

LIVERPOOL

Joe Shooman explores Liverpool's eclectic and lively music scene, during its year as European Capital of Culture

Liverpool is often called 'the world in one city', and in this European Capital of Culture year, it's time for the bustling banks of the Mersey, complete with UNESCO world heritage waterfront, to prove the veracity of that epithet. With a 800-year history of seafaring and cultural immigration on which to draw, it's little wonder that music in all its facets has long been central to the mindset of the area. Here, an Irish Bar is so much more than those nasty theme pubs serving fizzy faux-Guinness with waitresses in dodgy green hats and even dodgier accents. Pubs like The Liffey on Renshaw Street and the Pogue Mahone on Seel Street feature traditional music. Liverpool's annual Irish Festival takes place in October, with events throughout the city, including Christy Moore at the lovely Philharmonic Hall. Liverpool, and in particular Liverpool 8 district, has been

long associated with the booming bass of dub. The days of illicit Toxteth (an inner-city area to the south of the city) drinking dens may have been and gone, but the spirit survives at Wood Street venue Django's Riff. Senator Sound System take the place over for their Dubzone night on the last Friday of every month. That venue is something of a melting pot for music of all types, from hip-hop to soul and funk, and their dual whammy of supporting underground music whilst having a splendid city centre location makes them a winner. A particular jewel is the Africa Oyé festival, which takes over Sefton Park for a weekend every June. The largest free celebration of African music and culture in the UK, it brings in an array of hugely influential artists, from Femi Kuti, Baaba Maal, Habib Koité, Omar Pene, Bonga and Rebecca Malope to today's favourites such as Tinariwen, Ba Cissoko, Tiken Jah Fakoly, Andy Palacio, and

The Gangbe Brass Band. That's without mentioning the droolsome food stalls. Add into the mix samba schools, a bustling folk scene centred round such venues as 3345, View Two Gallery and Dragon Bar, and one of the oldest Chinatowns in Europe, and what you have is a city bursting at the seams with kaleidoscopic culture and musical history. The events and concerts here are merely scratching the surface of course in this auspicious Capital Of Culture year, and as ever with Liverpool, it's a matter of diving in and seeing what splashes are being made by the local acts as the eyes – and sounds – of the world descend on the city to create yet more exciting and new musical mosaics. This fundamental ability to absorb outside influence and meld it into something that's at once new and unmistakably Scouse is perhaps as close to a definition of 'culture' as you're ever likely to get.



Mellowtone's birthday party at View Two Gallery, October 2007



VENUES

Indie-rock oriented venues like Barfly also often have folk and world music nights, so it's worth keeping an eye out for their listings. But try these too:

Carling Academy

Future gigs include The Beat who play on March 15 and Jah Wobble who comes to the venue along with Pagoda Orchestra for an intriguing Chinese dub gig on July 5.
11-13 Hotham Street, Liverpool L3 5UF, +44 (0)151 707 3200, www.liverpool-academy.co.uk

Django's Riff

One of the central venues with a varied line-up including: Brasilica, live funk, and the spiritual home of Dubstar and Rockers 2 Rockers – two long-established sound systems from the traditional haunt of big bass, Liverpool 8.
24-40 Wood Street, Liverpool L1 4AQ, +44 (0)151 708 8896, www.myspace.com/djangosriff

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

Gorgeous building with magnificent acoustics. Over the years it has seen luminaries including Abida Parveen, Nitin Sawhney and Anoushka Shankar. The last Saturday of each month it hosts Music For The Mind And Soul with Milapfest.
Hope Street, Liverpool L1 9BP, +44 (0)151 709 3789, www.liverpoolphil.com

3345

Check out Metroacoustic, the Wednesday shindig hosted by Scouse-Norwegian songstress and promoter Kaya Herstad, and Alan Parry's Acoustic Slice every Monday.
33-45 Parr Street, Liverpool L1 4JN, +44 (0)151 708 6345, www.3345parrst.com

View Two Gallery

The home of Mellowtone, promoters of contemporary folk. Runs on the first Friday of the month and features Música del Alma DJs between the live acts, so expect everything including funk, soul, reggae, Afro-beat and chilled hip-hop.
23 Mathew Street, Liverpool L2 6RE, +44 (0)151 236 9444, www.viewtwogallery.co.uk

St Bride's Church

The Random Family take charge of this wonderful acoustic place for their events and gigs at the more traditional end of folk, including Martin Carthy at The Family Folk-Up – a monthly live acoustic music night.
Percy Street, L8 8LT, www.stbridesliverpool.com

Everyman Folk Club

Meets every Tuesday of the month in the third room of the Everyman Bistro & Bar, which makes up for what it loses in

GOING TRAVELLING?

Songlines has now profiled the world music scene in over 30 cities. Check the archive on www.songlines.co.uk

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RECORD SHOPS

Probe

Long-established *High Fidelity*-esque record shop with impressive dub section.

9 Slater Street, Liverpool L1 4BW,
+44 (0)151 708 8815, www.probe-records.com

Hairy Records

Nowhere better for second-hand funk, Afro-beat and soul rarities, amongst others.

124 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4JA,
+44 (0)151 707 2166

LISTINGS

There are numerous free listings magazines out there, all serving bits and pieces of the local scene, but as yet no one all-encompassing publication – keep an eye out for flyers. These websites are worth a look:

www.liverpool08.com

www.liverpool.com

www.gigwise.com

www.yoliverpool.com

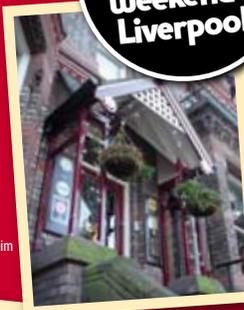
Competition

WIN
a
weekend in
Liverpool!

We have two nights accommodation at the attractive **Blenheim Lakeside Hotel in Sefton Park, coinciding with Africa Oyé festival, to give away. To enter, simply answer the following question: Which former Beatle opened Liverpool's recent 2008 European City of Culture celebrations?**

Conditions: the prize is for two nights accommodation at the Blenheim Lakeside Hotel (double room, breakfast included) on Friday June 20 and Saturday June 21. Travel to hotel not included. The hotel is a large Victorian villa overlooking Sefton Park, offering first-class bed and breakfast accommodation at an unbeatable price. Former family home of original Beatle Stu Sutcliffe. Closing date April 4 2008. See p5 for *Songlines* competition rules and email address.
www.blenheimlakesidehotel.co.uk

Visit Liverpool.com



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FESTIVALS

Africa Oyé

June 21 and 22 at Sefton Park sees this year's event which is rightly regarded as one of the most important celebrations of African music in the UK, and beyond. And everything's free! Well, apart from the wonderful food...

www.africaoye.com

Liverpool Irish Festival

Celebrates the ages-old links between Liverpool and Ireland, with masses of events in various venues. October 17-November 2 2008.

www.liverpoolirishfestival.com



Flautist Terry Clark Coyne who played at last year's Liverpool Irish Festival

Milapfest

Various events city-wide. Includes Onam Festival on September 12 and Navratri – with *ujarati* folk dance – from September 29 to October 8.

www.milapfest.com

Samba Carnival

August 2 is the date of Liverpool Samba School's ambitious nighttime carnival, designed to bring families to the streets in a Rio-style celebration.

www.carnival.org.uk



Liverpool's premier Asian festival, Milapfest

size with the excellent food from the bistro next door.

5-9 Hope Street, Liverpool L1 9BH,
+44 (0)151 708 9545, www.everyman.co.uk

The Magnet

Home for almost 50 years to a constant flux of club nights and live performances in its sizzingly hip downstairs room, boasting a fantastic PA.

45 Hardman Street, Liverpool L1 9AS,
+44 (0)151 709 6969,
www.magnetliverpool.co.uk

The New Picket

The reborn Picket moved into its new venue in Liverpool's Independent District a couple of years ago and has never looked back. Home of Liverpool Samba School, who rehearse here every Monday night, it's also hosted AfroRoots and many others.

61 New Bird Street, Liverpool L1 0BW,
+44 (0)151 709 6969

RADIO SHOWS

BBC Radio Merseyside, 95.8FM, serves the community with several shows:

Folkscene Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9pm.

With Stan Ambrose.

Upfront Saturdays, 8pm. Liverpool's Black Music Magazine – presented by James Klass and Mandy Smith.

Open House Fridays, 9.05pm. Magazine programme for the Asian community, presented by Umi Prasad and featuring everything from Bollywood to *bhangra*.

Orient Express Mondays, 9.05pm. June Yee in the hotseat for the Chinese culture, music and news programme.

PMS – Post Millennial Sounds Sundays, midnight. Roger Hill presents an eclectic mix of contemporary music from round the world.

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