



Sax on the beach: Hua Hin Jazz Festival

At long last jazz has emerged from the confines of the hotel lounge bar - the beach resort town of Hua Hin is a fitting location for a jazz festival. His Majesty, King Bhumibhol, himself a jazz fan and accomplished saxophonist, no doubt approves of this great little beachfront festival. On a critical note, the event is now in its 6th year and the authorities have failed to recognize its potential. This year's event on June 8th and 9th was cut from three to two nights and featured just two international acts.

The festival features evening performances on two large stages, erected at each end of the beach. The big attraction of the Hua Hin Jazz Festival, is its location and the fact that it is free. Evening performances are held on two large stages, erected at each end of the beautiful beach outside the Hilton and Sofitel hotels. Admittedly most simply come to eat, drink and socialize in a beautiful setting. But come they do, in droves, and the music at this seaside venue washes over them. Many of the uninitiated change their tune about jazz and leave as converts to the genre.

Festival website
www.huahinjazzfestival2007.com

Jazzing Up Bangkok: Bangkok Jazz Festival

The Bangkok Jazz Festival in mid-December is enjoyed by thousands of people who come for three pleasantly cool and moonlit evenings listening to some of the hottest musicians to have appeared in Bangkok in recent years.

The superb outdoor venue of Sanam Sua Pa pulls in around 15,000 people a night. Undeterred by the \$30 entrance fee, the enthusiastic crowd bring along rugs, wine and well-stocked picnic hampers (and just as well because the food on offer at the site remained the major disappointment of the event). Year-after-year the Bangkok Jazz Festival is improving but does still suffer from the 'smooth jazz' disease. The organisers need to place a little faith in the audience and trust that they are ready and willing to experience something a little more challenging. The festival line-up seems too heavily influenced by the promoter's personal taste, rather than the desire to stage a world-class event showcasing a diverse line-up of talent. Artists have included Larry Carlton, Lee Ritenour, the Yellow Jackets, Tower of Power and Jack Lee.

www.bangkokjazzfestival.com

Folk Down Under: Woodford Folk Festival, Australia

The Woodford Folk Festival is held over six days and six nights at the end of December. With over 2000 performers and 400 events, the festival includes concerts, dances, workshops, forums, street theatre, writers' panels, film festival, comedy sessions, acoustic jams, social dialogue and debate. Held in a picturesque rural setting, it can get very hot and dusty and / or wet and muddy but it has a beautiful friendly vibe. Kids run around free, nothing gets stolen and there is no trouble. The music covers a broad spectrum from weird eccentric old folkies to mod dance bands. The festival scale does mean that the quality of acts can be variable but it also features the cream of Australian performers and a generous gathering of special international guests.

www.woodfordfolkfestival.com

Singapore Swing: WOMAD

Singapore, an island nation known for its strict rules and regulations really does know how to let its hair down! Each August the World of Music, Arts and Dance festival, commonly known as WOMAD rolls into town, bringing music and culture from around the world to a packed audience in Fort Canning Park.



Originally inspired by musician Peter Gabriel, the first WOMAD festival took place in the UK in 1982. Since then WOMAD has presented more than 145 events in 22 different countries. The festivals possess a unique atmosphere and succeed in introducing audiences to many talented artists, many of who get little airplay and would not normally be able to embark on tours to the other side of the world. WOMAD views music as an international language and the festivals actively promote multiculturalism through music. With simultaneous performances on three stages, including music workshops and dance sessions hosted by many of the visiting artists, the event in Singapore hits all the right notes. Artists from countries and cultures as diverse as Mali, Sri Lanka, France, Israel, Algeria, Cuba and the USA, play before a capacity crowd. This year's festival will be held in Singapore on August 24- 26th.

WOMAD also hold events in Australia and New Zealand.
www.womad.org

Rumble in the Jungle - The Rainforest World Music Festival, Sarawak

Without doubt, the Rainforest World Music Festival has put Sarawak on the map. From the humble beginnings of just a few hundred local hardcore World Music fans gathered in a field, this year the festival celebrates its 10th anniversary and will see 20,000 people pass through the gates over a three day period. Word has spread about what is without a doubt Asia's greatest festival. People now fly in from around the region to hear the great music. With daily admittance capped at 8,000 people, an intimate feel has been retained.



The setting for the event is nothing short of spectacular. The tree-covered Mount Santubong forms the backdrop to the main stage and the traditional wooden buildings of the Sarawak Cultural Village serve as venues for afternoon music workshops. These workshops, where musicians from different bands come together for a themed display of virtuoso skills, form an integral part of the relaxed weekend. Musicians work together in an atmosphere of mutual admiration. In such a setting barriers between audience and performer do not exist; it is this intimacy that makes The Rainforest World Music Festival such a unique event. From July 12th - 14th, twenty groups representing 12 countries from all continents will play alongside local groups from Sarawak and West Malaysia. Highlights include Huun Huur Tu from the small Russian

republic of Tuva who will perform their unique blend of music and throat singing. Other notable acts include the Ensemble Kabul, an Afghani band exiled by the Taliban, the Foghorn Stringband who will deliver an entertaining and spirited set of 'red-neck' rhythms, Khac Chi from Vietnam, Shooglenifty from Scotland, Shannon, a six-piece Polish band who deliver driving Celtic rhythms with a fast and furious beat that never fails to work the crowd into a frenzy of excitement.

For those who can't make it all the way to Sarawak, this year will see many of the same bands take to the stage for the Penang World Music Festival on July 20th - 22nd.

www.rainforestmusic-borneo.com