



21 Top Musical Acts

Bradford Mela has hosted scores of high quality musical acts from many different musical traditions in the past 21 years, here are just a few...

1. Apache Indian (2003)

Apache Indian introduced the new hybrid sound of 'bhangamuffin', merging reggae with Indian music, singing in Jamaican patois with Punjabi phrases. His hits include 'Arranged Marriage', 'Chock There' and party anthem 'Boom Shack-A-Lack', which has been used in countless TV commercials and movies worldwide.

2. Fun Da Mental (2000)

Led by local boy Aki Nawaz (a.k.a. 'Propa-Gandhi') this controversial band mixes hip hop with Eastern and Western musical influences, and their often extreme lyrics speak out against social injustice, religious persecution and racism. Their performance at Bradford Mela also featured guest artiste, the legendary Qawwali singer Aziz Mian.

3. Malkit Singh (1995 and 2003)

Known as 'the golden voice of bhangra' and 'king of Punjabi folk music', Malkit Singh has appeared twice at Bradford Mela (on the first occasion with his band Golden Star). Malkit is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the biggest selling bhangra, and was awarded the MBE in the Queen's 2008 New Year Honours list for services to Punjabi music.

4. Talvin Singh (2005)

Famous for his tabla playing in support of such artists as Madonna and Bjork, Talvin Singh was responsible for creating a fusion of classical Indian music with drum and bass in the late 1990's. Talvin went on to win the prestigious Mercury Music Prize for his album 'OK'.

5. Tom Robinson (1994)

Tom Robinson rose to fame with the punk explosion of the 1970's, with his hit '2-4-6-8 Motorway', but became better known for his overtly political stance, supporting Rock Against Racism, Amnesty International and gay rights. Since his last big hit, 'War Baby', Tom is better known as a radio presenter for the BBC.

6. Alaap (1998)

One of the pioneers of British bhangra in the 1980's, Alaap were known for their exhilarating live performances and driving rhythms. Charismatic singer Channi Singh (who famously wears a white scarf on stage) was followed onto the Bradford Mela stage 10 years later by his daughter Mona Singh who performed in Bradford in 2008.

7. The Sahotas (1991 & 2000)

The first 'boy band' in bhangra was made up of five brothers from Wolverhampton. Their music is a fusion of reggae, rock, dance and Punjabi music and they reached a wide audience supporting reggae band 'Aswad' on their UK tour. Their music has increasingly crossed over into mainstream pop, with many of their lyrics sung in English.

8. Jazzy B (1997, 1999 & 2004)

Hailing from Canada, this transatlantic superstar was among the first to incorporate hip-hop into the traditional Punjabi beat. His hit 'Romeo' introduced hip-hop imagery into his videos and subsequent stage performance, and he rapidly became one of the best selling bhangra artists in the world.

9. Lemar (2003)

British soul and r&b singer Lemar was brought to public attention on the BBC's 'Fame Academy' in 2002. He appeared at Bradford Mela the following year, and has gone on to win two BRIT and two MOBO awards in successive years. He has gone on to incredible commercial success whilst maintaining his credibility as one of the top UK vocalists.

10. Jah Wobble (1995 & 2008)

Originally known as the bass guitarist for Johnny Rotten's 'Public Image Limited', Jah Wobble's varied musical interests have led on to a successful solo career. He has formed a series of critically acclaimed collaborations with a variety of musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds, creating a unique style which includes ambient, dance and world music.

11. Sabri Brothers (1991 & 1994)

One of the foremost exponents of Qawwali and the first group of its kind to perform in the West, the Sabri Brothers were known for their highly spiritual performances. They were noted for the contrast between the deep and powerful voice of Gulam Farid, and the light and melodious voice of Maqbool Ahmed Sabri. Sadly Gulam Farid had passed away before the group's second appearance at Bradford Mela.

12. Najma Akhtar (1998 & 2006)

Najma is a British singer trained in Indian classical music, who has created a distinctive style - singing ghazals (poetic Indian love songs) accompanied by a graceful fusion of jazz instrumentation with traditional tabla and Indian rhythms and melodies. Najma has collaborated with some of the world's most influential and credible musicians including Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, Apache Indian and Nina Simone.

13 Black Umfolosi (1999 & 2002)

This internationally acclaimed group from Zimbabwe are famed for their harmonic acapella singing and dance routines. Their dynamic live performances showcase traditional styles of the Southern African region, including the memorable 'gumboot' dance originating from the miners in South Africa.

14. Rishi Rich (2006)

This British Asian music producer is famed for fusing urban music and bhangra and has remixed tracks by Madonna and Britney Spears. His 'Rishi Rich Project' acts as a showcase for up and coming talent, and he is responsible for launching the careers of a number of artists who have also appeared at Bradford Mela, including Juggy D, Veronica, H Dhami and Mumzy.

15. RDB (2005)

Short for Rhythm, Dhol and Bass, RDB are three brothers from Bradford who produce, perform and DJ a blend of garage and r&b with bhangra and Bollywood music. They are recognised in the mainstream for their collaboration with American rapper Snoop Dog on the soundtrack to the movie 'Singh is Kinng', and their broadcasts on BBC Radio One and Galaxy radio.

16. Banco de Gaia (2005)

An underground electronic music band led by Toby Marks, who create 'ambient dub' music layering samples of Arabic and Middle eastern music over reggae, rock and trance rhythms.

17. Eliza Carthy (1998)

Leading light of the British folk scene, this Yorkshire born singer and fiddle player combines traditional with experimental arrangements. Twice nominated for a prestigious Nationwide Mercury Prize and the winner of more than five BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, she has revitalised and made folk music relevant to new audiences.

18. Reda Egyptian Folkloric Troup (1996)

Having toured over 60 countries and performed on the world's most prestigious stages the Reda folk dance troupe brought a flavour of Egypt to Bradford Mela with their exotic blend of authentic costumes, music, folk dance, acrobatics and the unforgettable 'Dancing horse' routine.

19. Anakhi (1992,1993 & 2001)

Bradford Mela claims some responsibility for launching the newly formed Anakhi bhangra group to the world. Legend has it that when the headline act failed to appear 1992, the group (who were attending the Mela as members of the public) saved the day by volunteering to go on stage. A successful recording and performing career followed and they were rewarded by being given the headline spot in their own right the following year.

20. Baluji Shrivastar (2008)

Baluji is one of the greatest sitar players in India with the ability to enthral an audience regardless of their level of understanding of the musical genre. He has performed alongside artists like Oasis, The Kaiser Chiefs and Kylie Minogue. This blind musician has a command of complex rhythms and his inexhaustible imagination which make every performance a unique and moving occasion.

21. Bhangra Latina (2008)

Combining elements of bhangra and Latin music, Bhangra Latina explores how composers and musicians from different traditions can work together and create new music, drawing on the genres of salsa and bhangra. Led by bhangra producer and percussionist Kuljit Bharna, Latin pianist Alex Wilson and multi award winning singer Sangeeta this new musical phenomenon was one of the highlights of last year's Bradford Mela.

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