

EDINBURGH

GOING TRAVELLING?

Songlines has now profiled the world music scene in over 25 cities. Check the archive on www.songlines.co.uk

Sponsored by



Most famous for its Hogmanay celebrations and annual International Festival, Scotland's capital has plenty more to offer visitors in search of music. By Jan Fairley

Walking with the Alloa Bowmar Pipe Band as they heralded the start of the December 30 'Night Afore' involving everyone dancing the longest open-air 'Strip The Willow' in the world along Edinburgh's George Street, it strikes home that Scottish bagpipes and *ceilidh* bands still magically stir the nation never mind tourists' soul. Bizarrely while the city thrived musically in the 90s during the run up to Scottish independence

and the building of its expensive parliament, corporate power now dominates due to the uninterrupted growth of commercial building hand-in-glove with a council and Scottish executive pushing for tourist-linked events rather than inspiring a thriving regular venue scene.

Nevertheless this is the city that saw the vibrant Salsa Celtica emerge from pub jam sessions, bringing together Scots with exiled Latinos and it's best to focus on clubs and pubs to find musical energy. The Scottish Arts Council

'Tune Up' (www.tuneup.org.uk) initiative supporting music touring in Scotland, like Burnsong, is thrilling, plus there's Scottish musician-composer Jim Sutherland's international 'Before the Wolf' project involving a 200-strong choir. With major world music artists coming into the Usher and Queens Halls, news of other ad hoc events or more regular ones like the Spring Fiddle Festival can be found in *The List*, Scotland's fortnightly magazine (www.list.co.uk) or www.gigguide.co.uk.



The thriving live scene at the Bongo Club



Timeless - Leith's Shore Bar

café collective moved to Holyrood Road university premises.
37 Holyrood Road, EH8 8BA, +44 (0)131 558 7604, www.thebongoclub.co.uk
Out of the Blue, The Drill Hall, 36 Dalmeny Street, EH6 8RG, +44 (0)131 555 7101, www.outoftheblue.org.uk

The Jazz Bar

Run by jazz man Bill Kyle and funded by

local fans, this bar has survived the years under different names. The prevailing atmosphere is funky, great for live music and club nights. Come here for Goats' Stew, Rumba Caliente and The Elephants (all Salsa Celtica offshoots); Jim Mullen, guests like Ravi Coltrane and, if lucky, local Chilean songstress Valentina with Voces del Sur. **1A Chambers Street EH1 1HR, +44 (0)131 467 2539/220 4928, www.thejazzbar.co.uk**

The Shore Bar

Old atmospheric bar with notable restaurant in port of Leith with folk-world sessions involving members of Shooglenifty on Wednesday evenings plus Infinite Jazz trio on Tuesday and Saturday. **3 Shore, EH6 6QW, +44 (0)131 553 5080, www.theshore.biz**

VENUES**Usher Hall**

The BBC Radio 3's Awards for World Music took place here in 2005 and this year sees Ojos de Brujo, African Soul Rebels and Buena Vista Social Club, plus others. The venue will close for a period after the summer 2007 for the addition of a restaurant, bars, lifts, new educational space and upgrading backstage. **Lothian Road, EH1 2EA, +44 (0)131 228 1155, www.usherhall.co.uk**

The Queens Hall

Home to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, this is also the place to find the innovative Mr McFall's Chamber, led by the intrepid Robert McFall, who interpret Piazzolla's tangos.

Recently saved from threat of closure, in the 80s and early 90s this was the place to

gravitate at weekends for everything from jazz to funk. Highlights this year include Ayl Bain and Phil Cunningham, Salsa Celtica, Peatbog Faeries and Terrafolk.

Clerk Street, EH8 9JG, +44 (0)131 668 2019, www.thequeenshall.net

Bongo Club & Café and Out of the Blue

Since the 90s the Bongo has been the bohemia hub for cutting edge musical exchanges. In 2004 this creative centre was forced to relocate from its former New Street bus station home. It had to divide with the Out of the Blue collective, finding home in Leith Walk's Drill Hall from where they organise community arts projects. Meanwhile the Bongo Club and



New Year's celebrations at El Barrio - Brazilian style

PUBS

Edinburgh boasts key traditional pubs where local folk and world musicians play - thriving in a smoke-free environment.

Sandy Bells Pub

Long a gathering place for musicians, writers and poets, the spirit of the late folksong collector and singer Hamish Henderson lives on through weekday sessions from 9pm onwards. (Sat & Sun 3.30pm). Watch out for Anna-Wendy Stevenson's trio Fine Friday. **25 Forrest Road, EH1 2QH, +44 (0)131 225 1156**

Malt Shovel

Atmospheric pub in old town with sessions on Thursdays 9pm. **11-15 Cockburn Street, EH1 1BP, +44 (0)131 225 6843**

The LOT

This bistro and bar is in a converted church in the historic Grassmarket quarter with breathtaking views of the castle. Watch out for Yiddish singer Stephanie Brickman. Its

Ceilidh Club (weekly on Tuesdays) features local top ceilidh bands and makes use of its fabulous wooden floor. **4-6 Grassmarket, EH1 2JT, +44 (0)131 225 9924/22, www.the-lot.co.uk**

The Royal Oak

Daily singer-songwriter sessions at 9pm weekdays, 6pm on Saturdays and 4pm on Sundays. **Infirmity Street, EH1 1LP, +44 (0)131 557 2976, www.royal-oak-folk.com**

Athletic Arms

Known as 'The Diggers' with lively Wednesday sessions where many musicians join in. **Angle Park Terrace, EH11 2JX, +44 (0)131 337 3822**

FOLK CLUBS**Edinburgh Folk Club**

Regularly features famous bands like Whistlebinkies and well-known names like Michael Marra. Wednesdays at 8pm.

Pleasance Cabaret Bar, The Pleasance, +44 (0)131 650 2349, www.edinburghfolkclub.org.uk

Leith Folk Club

Vibrant club which features many of the BBC young traditional award winners, as well as old and young talents of the Scottish music scene. Tuesdays at 8pm. **The Village, South Fort Street, off Ferry road, +44 (0)131 478 7810, www.leithfolkclub.org**

CLUBS**El Barrio**

Latin-Spanish bar run by Latinos with regular salsa nights. **119 Rose Street, EH2 3DT, +44 (0)131 226 4311, www.elbarrio.co.uk**

FESTIVALS

Edinburgh is a festival city and its two main ones are in December and August. The mid-winter festival begins on December 29 with a torch-lit processions complete with Viking Ship and marching bands, including local samba outfits and guests like Bollywood Brass parading from the historic Royal Mile to Calton Hill for a massive bonfire and fireworks.

Hogmanay

See the old year out with various stages erected in the centre, including a ceilidh stage boasting local heroes like Capercaille, Salsa Celtica and Shooglenifty. **December 29-January 1**

Ceilidh Culture

Edinburgh's traditional and folk music event with poetry, storytelling and more. **March 24-April 15**

The August International Festival

With its massive fringe, film, book and TV festival, this is equivalent to an annual carnival. However, while there is plenty of classical music, world music rarely gets the public it deserves, eclipsed by theatre and comedy. **August 10-September 2**

St Andrews Day

Public celebrations for Scotland's patron saint (famous for being a fisherman) with street performances by the likes of Shooglenifty plus klezmer and Balkan grooves from Moisha's Bagel. **November 30**

Burns Night

A key event in the Scottish calendar. Once all-male affairs, today families and friends gather at home, or more formally at special Burns Night Suppers. This involves piping in the haggis (the national dish). As well as Burns' song and poetry, the whole event is peppered with many toasts with fine malt whisky and there is usually a fiddler and ceilidh dancing finishing with the singing of 'Auld Lang Syne'. **January 26**



Fireworks over Edinburgh castle

ROUGH GUIDES DO EDINBURGH

"THE PICK OF THE GUIDEBOOKS"

The Daily Telegraph on The Rough Guide to Scotland



Over 300 travel titles and 70 reference books www.roughguides.com

