

# 12<sup>th</sup> London Vegan Festival

After six months of preparation, the organisers of the 12<sup>th</sup> London Vegan Festival arrived at the venue and were gearing up for the busy day ahead. The Kensington Town Hall (KTH) staff had done a superb job which made it easier as the period between arriving and opening proves the most stressful. By 10.45am a queue had formed so attendees were let in earlier than usual and by noon the venue was positively buzzing. During the course of the day there was a diverse range of talks, workshops, children's activities, music, poetry, comedy, yoga, meditation, music and social interaction (speed meeting), plus 104 stalls to keep everyone occupied.

There was a diverse variety of talks including `Alternatives to Petrochemicals`, `Veganism, Anarchism and Pacifism`, `Understanding Raw Foods` and `Why Vegans should be Opposed to Racism and Fascism`. Saf Restaurant's head chef ran a very popular food demonstration and Vegan Campaigns ran a workshop to discuss food fairs and the vegan pledge.

Visitors to the festival enjoyed a range of different musical styles, amongst them, a vegan hip hop artist; Americana and Jazz; Roots folk; and positive pop. Andrew O'Neil, the highly popular vegan comedian, filled the Small Hall to capacity.

Over 2,000 vegans, vegetarians and non-vegetarians filled the venue, so much so that the KTH management insisted that we count one in and one out. Fortunately, the vast majority of those queuing were patient and amenable. As usual, the foyer proved to be the busiest as this is where the food and bar are situated, and we all know how vegans love to eat and drink! The vegan bar staff were kept busy, as were the caterers; Rainforest Creations, Shambhu's, Fairfoods and the ever popular Veggies.

Unfortunately, the festival organisers did experience more than their fair share of difficulties. The London Vegan Festival prides itself for its diversity and integrity, i.e. the quality of being united. The first incident involved a rather aggressive encounter causing a stallholder selling vegan wines from Israel to seek the help of an organiser as he and his teenage daughter were being harassed by a festival attendee over the issue of Palestine. The second incident involved a speaker and a group of people attending her talk. The issue between them had no relevance to the scheduled talk resulting in the people who had attended to hear the talk being deprived of doing so. A plea from one of the organisers that the talk is allowed to continue went unheeded. Confrontations and intolerance are not welcome, as incidents of this nature go against the very spirit of the festival.

In 1996, when the idea of a national vegan event was first proposed, founder members Robin and Alison could never have envisaged the subsequent successes, including the formation not only of regional vegan festivals but international ones too, France and Sweden being two examples. Having organised 12 consecutive festivals we have decided to take a well earned break and so we will not be organising a London festival in 2010.

We would like to thank our 2009 sponsors; The Vegan Society, Veggies, Vegan Store, The Redwood Wholefood Co, Beanies Health Foods and Viva! We also wish to thank the invaluable volunteers, without whose help the festival would not be possible, Vegan Campaigns for help with the organisation and web space, and all of our supporters and sponsors over the years.

Robin & Alison (CALF)  
BM 8889, London, WC1N 3XX.  
E-mail: [robandal55@gmail.com](mailto:robandal55@gmail.com)