

FESTIVAL DIRECTORS REPORT

Overview

The 2008 Surry Hills Festival was a huge success, with an estimated crowd of 100,000 festival goers enjoying a perfect sunny autumn day. It was extremely encouraging to see the vast number of well behaved people attending the festival this year and the local community's endorsement of the festival.

City of Sydney council staff were extremely helpful in the planning and negotiations leading up to the festival. Particular mention should be made of the support received from Jennie Trinca, Cultural Development Coordinator. The City of Sydney committed \$20,000 to the festival, \$15,000 for general grant and a further \$5,000 to cover waste management for Prince Alfred Park. Jennie Trinca provided a great advocacy role for the Neighbourhood Centre in all areas related to the City of Sydney, and in particular the recurring issue of Waste Management.

Festival Site

Following feedback from 2007 the Park was redesigned to maximise stallholder trading, flow of pedestrian traffic and stage volumes. Feedback from stallholders reported an increase in trade and fewer bottlenecks as a result.

Stalls

In excess of 240 market stalls and promotional sites were placed on the festival site, this was slightly short of the projected target for the 2008 festival and primarily due to the reluctance of 2007 stallholders to commit to a stall site so soon after the 2007 festival. Anecdotal feedback from the 2008 stallholders has been excellent, with numbers of stallholders reporting an excellent trading day. It is anticipated that a strong repeat rate from 2008 stallholders will be achieved, and that the 2009 stallholder income budget will be met.

Sponsorship

A newly developed sponsorship package was circulated to approximately 40 potential sponsors, however the majority of cash sponsors from 2007 declined to return, mostly sighting the date of the 2008 festival as too close to the previous festival. It was encouraging to see the return of all of the 2007 in kind sponsors, and to secure several new in kind sponsorships.

Entertainment

The festival entertainment was of a high caliber, programmed across 8 performance areas & stages. All performers on the main entertainment stages donated their time and provided an eclectic range of entertainment, which attracted a very broad demographic on the day. Numbers of other local performers, dance schools and community groups also provided entertainment throughout the day, both on the Rainbow Stage (family entertainment) and as roving performers throughout the park.

Performers on the children's stage were excellent with the majority donating their time, although fees were paid to an Indigenous Storyteller who also performed the Welcome to Country.

Dog Show

This year's Dog Show Off proved as popular as previous years and was sponsored by Lucianna O'Callaghan from Sassy Treats, who once again provided prizes, MC, designed the categories, etc. Luciana was able to present a \$320 donation to the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre as a result of registrations and bucket collection at the Dog Show.

Media & Promotion

Media and promotions required a focused effort for the 2008 festival, due to the festival re-occurring within 7 months of the previous festival. A comprehensive campaign was embarked upon, to educate the public that the festival was re-occurring early in the calendar. This campaign included the same focuses as 2007, with the introduction of several new grass roots promotional elements and social networking sites.

Volunteers:

The festival experienced extraordinary support by volunteers this year with 160 volunteer applications accepted, the majority coming from event management courses across the city.

Volunteers thoroughly enjoyed the festival and a high percentage indicated a willingness to be involved in future Surry Hills Festivals.

Production:

The production costs for the 2008 festival increased significantly, with the decision to fence Prince Alfred Park, and the need to increase security to support the vast crowd of 100,000. Waste Management expenses were also higher, due to the increased charges from the City of Sydney. These production costs will remain at a higher level at future festivals, due to the fact that the festival is now established as an extremely large inner city event, which necessitates a higher production budget.

Conclusion:

As forecast, the festival will return a slightly lower profit than 2007. The primary contributing factors to this are connected with the date of the festival and its proximity to the 2007 festival, which had a substantial effect on returning sponsors and increase in production costs.

We would like to thank the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre Management Committee for the opportunity to direct the 2008 festival.

The festival was clearly a success on so many fronts – an excellent standard of entertainment, record crowd numbers, perfect weather, a great trading day for the majority of the 250 stallholders and once again a sense of genuine community celebration.

It is impossible to mention the above successes, without mentioning the investment from a fantastic festival team, and other supporters and contributors to the festival. The list of thank you's is too long to document, however special thanks are due to: Kate Melhopt, Naomi Archibald, James Deighton, Hadas Benjamin, Grace Brayshaw, Natalie Hochbaum, Christoph Dwertmann, Jenny Larsson, Veniece Tse, Amber Jones, Les Honey, Mel Perry, Zeynep Yapar, Mike Salon, John Ferguson, Daniel Byrne, Tracey Byrne, Amber Morrissey and many others.

Cathy Wills & Sue Andersen
Festival Directors 2008
Surry Hills Festival