

PARIS

→ SOUNDING OUT



A decade ago, *Songlines* inaugurated its Sounding Out series by exploring Paris to better understand why it is widely considered the planet's 'world music centre'. On the surface, the city's 30 million annual visitors might consider little has changed.

Musicians continue to arrive from all continents, taking advantage of an unquenchable thirst for music from elsewhere; clubs and concert halls like The New Morning, Théâtre de la Ville, Café de la Danse and Satellit Café remain prominent; the Africolor festival, Festival de l'Imaginaire and Fête de la Musique remain poles of experimentation. On any given week, the excellent free *Lylo* magazine advertises nearly 100 top-class world music concerts each weekend, and around 20 on week nights.

But not all is well in the Kingdom of la Musique du Monde. Economic rigour has hit the music industry. Populist political parties are feeding on social discontent to encourage the French to close in on themselves. And a decade of draconian immigration laws have sapped the enthusiasm of foreign artists, driving many to seek greener pastures.

"African musicians put Paris on the world music map four decades ago," explains Soro Solo, a veteran Ivorian journalist who co-hosts *LAfrique Enchantée* on national radio France Inter. "Manu Dibango, Francis Bebey, Salif Keita, Khaled, they set up

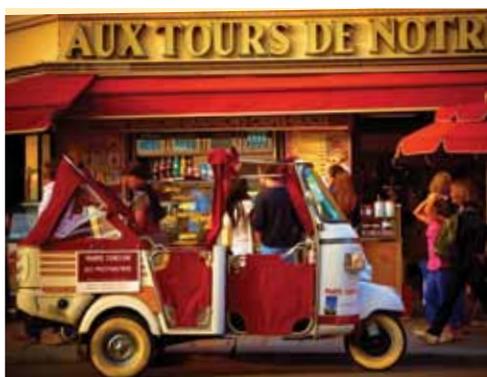
shop here. Nowadays, Paris is only a temporary stop, it's too much hassle, musicians prefer Scandinavia, Germany or the US."

Surviving has indeed become a struggle: legislation is forcing many clubs to curb their live staples as police enforce new laws on after-hours 'noise'. There are pockets of resistance, however, beginning with the cultural defiance of the Socialist Party-dominated town hall. Its 11 years in power have helped spawn music centres like Fleury Goutte d'Or-Barbara, Maison des Métallos, Le Centquatre and the Maison du Hip-Hop. Tunisian-born mayor Bertrand Delanoë's two mandates have included the creation of events like the month-long Paris Plages and la Nuit Blanche.

Committed individuals have used ingenuity and acumen at places like La Bellevilloise and Point Ephémère.

"These clubs are at the heart of a revival centred on music coming from the Balkans, the Caribbean and Latin America," remarks seasoned observer Robert Dray. For decades, Dray has

been monitoring the Parisian scene for musicians for his Very Good Music agency. "You have the feeling people are looking to escape the morose atmosphere and are turning out in impressive numbers in a catharsis with musicians from different worlds," he suggests. Paris thus remains musically defiant and innovative – if you are prepared to dig deep and try out the following selection of places and events that are defying the French recession.



The French capital has long had a reputation for its eclectic music scene. Daniel Brown portrays a city that, despite the recession, is still buzzing with music



The Halle aux Oliviers restaurant in the rough and ready La Bellevilloise

VENUES

La Bellevilloise

Within seven years of transforming this giant hangar, this cooperative has become one of Paris' most innovative and vibrant venues. From Radio Nova's exhilarating Nuits Zébrées to the Jazz'n'Klezmer festival, there's something for everyone on the four stages. **19/21 Rue Boyer, 75020, +33 1 46 360 707, métro: Gambetta or Ménilmontant, www.labellevilloise.com**

La Maroquinerie

Neighbour to La Bellevilloise, this two-floor complex organises over 230 concerts annually bringing the best of world and contemporary music. The atmospheric basement concert hall can cram in 500 aficionados who can then chill at the restaurant and terrace above. **23 Rue Boyer, 75020, +33 1 40 33 35 05, métro: Gambetta or Ménilmontant, www.lamaroquinerie.fr**

The New Morning

Founded by charismatic Egyptian Eglal Farhi, the outwardly discreet

jazz and world music club in one of the capital's most cosmopolitan neighbourhoods retains all the charm and warmth that enticed the likes of Chet Baker and Ron Carter to open the venue in April 1981. **7 Rue Petites Ecuries, 75010, +33 1 45 23 51 41, métro: Chateau d'Eau, www.newmorning.com**

Théâtre de la Ville

This splendid Haussmann-era building continues to offer outstanding traditional ensembles and acoustic bands from Asia, Africa, Polynesia and the Americas. The classic programming is overseen by playwright Emmanuel Demarcy-Mota who inherits a long tradition of stunning discoveries: Cesaria Evora, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Zakir Hussain were unknown quantities in Europe before the Théâtre helped launch their international careers. **2 Place du Châtelet, 75004, +33 1 42 74 22 77, métro: Châtelet, www.theatredelaville-paris.com**

Café de la Danse

Celebrating its 20th birthday, this attractive concert hall near Bastille continues to ally established artists

with up-and-comers. Its fabulous acoustics have recently attracted the likes of Danyël Waro and new Tunisian find Emel Mathlouthi. **5 Passage Louis Philippe, 75011, +33 1 47 00 57 59, métro: Bastille, www.cafedeladanse.com**

Satellit Café

Not quite the force it used to be, this club, hidden in one of central Paris' most inconspicuous streets, continues to programme new talents, offering dynamic blends of live music and DJ sets that have its faithful followers dancing till dawn. **44 Rue de la Folie Méricourt, 75011, +33 1 47 00 48 87, métro: Parmentier, www.satellit-cafe.com**

Cabaret Sauvage

This venue is a step into another epoch with a décor that mixes circus and Paris' *années folles*. Intimate booths and mirrors surround a large dance floor. Its excellent acoustics bring to stage the sounds from North Africa, the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa. **Parc de la Villette, 211 Avenue Jean Jaurès, 75019, +33 1 42 09 03 09, métro: La Villette, www.cabaretsauvage.com**

Centre Musical Fleury Goutte d'Or-Barbara

To discover what is cooking in the Parisian underground, hang out here. The five-floor building is devoted to unearthing rawer talents. Since last year, a dozen of the best have been showcased in June's FGO Lab' Festival. **1 Rue De Fleury, 75018, +33 1 53 09 30 70, métro: Barbès-Rochechouart, www.fgo-barbara.fr**

La Java

This club goes back almost a century when it hosted the likes of Django Reinhardt. Since the 90s, it has become a low-key hub for Latino sounds with healthy dollops of Balkan, Ethiopian and hip-hop. **105 Rue du Faubourg du Temple, 75010, +33 1 42 02 20 52, métro: Goncourt, www.la-java.fr**

Petit-Bain

A new addition to the music scene, this barge is the little sister of the Guinguette Pirate and neighbour to the renowned Batofar. It seeks to be an urban laboratory for hybrid music emerging from Colombia, Brazil or the Parisian suburbs. The likes of Sally Nyolo, Vieux Farka



Don your life jackets for a night afloat on the Petit-Bain



Working up a sweat at the Satellit Café

Touré and Cheikh Lô have donned life jackets to perform here. **7 Ports de la Gare, 75013, +33 1 80 48 49 81, métro: Quai de la Gare or Bibliothèque François Mitterrand, www.petitbain.org**

L'Alimentation Générale

Set in one of the hottest spots in central Paris and boasting one of the most original world music programmes in the city. Swing to Afro-Brazilian beats, warm Afro-jazz tunes or blasting fanfares, for less than a half-pint of beer, from Wednesdays to Sundays. **64 Rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud, 75011, +33 1 43 55 42 50, métro: Parmentier, www.alimentation-generale.net**

La Flèche d'Or

This atmospheric club used to be a train station linking Paris with London's Victoria Station. Since it re-opened, over 3,000 musicians have performed on its creaky stage, and it has a reputation for featuring the talents of tomorrow. **102 Bis Rue de Bagnolet, 75020, +33 1 44 64 01 02, métro: Porte de Bagnolet or Alexandre Dumas, www.flechedor.fr**

Musée du quai Branly

'Here is where cultures dialogue.' Such is the logo of this ethnographical museum with a programme of traditional music and ambitious jazz experiments. **37 Quai Branly, 75007, +33 1 56 61 70 00, métro: Alma-Marceau or Iéna, www.quaibrany.fr**

Institut du Monde Arabe

Set on the banks of the Seine, l'IMA, as Parisians call the home to Arab culture in France, hosts weekly concerts honouring the musical spirit and traditions of the Arab world. **1 Rue des Fossés Saint-Bernard, 75236, +33 1 40 51 38 38, métro: Jussieu or Cardinal-Lemoine, www.imarabe.org**

La Maison des Cultures du Monde

This venerable centre celebrates its 30th birthday this year with a plethora of concerts. 2012 also marks 15 years of the Festival de l'Imaginaire (see right). **101 Boulevard Raspail, 75006, +33 1 45 44 72 30, métro: Notre-Dame-des-Champs, Rennes or Saint-Placide, www.mcm.asso.fr**

FESTIVALS

Festival de l'Imaginaire

Over the last 15 years, the Maison des Cultures du Monde has hosted artists that truly test our imagination with their otherworldly virtuosity. They have recently allied themselves with similar-minded partner institutions to welcome acts like popular opera from Vietnam, Sinawi music from Korea and Sufi ceremonies from Albania. Held between March and June every year, this is a way to travel deep into the hearts of remote communities on the other side of the world, for the price of a métro ticket. **www.festivaldelimaginaire.com**



SOLEDAD NUJICA

Festival Villes des Musiques du Monde

Since the turn of this century, 17 Paris suburbs to the north have come together around a music programme allying traditional groups with modern talents. Held between mid-October and mid-November, an easy métro ride will bring you face-to-face with bands from Latin America, Africa... or just round the corner. **www.villesdesmusiquesdumonde.com**

Africolor

For 24 years, Philippe Conrath has been trying to chase away the winter blues with a couple dozen concerts in Paris' outlying suburbs. He has largely been successful thanks to his ability to snoop out outstanding yet unheard talents, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, and to be the first to bring them to France. Africolor is also known for its annual experimentations between seasoned artists, many of which end up as recordings for Conrath's music label Cobalt. **www.africolor.com**

Fête de la Musique

June 21 has almost become as synonymous with France as camembert. The brainchild of then-minister of culture Jack Lang, this fête is celebrating its 30th birthday this year. It is likely to be yet another smörgåsbord of rowdy rock bands and high-class free concerts at Bastille or under the Eiffel Tower. **www.fetedelamusique.culture.fr**



Habib Koite with a 250-strong childrens choir at Festival Villes des Musiques du Monde