



Touring

Planning your tour

There are a number of factors to consider when planning your tour. Crucially, you have to decide which carnivals you want to perform at – where they are, when they take place and, perhaps, why you choose one over another. New and emerging mas bands and carnival groups may find it harder to get bookings and receive performance fees as organisers tend to have limited funds to pay bands and are more likely to contract established bands that are known to produce quality work. So you'll have to think about your costs and whether it's worth touring whilst trying to build up your reputation.

The distance and overall time away from home are important factors to consider as this will have a cost implication on your budgets. For example, if you are travelling large distances you will need two coach drivers to transport your band to and from the carnival; your diesel costs will be higher and you may need to consider overnight accommodation if the distance is too far. The number of young people in your group may also be a deciding factor.

Getting bookings

Normally, carnival organisers will contact you directly to see if you would like to perform at their carnival. But this tends to only happen once you become known and established to organisers. It is important to develop a reputation for producing quality costumes and being a band that moves well on the road. This generates interest amongst carnival organisers as your name and reputation grows. Professionalism in the way you operate and an easy manner for doing business will also go some way to enhancing your reputation.

Other things to consider when promoting your work to organisers could involve setting up your own website with information and images about the band or group. You could produce publicity flyers and a well written letter of introduction which could be mailed to carnival organisers.

Having decided when and where you want to tour to you should just phone the carnival organiser to see if they're willing to incorporate your band in to their carnival procession. If the organiser wants to book you for their carnival then you will negotiate performance fees and/or expenses. If you are happy with the offer then the booking will be confirmed, usually in writing.



Once your carnival dates are confirmed you should receive a contract or a letter of agreement from the carnival organiser. You will then need to book transport to get to the carnival and equipment to enable you to perform. These will usually include booking a coach, a truck, your DJ, a PA system and a generator. Depending on how many bookings you have it is often more cost effective to book all of the dates in advance.

Another way to tour your band is to find other bands that are willing to let your band perform within their troupe as a separate section. This happens quite often at carnivals as it helps boost numbers on the road and creates a larger procession spectacle for organisers and their audiences.

Submitting your band's details to websites such as Carnivalnet (www.carnivalnet.org.uk) and Soca News (www.socanews.com) as well as developing your personal network of contacts, will raise awareness of your band amongst the carnival sector.

Where to tour?

The carnival season runs predominately from May to September, usually kicking-off with carnivals in Luton, Reading and Preston at the end of May and culminating with the Kendal Torchlight Carnival, Cumbria, in early September. In addition, notable outdoor carnivals and festivals such as Bridgwater and Canterbury takes place in the winter months providing opportunities for carnival bands to perform out of season.

Many councils and promoters have events beyond the carnival season. For example, there could be Christmas events which you could take part in, sometimes under cover in shopping centres, and these could bring in extra income for your carnival band.

Carnival tradition has a long history in the UK and there are many carnivals taking place across the country. Opportunities for carnival bands to perform are plentiful. Many cities and large towns have annual carnivals and festivals that include outdoor performance. Smaller towns will often have their own carnival, outdoor arts event or festival too.

The Carnivalnet website lists carnivals from across the UK and has contact details for most of the carnival organisers. Most carnivals are either run by local authorities or voluntary sector organisations.



The following websites provide contact details for carnival and festival organisers and the dates of events:

Carnivalnet - www.carnivalnet.org.uk

ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network) – www.streetartsnetwork.org.uk

BAFA (British Association of Arts Festivals) – www.artsfestivals.co.uk

Getting started as a new band

Most carnival bands will start-out by performing at their local carnival and local community events, such as fetes and school fayres. These provide good experience of what it's like getting costumes ready and preparing for the carnival procession. It will give you a feeling of what it is like to get a band on the road. If you can pull this off then there's no reason why you can't tour to other carnivals across the country too. It just takes hard work, money, good organisation and being aware of likely risks and complications.

The main concern for any band though, whether new or established, is that it stands or falls by the quality of the costumes presented at carnival and the spectacle and performance skills displayed by the troupe whilst on the road.