

MELBOURNE

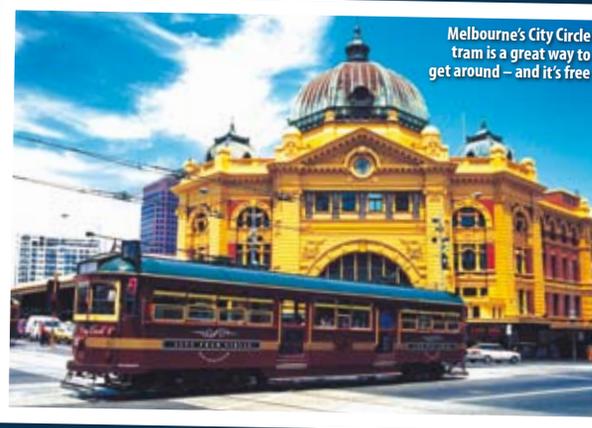
SOUNDING OUT

IS THE RHYTHM CALLING YOU?

Check out www.songlines.co.uk/musictravel to seek out the trip that will tickle your musical tastebuds



JOHN COLLINGS



Melbourne's City Circle tram is a great way to get around – and it's free



The city's laneways have seen a boom in bars and restaurants

Melbournite writer and broadcaster Kate Welsman gives the lowdown on Australia's capital of culture

While the rest of Australia scoffs at the tendency of Melbourne weather to offer four seasons in one day, and the lack of a harbour in a supposedly sun-worshipping island, one thing everybody knows about this city is that it is the culture capital of Australia. Melbournites are proud of the fact that most inner-city bars, no matter their size, have a set of turntables; there are more live music venues here than anywhere else in the country; and we are prepared to take to the streets to protect these spaces in the face of bureaucratic indifference. There is a saying amongst musicians that if you can make it in Melbourne, you can make it anywhere. With a population of four million, sport notwithstanding, music remains one of our favourite recreational activities.

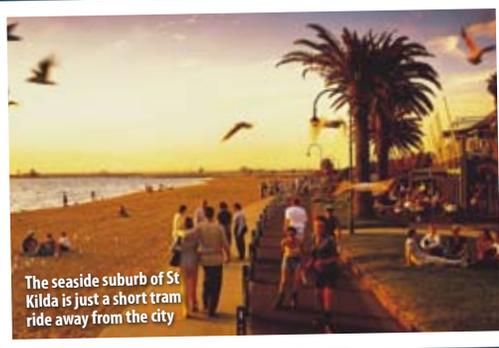
Global rhythms are part of this fabric. More than 170 nationalities are represented in venues that range from small local clubs to Victoria's

flagship performing arts venue, the Arts Centre. There is no one venue that caters exclusively to the world music scene outside of The Boite, but most clubs hold a Latin, Gypsy, reggae or African night on at least a monthly basis, and the places listed here devote a large roster for album launches, regular gigs and residencies. DJs and bands alike flock to these spaces and a halfway decent public transport system ensures that punters can easily cross town to hear different sounds.

Inner-city Melbourne is built on a grid, which makes for easy access. The Laneway culture is something else to experience as our hip-hop brothers and sisters display

their graffiti and street art. Federation Square (Fed Square to the locals) is a massive space which holds free gigs and screenings almost every weekend, celebrating diversity in the form of Buddha's Day and Multicultural Festival in May, Greek Thessaloniki Festival in November and Diwali Indian Festival of Light in October, to name a few. The Queen Victoria Markets regularly celebrate our other passion: food, with the Turkish food festival, South American food festival and street hawkers food festival, all accompanied by live music.

During the summer months, Melbourne comes to life with street and community festivals celebrating the local cultures of different areas, kicking off with the High Vibes Festival in Northcote which opens the fray on one of the last weekends in September and closes with the Darebin Music Festival. The Johnston St Fiesta celebrates all music Latin in November; The St Kilda Festival in February dedicates three stages to indigenous and world music styles; and the Brunswick Music Festival celebrates folk and global rhythms. At the end of the day though, it is the small clubs and venues that drive the music machine and keep interest alive.



The seaside suburb of St Kilda is just a short tram ride away from the city



Australia Day celebrations in Fed Square

VENUES

The Boîte World Music Cafe

Easily the oldest and most intimate of places, The Boîte was established in 1979 to showcase acoustic global rhythms and resides in Mark Street Hall in Fitzroy. From Bulgarian *a capella* to Indian classical, it continues to thrive in a lo-fi setting and is well respected as a music leader.

Mark St, Nth Fitzroy, +61 (0)3 9417 3550, www.boite.com.au

The Horn

A personal favourite, The Horn dishes up the spicy flavours of Ethiopian food and music in an intriguing space that is a restaurant, stage and a bar. Home to the residency of The Black Jesus Experience, Mulatu Astatke's backing band of choice for the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, as well as other African acts and reggae nights, The Horn dishes up sublime food and tickles musical senses while opening a door into Ethiopia's culture through its décor and artwork.

Johnston St, Collingwood, +61 (0)3 9417 4670

The Spot

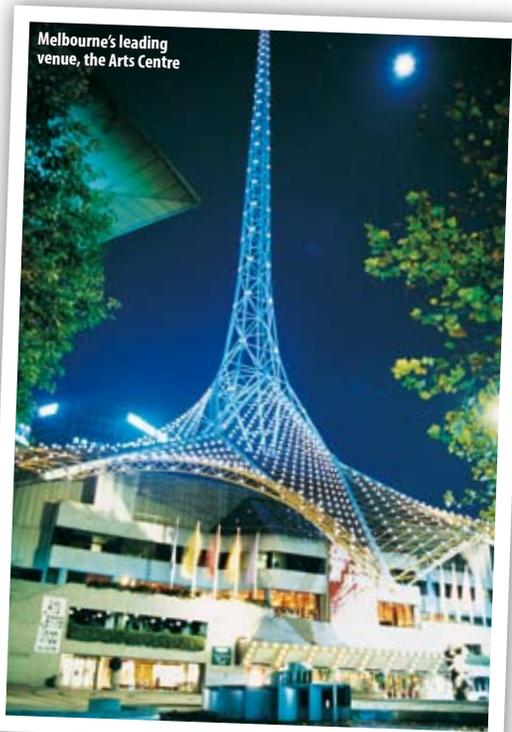
Right in the heart of Brunswick, The Spot holds weekly Latin nights and supergroup LABJACD on Friday nights, with a rotating roster of local Turkish, Gypsy and global fusion outfits crossing the others. Ignore the 80s 'Tribute Night' on a Saturday, but the food is good, and it has a great atmosphere.

Sydney Road, Brunswick, +61 (0)3 9388 0222, www.thespotbrunswick.com

Bar Open

Brunswick Street, the heart of Melbourne's leftfield culture and fashion, is home to legendary Bar Open that supports all kinds of music – from the improvised avant-garde to Gypsy punk. It's shabby, has a good grunge quota, but above all it's a great space that has over the years opened many ears. Home to Melbourne's Balkan Ball and a rotating door to the global yard.

Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, +61 (0)3 9415 9601, www.baropen.com.au



Corner Hotel

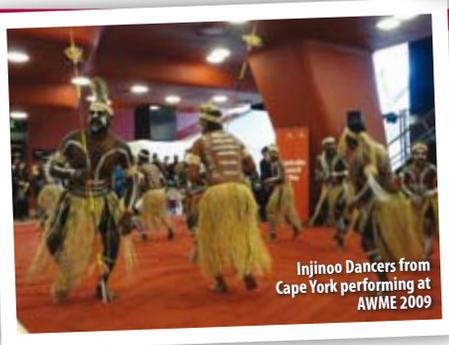
The Corner is one of Melbourne's larger venues and has supported the global scene for years. Most large festival sideshows stop here on tour and this club has the soundsystem of choice for dub lovers. Visiting artists have ranged from Lee Scratch Perry and Tony Allen to Babylon Circus and Gurrumul, and all styles in between. It has the bonus of two stages to present music and a rooftop bar and restaurant with skyline views of the city and great food.

Swan Road, Richmond, +61 (0)3 9427 9198, www.cornerhotel.com

The Arts Centre

This is the big one. The Arts Centre is Melbourne's largest venue with rooms that seat from 120 to 2,500. On par with the Sydney Opera House in terms of quality and production, the Arts Centre has been committed to presenting world-class performers, like Baaba Maal, Cesaria Evora and Salif Keita, but it has also over the last five years devoted programming and production resources to a project named *Mix It Up*. Curators and local performers from Multicultural Arts Victoria take over the foyer of Hamer Hall (their biggest auditorium) to present the diversity of Melbourne's community alongside an international act. Daara J Family were joined by local hip-hop band Diafrix in a commissioned piece that included musicians from the continent now residing here; bands, food stalls and a market all burst from the foyer onto the street. Hamer Hall is closed until 2011 for refurbishment but the smaller spaces continue.

St Kilda Road, Melbourne City Centre, +61 (0)3 9281 0000, www.theartscentre.com.au



FESTIVALS

Australian World Music Expo

Now in its third year, AWME showcases the best of indigenous, Pacific and world music in Australia to the world. While the daytime events are limited to international delegates, the exciting music programme is open to the public where you have the opportunity to see both emerging and seasoned bands and artists who are leading the way in the Pacific region. It is a unique insight to Australia's cultural scene and is a firm fixture on any festival calendar.

November 18-21 2010, various venues, www.awme.com.au

Melbourne International Arts Festival

Held in October, MIAF is Melbourne's leading arts festival showcasing music, theatre, dance and arts and

takes over all outdoor spaces and many venues. It has a reputation for cutting-edge presentation and communication and is one of the biggest festivals in Australia.

October 8-23 2010, various venues, www.melbournefestival.com.au

Port Fairy Folk Festival

Port Fairy Folk is one of Australia's favourite and most endearing music festivals. Held in the tiny fishing village four hours drive from Melbourne on the Great Ocean Road, this event has hosted over 500 performers and thousands of migratory Mutton Birds in March for 35 years. The festival has grown with its audience to encompass all forms of folk music and the folk experience. Camping, fantastic music, great ocean swells and all kinds of experiences are the norm for the not-for-profit organisation who all pull together for an extraordinary weekend.

March 11-14 2011, www.portfairyfolkfestival.com

Brunswick Music Festival

This is Australia's only inner-city festival of folk and world music and rather than concentrate on large venues, it crosses the city in medium and small spaces and opens with the grand Sydney Rd Street

Party with seven stages and a wealth of performances. International artists get down with the locals for a ten-day celebration which encompasses the Melbourne Folk Club, free events and the Counihan Gallery which presents their annual Women's Salon exhibition.

Mid March 2011, www.brunswickmusicfestival.com.au

Karavan! Melbourne International Gypsy Music Festival

2010 saw the launch of Karavan! – Australia's first annual Gypsy festival – headlined by Hungarian sensation Besh o droM en route to WOMADelaide and supported by six bands and DJs. Next year will see the festival grow and bring in more bands for a good, old-fashioned, vodka-fuelled knees up.

Feb 2011, www.karavanfestival.com

