

Middlesbrough Mela

2019 Report

2019 was our 29th year of delivering Middlesbrough Mela, creating a high quality festival which invites audiences of all ages, backgrounds, cultures and beliefs to join to together and celebrate all the diversity and vibrancy within our communities.

We have been working hard to build a year round presence, working with artists and engaging communities in creating bespoke commissions designed to tell the story behind Mela, highlight what is important to our communities and to provide a mechanism for our communities to tell us about their aspirations and wishes for the future. Projects such as Routes to Roots Parade, The Wishing Tree and Journeys where just a couple of the bespoke projects delivered.

The main field consisted of the large stage, which once again brought a large and vibrant crowd to enjoy the diverse music and dance programme on offer.

We worked with a host of old and new partners, including Middlesbrough Council, Arts Council England, Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner, Enjoy Tees Valley, Unison Northern, W Crow and Sons, Great Places and Stronger Communities to help bring Middlesbrough Mela 2019 to life.

The Middlesbrough Mela committee would like to extend a huge thank you to all our supporters, stakeholders, audiences, visiting traders, artists and volunteers who joined us this year and on our journey to our Big 30 for 2020.

Regards,

Middlesbrough Mela committee

What happened in 2019

Routes to Roots Parade

In June, July and August 2019, Middlesbrough Mela undertook a creative gathering of all engagement partners and artists to shape the Routes to Roots project. Using the theme routes to routes, highlighted the various journeys our communities have taken, and using nature as a mechanism to tell that story a Middlesbrough Mela opening ceremony was created. Over 150 people from community groups, schools and various projects across Middlesbrough and the wider Tees Valley, worked with professional carnival artists, musicians and choreographers over the three month period to devise and produce creative content for the parade via free workshops. A number of creative structures were commissioned for the parade and the wider event along with a number of professional performers such as Circus Raj and the Rajasthan Heritage Brass Band.

The workshop attendees, artists, commissions and professional acts formed The Routes to Routes Parade on August 17th. This Parade became the official opening programme for the Middlesbrough Mela. Some of our bespoke creations also joined the Sif Parade in Stockton to further promote the creative messages of Middlesbrough Mela.



The Wishing Tree

The Wishing Tree aimed to encourage audiences to share their hopes, dreams and aspirations for Middlesbrough Mela and their cultural lives in Tees Valley. The Wishing Tree project was a collaboration between visual and performance art. Working with local artist Greener Lavelle, The Wishing Tree was created, providing a

visual mechanism to collect and showcase the wishes of our audiences. Local performer/writer Uma Butt developed a series of stories and performance techniques to bring The Wishing Tree to life. Over the two day festival Uma undertook storytelling sessions, listening sessions with a finale that allowed all participants to submit their wish, hope or dream to the wishing tree. All those gifts to The Wishing Tree were showcased on its branches to help the tree bloom. It is envisioned that a creative piece will be created from the submissions in the 2020 Middlesbrough Mela.



The Mela Big Knit

The Mela Big Knit is a community project that has been in the making for over 18 months. Over 100 giant dream catchers have been created by individuals, schools and groups from across the whole of the Tees Valley. This project has represented the power of communities coming together. Each dream catcher is unique and completely individual to the maker, but by bringing all the dream catchers into one large arts installation it created one spectacular piece of art.



Journeys

Local Musician/song writer and community facilitator Sam Slatcher delivered a series of song writing workshops with participants from emerging communities of Middlesbrough. A bespoke song was created highlighting the individual journeys of participants and their life now in Middlesbrough. The choir performed their piece at the Middlesbrough Mela and parts of the song were also used in a visual and sound commission that was created just for Middlesbrough Mela. The visual commission was based upon a large scale laser cut piece that represented journeys. The interactive piece would play parts of the song as audiences walked by.



The Mela Arts Zone

The Mela Arts Zone was a hybrid of activity, welcoming an array of arts and cultural activity.

Working with artist Suzie Davey Two Tin Cans, a unique printing press made its way to Middlesbrough for the first time. Bespoke prints were created based upon the theme of journeys and wishes. Over 200 people engaged with the printing press over Middlesbrough Mela weekend.

Circus Raj, the grand Indian circus wowed the crowds with their legendary performance skills. Their breath-taking acts of aerialists, dancers, puppeteers and acrobats brought a colourful and vibrant addition to the Mela.

A variety of creative workshops took place with local professional artists and musicians including mask making, large scale colour art, dhol drumming, dancing and more. Over 1000 participants took part in the free workshops across the weekend.

Other activity in this zone included the famous Middlesbrough Mela walk about Characters – Melaphant, Disco The Peacock, The Travelling Wasp and the Mela Goddess. The walk about characters brought a vibrant and engaging element to the event, helping to spark audience's imagination and creativity.



The Mela Main Stage

The Main stage wowed the crowds with an eclectic mix of acts, which offered a vibrant celebration of world class music covering a rich mix of Hip Hop, Bhangra and traditional Asian sounds. Some of this year's highlights included Imran Khan, Jazzy J, The Jackal, Bhangra Smash up, Deesh Sandhu and Dance Bhangra. The stage also hosted an array of talented local community groups and emerging talent alongside Cbeebies star Mr Bloom.



The Mela Alternative Stage

This year saw the creation of the Middlesbrough Mela's Alternative Stage. The project was launched with the aim of creating a more diverse stage musically, opening up the organic Middlesbrough Mela audience to new cultural experiences as well as bringing a new crowd into the Mela. The concept is to present the best talent we have on offer locally in the Tees Valley and beyond.

All of the acts programmed brought a different element to the mix be in genre, musical styling or stage performance. The stage opened each day with a series of community performances showcasing some of the different communities and programs running across Middlesbrough. Working in collaboration with diverse communities, local performers were programmed who could enhance the stage with eclectic music stylings as well as gaining new experiences from being part of the Mela. VCMJ are a local church group with African roots, this was the first time many of them had attended the mela and the first time the Mela audience had been exposed to gospel music. The experience was thoroughly enjoyed by both.

As the day progressed more established musicians entertained the audiences. The crowds were exposed to a variety of musical stylings from folk to hard rock and a whole host of languages from Turkish to Spanish. Overall the stage was a huge success drawing in a millennial audience who upon discussion had originally only attended for the music, with many of them staying for the majority of the event.

The impact the stage had on the South Asian community was also a significant one as children were given the opportunity to explore different musical styling that they may never have been exposed to previously. Middlesbrough Mela saw young Asian boys dancing and air guitaring in front of the Alternative stage, Children on the spectrum getting lost in the music and people of a whole range of cultures, religions, ages and economic backgrounds enjoying music together.



The Bazaar and food court

With over 60 stalls featuring food from all over the world to a mix of fashion, jewellery, arts, crafts, toys and services. The Mela has always been a place a shopper's paradise and a great way to get a true taste of India in our famous Indian Bazaar.

The Fairground

From white knuckle rides to more laid back fairground classics, the fairground provided fun for all the family. This year's funfair has grown over recent years due to the festival moving back to the park. This has given the fair the opportunity to provide more exciting offers for our audiences

Economic impact

Middlesbrough Mela is proud to be able to make a positive impact on the economy. As one of the biggest diverse festivals in the North East, Middlesbrough Mela achieved an audience of 30,000 over the weekend.

Middlesbrough Mela employed 102 staff over the course of the festival and its development. This employment included artists, community facilitators, project managers, performers and crew covering a total of 273 days of employment combined.

52% of groups surveyed attending Middlesbrough Mela lived in Middlesbrough, 31.4% lived within the wider Tees Valley and 16.2% lived outside of the Tees Valley

Average spend per visitor was £14.77. Using the average recorded spend against our visitor numbers it can be estimated that Middlesbrough Mela generated an economic impact of £443,100

Middlesbrough Mela continue to attract loyal, repeat traders whilst also continuing to grow and develop relationships with new traders. Mela 2019 attracted 38% of new traders.

Volunteer and paid trainee opportunities

A total of 19 volunteers gave their time and support to Middlesbrough Mela. 11 volunteers make up the Mela committee who give their time all year round to help support the Middlesbrough Mela's development and delivery.

A further 8 volunteers worked throughout the festival assisting on a variety of roles including, zone management, photography, production, customer services and evaluation collection.

In partnership with creative factory we were able to offer a paid training/mentoring opportunity. We engaged local recent graduate Adele Catchpole to work with a variety of our professional community artists with the aim to develop her knowledge and working practice in community arts and carnival work for future creative practices within the Tees Valley.

Shouting about Mela

Middlesbrough Council currently provided Middlesbrough Mela with in kind support in the development and delivery of our marketing and PR campaign.

Middlesbrough Mela's marketing campaign was predominantly digital, focusing on tried and tested mechanisms. Working with Middlesbrough Council allowed the event to communicate via a variety of portals including Middlesbrough Mela, Love Middlesbrough and Middlesbrough Council social networks.

Middlesbrough Mela Socials

Facebook

- 3560 of our page fans are from the UK with 1919 from Middleborough with the majority from the Tees Valley.
- We have a decent international following with 70 active followers from Pakistan, 24 form India, 12 from the USA, 6 in Brazil and even 1 in Mozambique.
- Overall reach on facebook for the festival reached 182,818
- Total engagement reached 4112
- Event Responses totaled 6,500

Facebook responses

Christa Kamanga - *The wishing tree was amazing. We even went twice and I think we could have gone another dozen time and it would have been as special as the first.*

Rauf Abdul- *The multi cultural and family atmosphere. Kids loved Mr Bloom. We saw him at sirf, before he was famous. The event is much better at Albert Park because its spread out and we were able to stroll round at our leisure. Also, lots of variety. BTW, as one comment suggested you don't need more clothes stalls, or sales stalls. We didn't come to the Mela to buy stuff. Once festivals becoming merchandising opportunities, families stop coming. We came for a great day out, which we got. Keep doing what your doing.*

Melissa Firby- *Was amazing I go every year was lovely to see all cultures getting together*



Zafar Uddin- *This year it was noticed that less stalls in particular clothes stalls, only a few, there were lot less then previously.*

Another sad fact is that there was no Bengali Act this year, a lot of people from Bengali community expressed their great disappointment.

On Saturday it seemed busier than previous year but Sunday was very quiet compared to other years however still it was fantastic weekend out for the all walks of life. Weather was reasonably good which no one has control over, overall everything was good, certainly could have been better. Well done to organisers.

Good luck for the next year for 30 years Celebrations

Thank you everyone.

Mike Crooks *Went along today, and it was Brilliant. It felt a lot bigger than previous years.Oh and our dinner was amazing*

Carrol Dickinson *-The Parade, Jazzy J, Food, what an amazing day. I loved it all will be back tomorrow for round 2 In Sha Allah n so pleased it stayed dry....*

Twitter

- Total impressions 9205
- Total Engagements 352

Instagram

- Posts seen 5262
- Total Reach Saturday 3490
- Total Reach Sunday 2698

Broadcast media coverage

- BBC Tees
- ITV Tyne Tees
- BBC Look North
- CVM radio

Press and on- media coverage

- Evening Gazette
- Northern Echo
- The Primary Times
- Independent Teesside
- Enjoy Tees Valley
- The National Mela Partnership
- UK 44
- NE Volume

We have a loyal visitor audience from Middlesbrough but Mela extends its reach regionally and nationally too! Via Survey results:

56.2% word of mouth/Repeat Visitor

19.1%	Social Media
6.7%	posters/Adshells
5.7%	trading/performed
5.6 %	through Volunteers
1.1%	Arts Council

We were thrilled that so many of our audiences loved their time at Middlesbrough Mela, of those surveyed this is what people said they enjoyed the most:

23.6%	Food
18.9%	Arts and participation activity
14.9%	Music
8.7%	Culture/diversity
7.8%	Meeting People
7.8%	general atmosphere of the event
7.4%	Parade
3.9%	Stalls
3.9%	Fair

End of year accounts

Income

Sponsorship	£10,000
Funding	£42,115
Advertising	£600
Stalls (Including catering)	£25,450
Hires	£200
Inflatables and fairground	£8500
Total Income	£86,865

Expenditure

Main Stage artists	£19,400
Artistic/performers/engagement	£24,709.78
Staff	£7595
Operations and production	£31,981
Marketing and PR	£3150
Total Expenditure	£86,835.78

In Kind Support **£30,000**
(MBC staff contribution)

2020 and beyond

Middlesbrough Mela strive to increase their programming of cultural, diverse and exciting work, pushing the boundaries of traditional Mela's and previous offerings.

Whilst appreciating the work that has been achieved historically, each year the Mela has slowly but surely increased in programme offer and quality.

Whilst continuing to be one of the largest diverse festival in the North East we have the vision and impetus to continue to grow and develop and to become more strategically significant both regionally and nationally.

2020 sees Middlesbrough Mela's 30th Birthday and we want to celebrate in style!

We will be working hard to build new relationships both regionally, nationally and internationally to share our commitment in developing high quality, diverse arts for our vibrant communities.