

SIDESHOW

ACTIVITY REPORT 2013

www.sideshow-circusmagazine.com

ABOUT SIDESHOW

Sideshow is a magazine and website that promotes, records and thinks about contemporary circus. As an information point and an archive, Sideshow is a news provider with a complimentary focus on meta data and statistical research. As a cultural magazine, it is a curated space that gives a central role to the voice of the artist. As a networked organisation, it is a collaborator and initiator for media projects that contribute to the growth of circus art.

In 2013 Sideshow reached over 30,000 people online, worked with the City Circ consortium to deliver the website and directory for a UK circus showcase, and received funding from Arts Council England to run a new interview project focused on artistic process.

At the start of each year Sideshow evaluates its ongoing aims and key commitments. For 2013 many of those from the previous year were kept but were joined by an increased focus on international partnership and collaboration.

AIMS 2013

- To advocate for contemporary circus and improve its recognition among funding bodies and the general public.
- To disseminate, in particular, information on UK artists and companies to raise the profile of UK circus among overseas venues and programmers.
- To distribute circus literature produced by third parties (books, DVDs and magazines).
- To connect circus artists across Europe (and beyond) by stimulating the flow of information between national sectors.
- To contribute statistical research to further the understanding of the health/structure of the UK circus sector.
- To enter into partnerships with other organisations to improve Sideshow's sustainability and to share expertise on digital/editorial processes.

KEY COMMITMENTS 2013

- Work undertaken in partnership with other organisations and companies in the circus sector.
- Statistical research founded on open data (i.e. transparent, reusable formats provided free of charge).
- A journalistic practice centred on the voice of the artist.
- Greater international coverage and provision in all areas of the website.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Sideshow's core activities encompass a magazine focused on creative work in the circus sector, a news service providing insight and timely information for the international industry, a calendar of upcoming events tied to an annual statistical research project, and a small online store distributing circus literature.

Alongside these activities, the organisation increasingly supports artists, producers and researchers who are seeking informal professional or artistic advice.

MAGAZINE

At the start of 2013 Sideshow decided to concentrate on widening the international scope of the magazine. A small number of key international events were identified as opportunities to see work, exchange information, and participate in the activities of existing international networks (see next section). Aside from this, the main focus and output for the magazine was the Deconstructing Circus project (see Projects section).

NEWS

Sideshow published 90 news items in 2013, ranging from job postings to miniature interviews to articles on developments in the international sector. The strategy for news remains unchanged: the aim is to create a readership who are connected, aware, and actively engaged in the decisions that are being made for the strategic development of their sector.

EVENTS

Sideshow published 113 event listings in 2013. Due to the intensity of the workload these listings only covered events in the UK. They collected meta data including the date, location (expressed as long/lat coordinates in the WKT format), artists/companies, venue and festival, and were presented at the end of the year both as an interpreted study (see below) and as a raw data file for open use.

RESEARCH

In 2013 Sideshow expanded its research section to include a small directory of permanent/cyclical funding sources open to UK and international artists. These listings – collecting together project funding, research and travel grants, and funded residencies – are part of a wider strategy to increase the mobility of circus artists by raising their awareness of international opportunities.

At the beginning of January 2013, Sideshow also published State of the Circus, a study mapping the distribution of circus performances in the UK. Drawing on the event listings maintained by Sideshow through 2012, the research was conceived both as a contribution to the development of the UK sector and as an action that would attach a strategic dimension to one of Sideshow's core services/activities. Later in the year Sideshow published two pieces mapping Arts Council England's subvention to the circus sector.

<http://sideshow-circusmagazine.com/research/data>

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Circus is an international artform – its artists frequently travel for performance opportunities, to access specialised training, or simply because they like it. Sideshow attends a number of key international festivals and events each year in order to understand and map the development of aesthetic trends and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

SUBCASE

13-16 February @ Subtopia / Hangaren, Sweden

Sideshow attends Subcase, a three-day showcase of Nordic (and, in 2013, Catalan) circus. The event also includes a seminar on touring networks and tours of the facilities of Subtopia, Cirkus Cirkör and DOCH.

UNPACK THE ARTS (BELGIUM)

28 February - 3 March @ Les Halles, Belgium

Sideshow's editor is invited to give a talk on circus schools and aesthetics as part of the Belgian edition of Unpack the Arts, a European project to introduce cultural journalists to contemporary circus work. The group also visit shows at Hors Pistes festival in Brussels and La Piste aux Espoirs festival in Tournai.

MIRABILIA FESTIVAL

20-23 June @ Fossano, Italy

Sideshow is invited to Mirabilia Festival to participate in professional meetings with the European Circus Magazines Network. Sideshow's editor is appointed network lead alongside Adolfo Rossomando (Juggling Magazine) for the next six months of activities.

RE RE RIGA

8-11 August @ Riga, Latvia

Sideshow attends RE RE Riga, a new festival of circus and world music tied to Riga European Capital of Culture 2014.

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE

14-16 August @ Edinburgh, Scotland

Sideshow's editor is invited to give a second talk on circus schools and aesthetics as part of the UK edition of Unpack the Arts.

FESTIVAL CIRCA

22-27 October @ Auch, France

Sideshow attends the 26th edition of Festival CIRCa to see shows, meet the representatives of international organisations and networks, and conduct interviews for the Deconstructing Circus project.

PROJECTS

In April the City Circ network organised a three-day showcase called **Circus Now**. Sideshow designed, implemented and hosted the event website, reporting as well from the various talks and working sessions.

In August Sideshow received funding for **Deconstructing Circus**. Conceived as a project to build a significant resource for teaching and professional development, **Deconstructing Circus** will produce thirty interviews with thirty circus artists and directors focusing on artistic process.

CIRCUS NOW

In April, the network of London venues City Circ organised a three-day showcase called Circus Now. Aimed at producers, venue managers and arts council officers, the event combined pitches, work-in-progress showings and full-length performances with talks (including a session on contemporary circus aesthetics delivered by Sideshow's editor), panel discussions and networking events.

Sideshow produced and hosted the website for the event, which included a directory of 53 circus performances available for booking and a map of delegates. The live event was attended by around 100 delegates and the website by around 6000 unique visitors.

www.sideshow-circusmagazine.com/circus-now-showcase

DECONSTRUCTING CIRCUS

The Deconstructing Circus project was designed in response to a simple observation: that it's difficult for a circus artist to see a lot of work. Where writers can develop their practice by reading (as many books as they like) and composers can listen to music (all day), a circus artist spends far more time on technical training than they're able to spend learning through reflection and contextual research.

Deconstructing Circus takes a small step towards addressing this imbalance by publishing videos of thirty scenes from thirty contemporary circus productions. Each video is accompanied by an interview with the production's artist(s) or director that deconstructs the structure, dramaturgy and thematic content of the scene.

Slightly more than half the interviews will be produced in-house by Sideshow's editor, but eleven will be commissioned from four European writers: Cesc Martinez, Veronika Stefanova, Māra Pāvula and Bauke Lievens.

In 2013 there were nine interviews published with artists and companies such as Gandini Juggling, Aurélien Bory / Cie 111, Xavier Erra and Cirk La Putyka.

The projected final audience for the project is around 13,000 people. In 2014, once the project is completed, a promotion phase will raise awareness of the project's articles as a teaching and professional development resource – both for circus artists and those working in related disciplines such as physical theatre and dance.

www.sideshow-circusmagazine.com/magazine/deconstructions

AUDIENCE + FIGURES

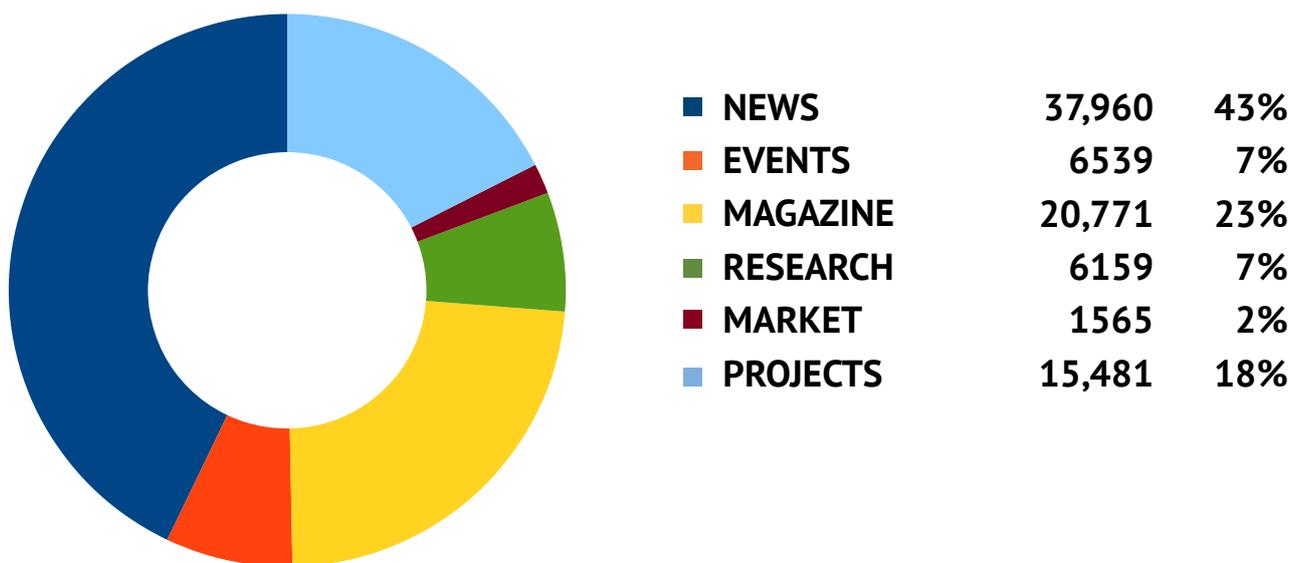
Over its lifetime Sideshow has served around 400,000 pageviews to more than 100,000 unique visitors. The site's core audience is made up of artists, producers, students and other professionals deeply involved in the contemporary circus sector. Around a third of readers are based in the UK, and the rest are spread over the world with a particular emphasis on Europe and North America.

IN 2013 SIDESHOW SERVED 112,490 PAGEVIEWS TO 31,203 UNIQUE VISITORS MAKING 51,619 VISITS.

Overall Sideshow's traffic stayed consistent from 2012 to 2013, though the greater emphasis on News and Research has caused a bump in the numbers for these two sections.

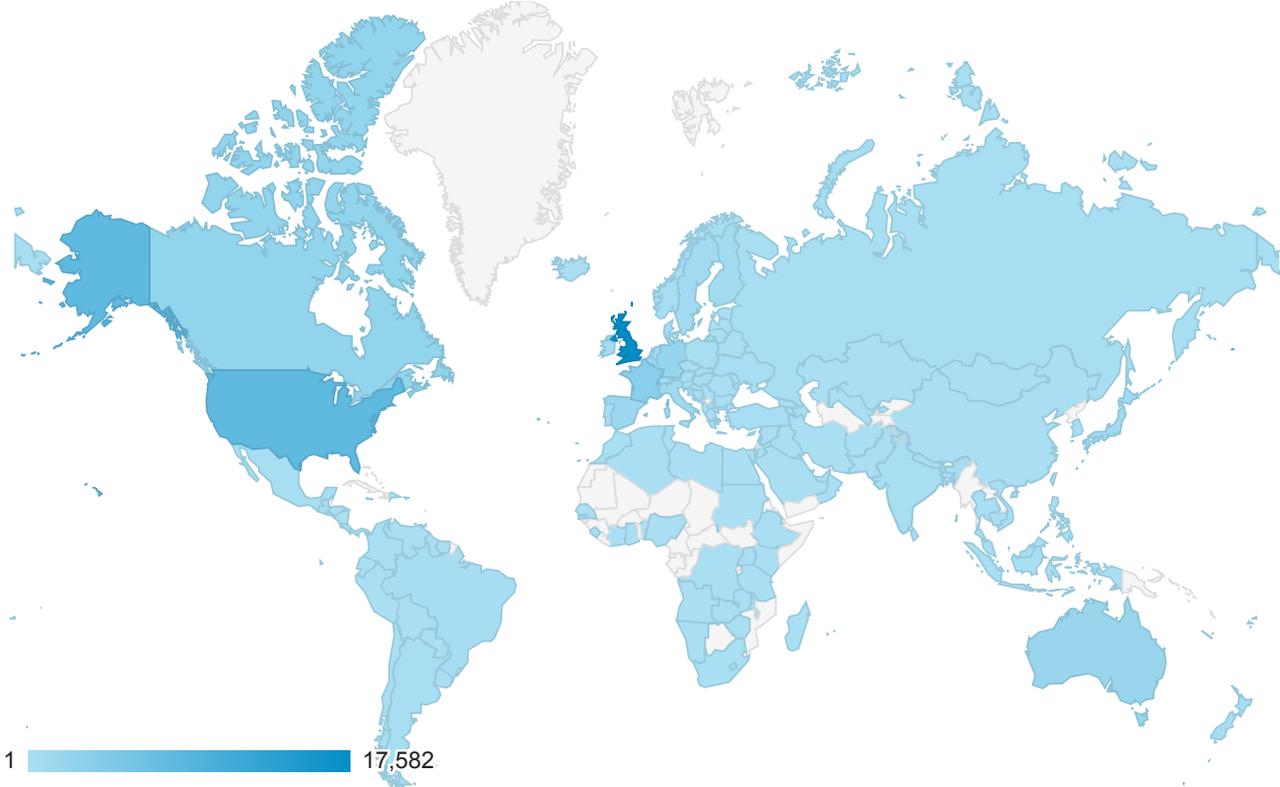
While the statistics below are helpful in understanding the broad parameters of Sideshow's reach and audience, editorial policy for the site is emphatically not led by analytics. It is possible to measure visits, pageviews, time on site, bounce rate and many other indicators, but none of these speak to the need to engage and challenge readers. With this in mind, in 2013 Sideshow ran a small survey of its readership to collect qualitative responses that could balance out the quantitative data.

PAGEVIEWS BY SECTION



- The Projects section here combines traffic to the Circus Now showcase site, Sideshow's Library, and the map of circus festivals / training spaces.
- In 2013 News takes a larger share of site traffic as the section is expanded to include mini-features and interviews.
- The above data doesn't include traffic to the front page of the website or to some other pages collecting together articles based on meta data.

VISITOR LOCATIONS



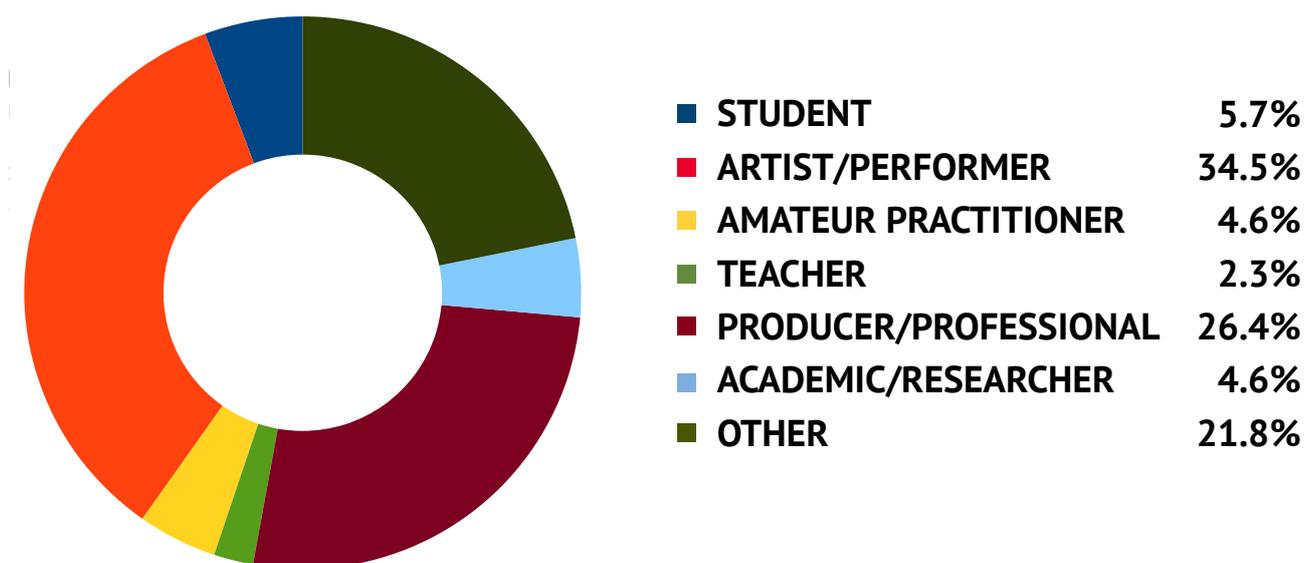
UNITED KINGDOM	17,852	34%
UNITED STATES	8002	15.5%
FRANCE	3555	6.9%
CANADA	2403	4.7%
GERMANY	2134	4.1%
AUSTRALIA	1853	3.9%
SPAIN	1649	3.2%
ITALY	1141	2.2%
BELGIUM	1102	2.1%
JAPAN	961	1.9%
145 OTHERS	10,517	20.4%

READER SURVEY

From 17-29 July 2013 Sideshow held an open survey to learn more about the site's readership and their opinions on editorial policy. The results confirmed that Sideshow's audience is made up principally of knowledgeable professionals working inside the circus industry.

For more information: <http://sideshow-circusmagazine.com/research/data/reader-survey-july-2013>

RELATIONSHIP TO CIRCUS



READER RESPONSES

“I think the site is amazing, and very important for me because it is the only voice in contemporary circus that I feel I can relate to for reviewing circus or doing interviews (at least that I found yet). [...] A lot of articles about circus are very superficial, and stay in the description of shows and I don't like to read them, as for Sideshow, there is an understanding and interest for circus shows as a work that I really enjoy, and also a knowledge of the circus art that helps me understand what I see, and therefore makes it very useful.”

“We don't get a lot of international touring shows here in Australia (apart from the big ones like Cirque) so some of the smaller more interesting shows we only find out about through sites like this, or YouTube. It's awesome to be able to see what other countries are doing.”

“A different perspective is almost invaluable in this business, and I find that if I'm ever (which is often) stuck in my own process there's always inspiration or direction to be found in the articles. [...] Knowing is half the battle, and getting a well versed, comprehensive feature on a given subject always inspires me to broaden my perspective on what is important in this world of circus.”

FOCUS 2014

Reflecting on the work undertaken in 2013, Side-show has identified a small number of operational objectives for the coming year. For the most part these centre on improving the sustainability of the website, raising more funds for project-based work, and emphasising transdisciplinary discourse.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES 2014

- On completing the Deconstructing Circus project, enter into a small marketing phase that will push the resource to higher education institutions both inside and outside the circus sector.
- Conceive a sponsorship programme to support the development of Sideshow in 2014 and beyond.
- Raise a commissioning budget and continue to work with experienced freelance writers.
- Design editorial projects that relate contemporary circus to other disciplines (dance, physical theatre, etcetera).
- Establish an advisory board to inform the editorial processes of the site and to help guide the organisation's development.
- Undertake a broader programme of research into the artistic and professional needs of contemporary circus artists through interviews, surveys, etcetera.
- Design an oral histories project focusing on 'untold stories' – key moments in circus history/development that currently have no written record.