

BRITAIN

FOR LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

Culture Focus

Notting Hill Carnival

Each August Bank Holiday since 1966 the Notting Hill Carnival has taken place in the streets of Notting Hill, London. It is the second largest street festival in the world and is led by the British African-Caribbean community. Essentially a Caribbean festival, its roots lie in Trinidadian steel band processions, the festival has become more and more a celebration of cultural diversity and social solidarity in the nation's capital.

The Notting Hill Carnival is best known for its **vibrancy**, with a three and a half mile parade of brightly coloured costumes, decorated **floats**, **eclectic** music and food stalls, and over a million visitors revelling in the carnival atmosphere. Steel bands still play the traditional reggae, calypso and soca sounds but now the music includes R&B, soul, house, funk, jazz and many other types of music. **Kicking off** on the Sunday of the Bank Holiday weekend with an egg, flour and paint fight, the festival has a family atmosphere with kids' costume competitions, steel bands and a variety of street performers. The main parade occurs on the Bank Holiday Monday, and into the evening **after-parties** take the place of the processional floats.

The Carnival has seen a greater police presence since riots occurred in 1976, and the 2010 event had an estimated 5,000 police officers allocated to security. Many believe that the increasing police presence has dampened the atmosphere, and the 'organised' nature of the event goes against the grain of carnival spirit which is based on **spontaneity** and togetherness. The success of the 2010 Carnival nonetheless was judged on the relatively minor incidence of crime, not to mention the sunshine that came out for the parade on the final day

QUESTIONS

- 1 Is there a similar cultural festival in your country? What does the festival celebrate?
- 2 Read some of the related articles. How do you think the Notting Hill Carnival has changed since the 1960s? Do you think these changes are positive or negative?

SUGGESTIONS

Do you know what **reggae**, **calypso** and **soca** music sound like? Have a listen to some examples of these types of music. Then make sure you understand what is meant by the terms **R&B**, **soul**, **house**, **funk** and **jazz** in relation to music.

Have a look at some of the photos of the Notting Hill Carnival.

VOCABULARY

Find definitions of the following words:

vibrancy

float

kick off

afterparty

eclectic

spontaneity