

the LESBIAN & GAY
MARDIGRAS
Community
Report November 1999

PledgeBand Sales Fail to meet Fundraising Target

In 1999 the total income from PledgeBand sales failed to reach the level needed to generate money for the Community Fund. In 1998 each PledgeBand purchased at £5 guaranteed £2.50 to be given over to the 'Good Causes Fund'. This generated over £131,000 - a record achievement. The effect of this was to leave the organisation with virtually no start-up money for organising Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras 1999. Consequently this year's event need to raise even more just to stand still. More money was also needed to pay for the things that lesbians and gay men asked for when we consulted you.

A number of areas were identified, by the lesbian & gay community, as important for more spending:

- Safety and Security measures
- Better outlets for the PledgeBand
- An improved women's area
- More facilities for disabled people
- More toilets
- More BSL signers
- More cleaning and litter removal
- Better sound systems
- More exciting content
- More lesbians & gay men
- Bigger name artists
- Better Information

More than any other issue - Safety was the number 1 concern.
The Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras team agreed - and acted accordingly.

ValueJet Who's Checking-In?

Ensuring that crowd densities are kept at safe levels and providing evacuation routes for people might seem overly cautious at the heart of a great party like Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras ?

Event co-ordinator, Ian Wilmott is unapologetic about his team's role.

"Organising an event such as Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras is both a great privilege and responsibility. We are required by safety law as well as our own values to make sure that everybody attending stays safe and well. Our plans have to take account of a fire breaking out in one of the bars on Canal Street. Or possibly crowd trouble, hooliganism or terrorist threat. A bomb exploded in a Soho gay bar killing three people just months ago. These are very real possibilities that we have to take account of. Can you imagine the panic and crushing if that type of situation occurred as people tried to flee into an area already jam packed with people ? Running Mardi Gras is a bit like running an airline, the passengers hopefully get on board confident that all reasonable safety measures have been taken, our role is to rehearse the unthinkable and plan it out of the system". I have both a moral and legal responsibility to act in a way that does not put other peoples lives in danger".

Safety Was Identified as the #1 Priority

Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras organisers faced a dilemma in 1999. What was more important - safety or fund-raising ? Having listened to you we did everything we could to make Mardi Gras more safe. This was the number 1 priority for the organising team.

As Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras has grown year on year, more and more people are trying to get into the small space that the village area provides. The event might be getting more popular but the village can't stretch to accommodate the growing numbers of revellers. Managing large crowds of people presents a nightmare for organisers of any public event such as Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras. The event is now so huge and second only to London's Notting Hill Carnival in terms of numbers at a street-based festival.

We all witnessed the horror of Hillsborough when by just the force of crowd numbers 92 people were crushed to death. In that situation people weren't rioting or fighting, there was no loss of order or proper conduct. Large crowds have a life of their own and if too many people try to squeeze into too small a space - that's when tragedy occurs.

In 1999 a number of new measures were introduced to deal with concerns about growing crowd numbers; escape routes and access for the emergency services were built into the planning of the event, areas were cordoned off to allow escape and evacuation in the event of fire or crowd trouble and a gated valve system was introduced where certain routes into and out of the village were controlled by professional stewards.

Despite these positive measures the organisers, police and City Council continue to have significant concerns about safety.

How Safe can Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras be in the Future ?

Despite the huge increase in safety provisions and the involvement of record numbers of police, stewards and safety measures in 1999 - a lot more clearly needs to be done to guarantee safety. There was an undercurrent of violence and harassment, especially at night, that is just not acceptable. Lesbians and gay men are vulnerable all year round so not all of the issues are unique to Mardi Gras. They are however magnified and visitors who are not village street-wise seem particularly vulnerable. What kind of message will they take home about us ? Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras is a world-beating event - and one that Manchester and the lesbian & gay village should be proud of - but what might you feel about it if you get your head kicked-in by some 'brain-dead' on the way home. There continue to be elements attracted to Mardi Gras, especially at night, that are ruining the atmosphere, causing mayhem and actual violence. The Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras organisers are clear that until this element can be barred physically from the village and denied access to alcohol the problems will continue. To achieve this will require the active co-operation of all village venues, the police and magistrates bench to name just some.

PledgeBand Sales Numbers Down in 1999

Fewer PledgeBands were purchased at Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras 1999 than the year before.

Numbers were down at least 6,000 as sales fell from over 51,000 in 1998 to 45,000 this year. Income from PledgeBands was higher at £384,000 this year compared with £214,000 in 1998 because the PledgeBand price increased. Additional income from the price increase was partly offset by the introduction of an early purchase discount of £8 and a concession rate of £5.

City Centre Parade - Best Ever

This year's Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras City Centre Parade was the best ever. There were greater numbers of floats than ever before and the standards of entries just get better year on year. The estimates for spectators on the city's streets were a staggering 600,000 plus. Parts of the city were completely blocked for hours before as people jostled to get a good vantage point. City centre shops reported their best ever Saturday trading outside of a Christmas period. All of this demonstrates that Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras - Manchester is now firmly in the 'world top ten' of street carnival events attracting huge numbers and crowds.

PledgeBand Income Up in 1999

Thanks to all of you who bought PledgeBands. Our income from these, after tax, was £384,000 this year, compared to £214,000 in 1998.

That's a big increase. In one sense its a great success because it enabled us to organise a quality event which so many people enjoyed. But good facilities cost a lot. If Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras relied solely on PledgeBand income to stage the event there would have been a £120,000 shortfall in 1999. We raise other income from contributions from the city centre businesses, concessions and sponsorship and these made up the difference.

What Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras Cost to Organise in 1999

In 1999, Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras cost over £450,000 to stage and manage. To put this into some context, London Mardi Gras cost over £1.2 M to stage a 1 day event in a park. **Big events are expensive!**

Where we spent some of the money in 1999:

Area of Spending	Amount
Aids Memorial Quilt Exhibition	£ 2,500
Artists and performers	£25,000
Big Screen Video	£21,000
City Centre Parade	£ 6,000
Cleaning / Refuse removal	£12,000
Fireworks	£12,000
First Aid / Ambulance Stations	£16,000
Insurance	£ 7,000
Memorial Vigil - Castlefield	£ 5,000
PledgeBands (to make and package them)	£38,000
Press Advertising, publicity, flyers	£35,000
Programmes, 60,000	£30,000
Security / Stewards	£63,000
Sign Language / Disability Provision	£ 4,000
Site costs, fencing, toilets and marquees	£60,000
Stages, generators and sound systems	£27,000
VAT (paid to the government)	£70,000
Women's Area	£ 6,000
Total	£439,500

Manchester Lines Up Top Talent in 1999

The line up of artists and celebrities at Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras 1999 has puzzled some music industry insiders. London Mardi Gras paid Harvey Goldsmith over £120,000 for an artist line-up to attract thousands. Manchester pulled off a rival feat for less than a fifth of this sum. Artists such as Westlife, Gary Barlow, Dina Carroll, A1 and the Brand New Heavies were just some of those featured on this year's main stage. In total over 16 hours of music, performance and dance were programmed in conjunction with Key 103 to give Manchester its biggest ever line-up. Even more bizarre when you consider this credible list was supplemented by the likes of Margarita Pracatan and the Beverley Sisters!

PledgeBand Cheats - Do you Know Any ?

During Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras 1999 there were more controls on entry to the village area than ever before. These were tightened over the weekend to deal with increasing numbers of crowds who were descending on the village to cause trouble. People were asked to show PledgeBands as a basis of demonstrating their support and attendance for the event. Without special laws it is not possible to keep people who want to enter out - whether they have bought a PledgeBand or not. Our estimates show that over 24,000 people entered the village area without PledgeBands on Sunday and Monday even when controls were tightest.

More importantly the fund-raising aims of Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras have been thwarted by people who have nominated *themselves* as this year's Good Cause. Estimated income lost to PledgeBand cheats in 1999 - £240,000.

The Cheats Top Tricks in 1999

'The Group Purchase'

People came in groups and bought 1 PledgeBand between them - one individual person would be sent into the bars to buy drinks for all !

'The Fence'

Buy 1 PledgeBand and then pass it back through the fence to friends to reuse.

'Split the Difference'

PledgeBands were cut in two so that when flashed at door staff - two people could gain entry using one half of a band each.

'The Brass Neck'

Demand your right to enter the village and then drink at venues that don't bother to check if you've bought one.

'The Craned Neck'

Bring your own booze and watch the mainstage acts from the NCP Car Park.

Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras Top for Tourism

Manchester's Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras is now the UK's top lesbian & gay tourist event. The British Tourist Authority have been marketing 'gay tourism' in both the USA and Germany. Manchester and Brighton are emerging as the 'hot' destinations to rival the traditional London-based holiday. Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras / Manchester has emerged as the 'Jewel in the UK's Gay Tourism Crown'.

It has been estimated that Manchester's Mardi Gras gives the city's economy an £20M boost. That means more jobs for local people and adds to the city's reputation as a dynamic and colourful place to live and work.

Where the Money Comes From

Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras has no money of its own. Every penny of income is generated by working with sponsors, supporters and businesses to convince them of the benefits of staging the event. In 1998 the organisers started with a blank piece of paper and managed to generate £425,000 of income. £131,000 of this was paid out to HIV / AIDS and Lesbian & Gay Community Initiatives. The remaining £290,000 was spent on organising the event. This left a tiny reserve to start the process in 1999.

Income came from a number of sources in 1999, some examples are as follows:

Income Source	Amount
Village Business Pledges	£ 39,000
PledgeBand Income	£ 384,000
Sponsorship / Concessions	£ 69,000
Total	£492,000

How does £10 become £7.33 ?

You may pay £10 for your PledgeBands, however the organisers end up with only £7.33 of that cash to invest.

Item	Cost
Purchase Cost	£10.00
VAT	£1.49
Band Production (each)	£0.57
Packaging / Distribution (each)	£0.28
Security Measures / Stock Control (each)	£0.33
Total	£2.67
Real Income from 1 PledgeBand	£7.33

How many PledgeBands does it take to pay for things if you look at it in this way ?

Expenditure Item	No of PledgeBands to pay for it
First Aid	2,200
Security Staff / Stewards	8,600
Site Costs / Fencing / Marquees	8,200
Insurance	1,000
Stages / Generators	3,700
Big Screen Video	2,800
Cleaning Bill	1,500
Total	28,000

Mardi Gras Accounts Available

Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras operates as a company, called **Mardi Gras 98 Ltd** (because that was the year it was established). It is obliged by law to conduct itself in a proper way and has to post annual audited accounts for public scrutiny like all other businesses. Additional safeguards are built in as all financial matters are dealt with by **Manchester City Council's Treasurer's Department**. Accounts can be viewed, by appointment, by contacting the **Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras Office**.

Write to:

Accounts Section
Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras
PO Box 532
Manchester M60 2LA

Councillor Pat Karney, who is the Chair of the board of Directors has promised openness and accountability in all financial matters.

Some Facts About the Finances

- None of the directors receive a single penny for their contribution to running the event and being prepared to act as Directors for the company. They give their time and assume liabilities for free.
- Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras is run as a 'not for profit company'. This is built into its articles of association (the rules that it operates by). Profits, when they are generated by the company, are distributed to community causes.

• Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras does not get grants from Manchester City Council, Health Authorities or the Lottery. Its only income relates to PledgeBand sales, sponsorship and trading activity over the Mardi Gras weekend.

• The team of staff who bring you Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras are mostly unpaid volunteers or specialists who work for short periods. There is one overall co-ordinator who is contracted to bring all of this team together. Sydney Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras employs over 12 year-round staff, San Francisco 10 and London 6.

It's Your Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras

You may have heard rumours that Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras is moving out of the village in 2000. Depending on who you listen to, suggestions are as diverse as a park in south Manchester, a park in north Manchester, Hulme, Castlefield Basin or Tatton Park (!). There are **NO** plans whatsoever in regard to any of these locations.

Making Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras a safe and secure event requires many considerations. Similarly what priority should be given to fund-raising and how realistic are these aims in 2000? Some people want a smaller community-based event, others feel that it is inevitable that as Mardi Gras grows numbers attending will increase and we can't turn the clock back to 1994.

Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras has a track record of community involvement and input. Over 250 volunteers were involved in staging the event in 1999, over 17,000 visited the website or sent e-mail, over 600 people attended the various consultation meetings held over the winter and spring, more than 100 people left messages on a dedicated opinion-line that we operated.

Before any major changes are put in place about Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras 2000 - **you will have a chance to have your say**. We can only organise a successful event if it is in line with **your** wishes.

As last year, we are already starting to gather views on what kind of Mardi Gras you would like to see. One way you can help us is to send in the tear-off strip below:

Should Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras

Stay largely as it is now YES / NO

Change radically YES / NO

If you think it needs to change, what changes would you make ?

Which aspects of Mardi Gras do you like most ?

Which aspects of Mardi Gras do you like least ?

What other comments do you have ?

Send to:

Manchester Lesbian & Gay Mardi Gras, PO Box 532, Manchester Town Hall, Manchester M60 2LA
or e-mail us at feedback@mardigras.org.uk