

MOSCOW

GOING TRAVELLING?

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Moscow is surprisingly multicultural, reflected in a burgeoning music scene that attracts international as well as local stars. Dmitry Ukhov reports

Anyone who's been to Moscow in recent years will know that it's nothing like the sombre, monolithic Soviet capital of years gone by. A lot has changed in the 15 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union and nowhere is that clearer than in Moscow – new buildings have shot up, old ones have been restored or recreated and there are restaurants, clubs and music venues a go go.

There's been a patriotic sentiment behind much of the revival in Moscow fostered by the mayor Yury Luzhkov, who has been in power since 1992 – for instance the rebuilding of the Kazan Cathedral on Red Square, (although this was planned pre-Luzhkov, pictured below); the vast Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (both destroyed in the 1930s) and the rather ridiculous statue of Peter the Great (pictured above left), by Tsereteli on the Moscow River. But despite this there's virtually nothing on television or in the print media about traditional Russian music. There are some quality folk groups in the capital like the Pokrovsky Ensemble and Sirin Choir who can both be occasionally heard in Moscow in churches and theatres. There is, though, a possibility of hearing some spontaneous traditional music if you head out to the popular flea market at Izmailovsky Park on a Sunday. For years, this is where first generation city dwellers came to remember their rural culture and even today there are sometimes groups of folk accordionists who gather to play.

As the former capital of Imperial Russia and Soviet Russia, Moscow has long been a multicultural city – street names like Georgian Street, Armenian Lane and Ordynka (which refers to the Orda, the Golden Horde and Russia's one-time Tartar rulers) attest to that. Many citizens of the former USSR are resident in the city and, although many are living in appalling conditions, there's even a musical group to be found amongst the Tajik builders in the suburbs. As anywhere, it's pop stars (either international like Madonna, or local like Zemphira) who attract the big audiences. But it's possible to hear concerts by musicians from the more colourful regions of the former Soviet Union like Tuva and Central Asia in venues like Dom (such as Davlatmand Kholov of Tajikistan) and some big-name world music artists like Omara Portuondo and Rachid Taha, who both performed in Moscow recently.

Substantial concert and event listings can be found in English in *The Moscow Times*, published every weekday: www.themoscowtimes.com and in Russian in *Time Out* and on the Afisha website: www.afisha.ru

Main image: the reconstructed Kazan Cathedral, Red Square. Inset: Peter the Great statue by Tsereteli and the rebuilt Christ the Saviour Cathedral



This image: Alexander Leonov from the group Va-Ta-Ga on stage at the DOM Cultural Centre. Left: Azerbaijan's Beilyar Folk Mugam playing during the On the Carpet series

VENUES

Dom Cultural Centre

Moscow's most reliable venue for alternative music, including world and roots, avant-garde, improvised and electronic music. Renowned folk singer Sergei Starostin curates the folk programming, with a Russian dance club on Thursdays at least twice a month. There are frequent themed series and seasons (*Deep Throat*, a festival of the voice, and *On the Carpet*, featuring oriental music) and ETNA, a festival of World Music held the second weekend of June. Dom also has its own record label.

Bolshoi Ovchinnikovsky Pereulok 24, building 4 (Metro: Novokuznetskaya) +7 495 253 7236, www.dom.com.ru

Veresk

A new place in the popular 'artists quarter' of Arbat. The venue hosts folk-rock and acoustic performances, including unplugged sessions of well-known performers, often in folk or traditional-style music. Veresk recently organised the first folk-rock festival in the beautiful surroundings of Kolomenskoe, the closest you can get to the feeling of rural Russia in the capital with its traditional architecture and wooded hills.

Old Arbat 22 (Metro: Arbatskaya, Smolenskaya) +7 495 144 0833, www.veresk.ru

Ethno-Club Yurta

Out from the centre of town, but easy to reach by metro, this surprising venture is hidden at the top of the Trampolin shopping mall and hosts Asiatic-inspired evenings and a shop for exotic articles and books.

Shopping Centre Trampolin (Metro:

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

For folk and ethnic instruments, as well as clothes and other objects – often of a New Age variety:

Byeliye Oblaka (White Clouds), Pokrovka ul 4, 2nd floor (Metro: Kitai-Gorod) +7 095 921 6125

Put k sebe (The Path to Oneself), Leningradsky Pr 10a (Metro: Byelorusskaya) +7 095 257 3987

Molodyezhnaya) +7 095 710 7341,

www.odinmir.ru (Russian only)

Romen Gypsy Theatre

Founded in 1931, the first and only permanent Gypsy Theatre in the world which presents many musical shows. The popular Russian Gypsy trio Romen as well as the Loyko ensemble came from the theatre's musicians.

Leningradsky Pr 30/32 (Metro: Byelorusskaya, Dynamo) +7 495 999 1422

Moscow House of Nationalities

A Soviet-style municipal institution that arranges an annual festival called *Beauty Will Save the World* featuring the various peoples of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

Novaya Bassmannaya 4 (Metro: Krasniye Vorota) www.mdn.ru (Russian only)

Moskovsky Mezhdunarodny Dom Musiki (Moscow International House of Music)

A new theatre and concert space with three halls programming well-known jazz and world music artists. In 2006-7 the Pokrovsky Ensemble hosts a series of concerts entitled *From Folklore to Avant-Garde*.

Kosmodamiyanskaya Emb 58, +7 095 730 1011, www.mmdm.ru

Kitaisky Letchik Jao-Da

A popular live-music club strategically situated in the centre of town opposite the former Central Committee of the Communist Party and the largest Moscow synagogue. DJs and live bands, with world music two or three times a month that has included Manu Chao, the Skatalites and Fanfare Ciocărlia.

Lybyansky Proezd 25 (Metro: Kitai-Gorod) +7 495 623 2896, www.jao-da.ru (Russian only)

Proekt OGI

Basically a literary café in a quiet courtyard. Two halls – one devoted to poetry and literary events, the other to music.

Potapovskiy Per 8/12, building 2 (Metro: Chistiye Prudi, Turgenyevskaya) +7 495 627 5366, www.proektogi.ru (Russian only)

FESTIVALS

Pustiye Kholmy (Empty Hills)

This takes place in the middle of June in Tarusa (about 100km south of Moscow in Kaluga province). A slightly hippy-style affair with traditional and world music ranging from klezmer to reggae and dub. www.holmi.ru (Russian only)



Hermitage Garden

A pleasant small park in the centre of Moscow close to the Pushkin memorial that hosts concerts of all sorts during the summer.

Karetny Ryad 3 (Metro: Chekhovskaya, Tverskaya, Pushkinskaya) +7 495 299 0432

Ethnolife/Ethnoland

An extraordinary festival running from mid June to the end of August at the Sorochani sports complex about 50km north of Moscow, near Kurovo village. Organised by Ethnolife, the festival aims to be a "place of world cultures and traditions" with music, clean living and a concern for the environment aimed at a young, technologically-aware generation. There are musical workshops and performances, visual arts, cinema and video and outdoor activities.

www.ethnolife.ru (Russian only)

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