

The Midnight Run '07

INUA ELLAMS MICRO REPORT.



THE MIDNIGHT RUN.



So, see that gorgeous black man on the bike, rocking brown beads to show his cool cultural side, festival wristbands, spectacles and a back pack for the 'intelligent hip hop' look, yeah? That's me, Inua Ellams, Nigerian, South London Poet and Graphic Designer. The photo was taken on the 19/07/07 at 12.28, at London's Southbank during "The Midnight Run". The Midnight Run was conceived one autumn eve '05. What started as a 'walk to the next bus stop' whim, became some neo urban nomadic journey freestyled from the wind, philosophizing on everything, dissing anything, eat-about, portable ho down shindig. Six hours later, my friend and I had covered the West End, Clapham, Vauxhall, Victoria, Elephant and Castle, all on foot. And we weren't tired. So I got to thinking, why not do this in summer, when we can rock t-shirts through the night with a bunch of people and see what happens... So I did. The first run was in '06. This is an account of '07's.

ON YOUR MARKS.. GET SET, Go!

With a goal to populate the city sans suits or briefcases, to dispel the perception of danger after dark, to taste the wild within the confining glass / concrete / steel and above all, to have fun, we congregate ..

(6.00)

Borders Bookshop, Charing Cross Rd, Ground floor, Graphic novel section. We begin at (7.30) and the day is the warmest it has been for weeks. London's teeming with its usual kaleidoscope of humanity, streaming past, splashing the pavements. We join the flow, Jack Prideaux suggests we go to Green Park and we do, spilling past Picadilly Circus's Trocoadero, pick up five people making a group fifteen-strong comprising of singers, teachers, students, poets, playwrights and promoters - five dudes and ten dudettes, two girls to every guy. Yemisi Blake, (writer from Haringey) suggests I planned it so. I smile deviously as we turn into Green Park and plot how to obtain the deck chairs available, without paying the one-pound charge. We go for the grassier option, sit in a big circle and one by one introduce ourselves. An attempt to get a Kumbaya sing-along is swiftly annihilated and the conversation flows green between us, discussing allsorts, energy drinks, vegetarianism and wireless internet in the park.



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BRIDGE



CAROUSEL

(8.15)

One plan is to watch the sunset on Hungerford Bridge. We make our way there Via Buckingham Palace where we stop to diss the guards on duty, pick up three more people but get to Hungerford bridge post sunset. However something of a similar hue beckons in the distance. Touching down on the Southbank we see a carousel exploding with sun-coloured promises of unadulterated joy. Five runners clamber on including Sophie Rostas (sculptor from East London) and Joe Coelho. Two Pounds and an anti climax later, we dismount and unanimously convict the carousel of Monet-ism - It looks better from afar – and wander into the Royal Festival Hall.

(10.15)

On the first floor, there is an exhibition, a maze of soapboxes littered with writing materials, encouraging viewers to graffiti... We swarm the place. Ella Janneh (Promoter from East) dives into an argument, defending public art against three men moving the boxes. Jay Bernard (writer from South London) commandeers a red folding bike from kind strangers and whizzes through the maze, Jack and Sophie hike the highest column and experiment with voyeurism using a couple on a date, we meet six more people including Emma McGordon and Susan Wickwar - all the way from Cumbria.

THE MIDNIGHT RUN.

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(11.00)

The Royal Fest Hall closes and we spill into the cool night air, London reminds us of its beauty by the Thames, lights bouncing off the river. We notice the tide is out, scatter onto the beach and spend forty minutes skimming stones....



PEBBLE BEACH

(12.00)

Half Way Point.

By the Oxo Tower, dancers: Tony Adigun and Odilia Egyiawan join us on a BMX bike en route to Tinsel Town - a twenty-four hour restaurant in Farringdon. We pick up four more peeps including Kathy Meyts Coba, cross the bridge by the Tate Modern into St Paul's, past the meat market, cross Charterhouse St into Tinsel Town, Order Oreo Cookie milkshakes and food and proceed to stuff our faces for two solid hours. Stuffed, we make for the Strand through Ludgate Circus. On the way we find a beautiful outdoor lobby area where we pause to take photographs.



OUTSIDE LOBBY

THE MIDNIGHT RUN.

One plan is to watch the sunset on Hungerford Bridge. We make A ridiculously zealous security guard demands we leave. Kathy grabs a feather duster from the lobby in protest and sprints down an alley with robo-guard in hot pursuit. She hides amongst scaffolding, now a midnight-fugitive, till Tony retrieves the duster and brandishing like Excalibur returns it on his noble BMX steed. Dusted, we discuss London's Masonic points and reach Temple at...

(4.15)

where three Polish just-arrived emigrants join the procession. We cross over by Temple Tube St back onto the riverside, opposite the stone-skimming site hours ago. The tide has returned and the powerless light of early dawn bathes the water. We are nearing the end, running loose across the bank; cycling in and out of traffic and climbing closed piers. Under Waterloo Bridge, fellow Nigerian writer, Joshua Idehen finds an empty Lucozade bottle. Jay suggests writing a collective poem and paper is passed from person to person to scribble on. We place it in the bottle and save it for later.

THE MIDNIGHT RUN.



(4.50)

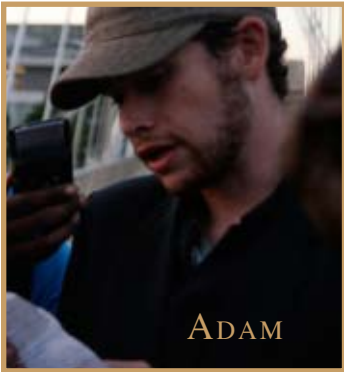
We get to Embankment Bridge and wait for the sun. Jay and Joshua play chicken, one stands still, one hurtles towards the other on the BMX. We toss coins into the Thames and toss wishes after. Adam Bernstein reads the collective poem aloud then EVERYONE holds some part of the bottle at the same time, count down from three and drop it into the river. It floats away serenely and we sit in a circle as we did ten hours ago in Green Park, no longer strangers.



THE MIDNIGHT RUN.



SUNRISE



ADAM



BOTTLE

(5.15)

THE MIDNIGHT RUN.

The sun shakes off the horizon, blazes across the city's windows, a great, golden full-stop to the Midnight Run. But we defy the sun, fool around till

(6.00)

then, we go home.

Aftermath...

I woke up at (1pm) with those glorious flashbacks on repeat, of the sleeping city being ours, of the fugitive, of the fun, and began to plan the next few runs... bigger, better, spin offs to coincide with festivals, celebrations or holidays, from Black History, to Christmas, New Year, Literature, Music, Art. Maybe documented, filmed and photographed, exhibited, intercity, international?... we'll see.

Inua Ellams

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG DOW

Want to get involved?
email: themidnightrun@gmail.com
www.myspace/phaze05
www.phaze05.com
Peace.
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The Midnight Run //
Cause we can't see stars for fumes
we turn to smashed glass, believing
shards shine like constellations do.

