 2009

Date: Sunday 7 June 2009

Venue: Old Market Square, Royal Centre and New Art Exchange

Times: 1pm - 7pm

Admission: Free

The Nottingham Mela returns for a very special event in its 21st year since launch, with celebrations set to take place on Sunday 7th June 2009 at Old Market Square.

The Mela scene started off in Nottingham and Bradford over two decades back, and has since enjoyed huge success all over the UK. This year we bring it back to where it all started - Nottingham, for a very special gathering to celebrate 21 years of Mela in the UK.

There will be two stages for Mela 21 in Nottingham city centre, with performances taking place in both Old Market Square and the Royal Centre highlighting the best of local talent from Nottinghamshire, as well as activities at the New Art Exchange in Hyson Green. The site in Old Market Square will also host many speciality stalls selling Asian arts, textiles, music and freshly prepared Indian food.

Mela is a Sanskrit word meaning 'gathering', 'to meet' or a Fair. This year's Mela in Nottingham has a great line up led by iconic Bhangra superstar **Jazzy B**, South Asian dance impresario's **Akademi** with their latest production - *Initium*, Ghazal legend **Najma Akhtar**, and all the way from India, Gujarati folk dancers **Vasuki Sanskrutik**.

There will also be numerous activities in the lead up to the event. In the days leading up to Mela, local community and youth groups will be producing site specific decor for Mela 21, showcasing their creative work on 7th June.

A Brief History - 21 years of the Mela...

The aim of the first ever outdoor *Festival of Asian Arts & Music* in 1988 was to provide the public with an event which would go a long way to satisfy the artistic and cultural needs of a diverse Asian community, whilst at the same time providing opportunity for the wider community to enjoy the rich cultural traditions of the Indian Subcontinent.

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The festival aimed to increase the general awareness about Asian music within the UK and thus it was felt that Melton Medes could benefit. In the longer term, the aim of the festival has been to provide the public with an Asian event with the equivalent artistic content of the Edinburgh Festival, whilst having the carnival atmosphere of the Notting Hill Carnival.

The formative years' festivals were two-day events which attracted national and international media attention. Links with activities and events on the European continent were also established, especially within the world music scene. For example, thanks to the first festival, Bhangra band "Pardesi" performed on the continent at huge events such as "Le Printemps de Bourges" (France) and in 1990 at the "Roma-Europa" concert (Italy); and had a video made about them by "Suisse Romand Couleur 3" national TV.

For the fourth annual festival a new environment was chosen to play host to the event - the Victoria Embankment. By this time the educational aspect of the festival was very strong, and growing. In addition to workshops in Sitar and Asian dance, traditional craftwork, mehndi, painting, sculpture and storytelling were some of the activities taking place.

APNA Arts continued to move forward in the 90s with more determination. The annual festival grew from strength to strength on various aspects, including a greater emphasis on visual arts, addressing environment issues and heritage. In later years the emphasis and focus of the festival has changed, looking closer at developing younger people, as well as nurturing the creative arts in an all-inclusive manner.

Britain's premier Mela festival has consistently showcased live performances by national and international artists including the likes of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Nitin Sawhney, Anup Jalota, Najma Akhtar, Baluji Shrivastav, Aziz Mian Qawwaal, Alaap, DCS, Apna Sangeet, Golden Star and Apache Indian amongst others. The best in performances from the diverse artistic cultures of South Asia such as Bhangra, Ghazal, Qawwali, classical & folk dance and theatre.

In recent years it has condensed from a two-day festival to a one day event, but the thoughts and spirit behind Mela remain the same, that of creativity, music, respect, and celebration in diversity.

Mela 21

Nottingham Mela has continually brought together young South Asian artists and visitors from around the country in an environment of creativity, tolerance and respect. The event has always provided a unique opportunity to experience and partake in a weekend of live performances, interactive workshops and something slightly different.

Mela 21 will showcase the best of Pop, R'n'B, Bollywood, Bhangra, Dance, Qawwali and Fusion, and will be revealed shortly through the events' website: www.mela21.com. It's going to be fun, fabulous, and best of all free! So please join us on Sunday 7th June, or if you would like to get involved in any of the activities in the lead upto Mela, please contact us on mela21@thenewartexchange.org.uk.

- Ends -

For further press information please contact - Raam Tarat, *Marketing and Communications Manager* ,

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Notes to Editors

Event

- **Date:** Sunday 7th June 2009
- **Event times:** 12pm - 7pm
- **Venues:** Old Market Square, Royal Centre and New Art Exchange
- Admission to Mela 21, and related arts / dance / community workshops are FREE
- This event has been co-produced by New Art Exchange and Nottingham Asian Arts Council, with funding support from Arts Council England and Nottingham City Council.
- BBC Asian Network will be co-hosting Mela 21, and are official media partners for the event
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Educational / Community workshops

- In support of these events we are working closely with local education and artistic practitioners, presenting a creative arts programme based around the residual themes of NAE's *An(other) Story* and Mela 21
- There will also be physical / dance-based workshops courtesy the Shree Vasuki Sanskrutik Group (India)
- For further information on these workshops and the NAE educational programme, please contact Indy Hunjan on education@thenewartexchange.org.uk or 0115 924 8630.

New Art Exchange

- **New Art Exchange was awarded £5million** of funding from Arts Council England, Nottingham City Council, the Greater Nottingham Partnership, East Midlands Development Agency, Radford and Hyson Green New Deal for Communities, and European Regional Development Funding, and took 18 months to build. The organisation was a big winner in Arts Council England's the January 2008 review of national arts funding gaining a 58% increase in its annual funding grant. The award was made in recognition of the organisation's vital role in supporting visual and performing arts.
- **Mission:** The New Art Exchange's ambition is to become a national centre of excellence promoting contemporary arts development within the cultural and creative industries, to deliver an innovative and exciting programme of activity to promote, support and advocate contemporary multi-cultural arts development in visual and performing arts and new media. To be a cultural centre led by African, African Caribbean and South Asian arts practice. To serve an international community from roots firmly embedded in the local area.

Nottingham Asian Arts Council

- Nottingham Asian Arts Council (NAAC) is a non-for-profit organisation which is dedicated to the promotion of South Asian Arts within the Nottinghamshire region. It is a voluntary organisation formed in October 1986 with the specific aim of promoting South Asian Arts in Nottinghamshire. NAAC began its work directly in Nottingham City with members of the resident Indian sub-continent communities, but later broadened out across the various boroughs of Nottingham. NAAC now works across the

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County, whilst also developing contacts nationally and internationally to support cultural activities and artists.

- NAAC is funded through a grant received from the Nottingham City Council and the East Midlands Arts Council. Various other grants are secured to deliver specific projects.
- The organisation has been instrumental in encouraging the promotion of cultural diversity through the education of the public in all areas of Asian Arts and culture. NAAC has successfully started up classes and workshops in Asian music and dance via liaison with the Arts Council England East Midlands. It has also been behind the promotion of various local artists in the Nottingham area.