

10 Things You Didn't Know about LA Fest

1. Principals of Loyola silently make the fest a success. Fr. Kuruvilla Cherian (1998-2000) was so excited that he accompanied the students who went to buy certificates. Fr. Varghese Anikuzhy (2001-) tackles parents who frown at this fun fest in an 'entrance exam year'.
2. Every year, after LA Fest, the organisers gather to review the feedback forms and analyse their own performance in detail.
3. The theme song 'L for life, A for art' was written in 1996 by Fr. Benny Chiramel S.J. and composed by Gerald Pereira, the music teacher at Loyola.
4. The budget of LA Fest has grown from Rs. 4,000 in 1996 to more than Rs.18,000; the school management finances the bulk. The Plus Two students, the PTA and the Old Boys' Association also chip in. Fr. Joseph Edassery (Vice-Principal) has been LA Finance.
5. Loyola alumni i.e. former organisers of LA Fest, cut classes in college to participate in the rehearsals and offer helpful comments.
6. At LA Fest 2004, participating schools received saplings as gifts.
7. For the name of the festival, 'LA Fest' beat the following: Abhinaya, Bhavana, Fiesta, Manch, Ragam, Sangam.
8. The best thing about LA Fest, according to feedback forms, is the brilliant way in which it is organised. Every year, participating schools have singled out one group of volunteers for praise: the 11th standard students who serve as ushers.
9. As a logo, the Nataraja appeared in 1997. Initially, the LA Fest Nataraja was a stick figure that reminded you of a belly dancer. In each successive year, more flesh has been added.
10. LA Fest claims to be 'an all-student affair'. But the invisible hand of 12th standard class teacher Deepa Pillai (DP) has been there in every fest since 1996. Her passion for anonymity forced us to delete her name in 'The Rising' (page 2). But we have the last laugh.

10
years of
LAFest

The Rising

In November 1996, Vivek Krishnan, Harish K., Rahul Warriar and their 12th standard classmates pleaded with the class teacher: Madam, we need a break from the grind of textbooks and classes; let's organise an inter-school arts festival.

The idea gathered momentum among students. But somebody had to get the green signal from the Principal Fr. Mani Manimala.

One afternoon, as the school bell rang, the teacher—surrounded by students egging her on—told Fr. Mani, “The students have been saying that they want to organise a festival for schools in the city.” The Principal, full of energy but looking stern as ever, replied, “If you are ready to take full responsibility, go ahead.”

The students who overheard this were ecstatic. The teacher who had bravely conveyed the proposal could not back out. Her students would ensure that, year after year.



Participants

Holy Angels (Nanthencode) and Nirmala Bhavan have participated in every LA Fest. It is such enthusiastic participation by schools that has defined the level of excitement.

The contestants—with their skills, energy and wit—have generated waves of laughter, fun and celebration, even in a fiercely competitive setting. Inter-school rivalry has not come in the way of applauding the finest performers.

Today, in Malayalam moviedom, the young, stylish and intelligent star Prithviraj (*above*) captures the hearts of audiences. Just as he did at LA Fest 1998 and 1999, when he represented Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and won the title of Mr. LA Fest. He remains the only person to have won the personality contest LA Persona twice.



Organisers

The founding spirit of LA Fest is to take a break from studies. But there's hardly a break from learning. As organisers, students learn from day one—to schedule and plan, to conjure up events, to design and publish brochures...

And then there is the extra effort that goes in. LA Fest brochures, for instance, are not sealed in envelopes and posted to schools. Instead, organisers visit schools, speak to potential participants and when necessary, conduct mock sessions of new events. From drawing up rules to executing events on stage, every little detail has to be thought of and looked into.

"LA Fest was my first training ground in management," says IIM alumnus Jacob Kuruvilla (*top, left*), an event manager in 1997.



The Day Before

0730 : Left home for school, earlier than usual. Mom smiled.

0830 : Reached Loyola 15 minutes ago. Clearing cobwebs in the auditorium, scrubbing the walls. Arun is dangling from the rooftop to clean the window panes. Two guys are cleaning the toilets.

0930 : On the stage, quizmasters are discussing where the screen should be. Off stage, organisers of the personality event are rehearsing their wisecracks.

1315 : Belated lunch arrives. Refreshment committee satisfied. This is the quality of food that will be served tomorrow to all participants.

1400 : Rohan's father is waiting to whisk him away to a tuition class. Our friend is refusing to go. Elsewhere too, there is drama while rehearsing.

1530 : Certificates arrive from the printers. Whew!

1730 : The mess has to be cleaned. Quick, get the buckets.

2000 : Started arranging chairs for school contingents.

Events

LA Fest is a mix of continuity and change. Some events like Harmony (group song with instruments) and Dance O' Mania are carried over from the previous year. The quiz is retained and modified each year so that the intellectual flavour of the fest is intact. And each batch of organisers has to come up with a fresh event or round.

1998: Advertrix. Make ads for fictitious products and display it on the stage.

1999: Advertrix turns into full-fledged stage event. Enact the ad on the stage; jaw-jaw with jingles.

2000: Cine Cocktails. Prepare the publicity hoarding of a film and then put up a two-minute tableau of hoarding.

2001: LA Hauton. Make designer wear and conquer the ramp; one school used sack for eco-clothes.

2002: Travesta. Generate humour by fusing plots of two film genres (e.g., romance and horror).

2003: Sell-e-brity. Create TV commercials.

2004: Comedia del Arte. Interpret a cartoon and enact a humorous skit to draw attention to the social issue.

2005: Movie spoofs.

Thus, every year, the organisers have to identify a fresh presentation style, and the contestants have to respond to the challenge with loads of humour and originality. This theatre-based event is among the most challenging at LA Fest. It involves conceiving ideas, scripting, composing music, choreographing, directing and acting. Which sometimes means repeated rehearsals, props, costumes and make-up. Dishing out humour is no joke.



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The personality contest brings out the spontaneity and talent of the participants as well as the organisers. It requires participants to think on their feet, and display verbal and dramatic skills. Over the years, the festival has grown, but LA Persona remains my favourite.

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Saraswathy Nagarajan, journalist
Judge and long-standing well wisher