

SYDNEY

Seth Jordan explores a multicultural metropolis known for its gleaming harbour, Opera House and diverse musical tastes

Bennelong Point, the piece of land where Sydney's famed Opera House now stands, is named after an Aboriginal man who befriended governor Arthur Phillip when the first British convict settlement was established in 1788. It's a fitting reminder that long before captain James Cook 'discovered' Australia, for over 50,000 years the Sydney area was home to the indigenous Cadigal/Eora people. But in 2008 ultra-modern Sydney reflects more of the present than the past, as successive waves of immigration have transformed it into one of the world's most vibrant multicultural cities.

With a population of over four million, 70% of Sydneysiders are a

combination of two or more ethnic backgrounds, and over a third were born overseas. Representing over 200 nationalities, the cultural supremacy of the city's early British/Irish heritage has given way to more recent influxes from southern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South America and New Zealand. As a result, Sydney's music scene – dominated as recently as the 1980s by a mono-cultured mix of commercial pop acts and hard-rocking indie bands – today offers a much more diverse selection of worldly sounds. A city that likes to party, Sydney went for it in a big way when it hosted the 2000 Olympics, an event that attracted world music artists from around the planet and immeasurably boosted the city's international profile.

Blessed with some of the world's best weather and surrounded by its glittering harbour, Sydney is by nature a

casual outdoor city. While local musicians justifiably bemoan the lack of sufficient indoor venues, you'll find as much world music being performed live in Sydney's parks and at free community street festivals than in clubs. Some of the finest global gems are often hidden away in the pubs and members' clubs of Sydney's inner and outer suburbs. With some of Sydney's most accomplished musicians rarely playing outside of their own tight-knit communities, it's well worth checking the many local ethnic newspapers for concert announcements.

Seeking something distinctively Australian after all that multicultural fare? You can usually hear the organic sound of a didgeridoo being blown by heading down to the ferry wharves at Circular Quay, near the Opera House, gently reminding us of those dreamtime days before captain Cook sailed his ship into Botany Bay.



St Mary's Cathedral flanked by Cook and Phillip Park, downtown Sydney

BRETT FARRENS/STONISKA AUSTRALIA

VENUES

Café Carnivale

Raised from the ashes of a state government-funded festival called Carnivale, which folded a few years ago, Musica Viva's Café Carnivale – held at three different venues – continues to showcase a wide selection of high-quality local multicultural talent. Its weekly live sessions range from acoustic folk soloists to electrified African and Latin bands.

Eastside Music Café, 395 Oxford St, Paddington, +61 (0)2 8394 6666

Glen Street Theatre, Glen Street, Belrose, +61 (0)2 9975 1455

**Riverside Theatres, Corner Church & Market Streets, Parramatta, +61 (0)2 8839 3399
www.musicaviva.com.au**

The Basement

Classic cellar jazz club in the heart of the city which presents a steady parade of both



Tango time at Café Carnivale

SHANE BOGARD

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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FESTIVALS

Sydney Festival

This major three-week city celebration has grown into one of Australia's premier international festivals. With a reputation for innovative programming, it annually offers a broad range of music, dance, theatre and visual arts. Spread across numerous indoor and outdoor venues – with many free events – its January date virtually assures good mid-summer weather. This year's worldly highlights were Björk, New York's Spanish Harlem Orchestra, French Gypsy/ska band Babylon Circus, Kiwi power-dubsters Kora, all-star Aboriginal ensemble The Black Arm Band and a tribute to veteran indigenous singer-songwriter Kev Carmody.

www.sydneyfestival.org.au

Yabun

This low-key Aboriginal festival is the indigenous way of simultaneously celebrating and mourning the national public holiday

– Australia Day – on January 26, a date that commemorates the founding of the first British penal colony at Sydney Cove. Alternatively known to local indigenous Kooris as 'Invasion Day', the Yabun event has become both a festive occasion and a political statement of survival. Always presenting a solid line-up of traditional and contemporary Aboriginal talent, this year's 'deadly' (Aboriginal slang for 'cool') festival featured didgeridoo master Mark Atkins, Darwin diva Shellie Morris and Melbourne rocker Dan Sultan.

www.gadigal.org.au

Darling Harbour Fiesta

Taking place on the long October weekend, this gathering has quickly become a major draw card for Sydney's Latin community, and all who love to dance. It features a *caliente* programme of local and international Latin American talent.

www.darlingharbour.com



Australia Day's Yabun Festival

The Great Escape

Only a couple years old, this mostly rock fest is still finding its feet, but shows great promise. Their 2007 international line-up included Ziggy Marley, Lee Scratch Perry, Gogol Bordello and Fat Freddy's Drop. They've recently shifted dates from the Easter weekend to early October.

www.thegreatescape.net.au

Community Festivals

Throughout the year, local councils and multicultural communities host their own vibrant festivals. The best fests are Leichhardt's Italian Festival (May/June, www.sydneyitalianfestival.com.au), Newtown (November, www.newtowncentre.org/festival), Glebe (November, www.glebemusicfestival.com) and Auburn's Street Festival (September).

Sydney Festival – a global summertime extravaganza



international and Aussie-based world acts. Recent global visitors have included Ernest Ranglin, Taj Mahal and Omar Sosa. Many of Sydney's best reggae, African and Latin performers play here regularly too.

29 Reiby Place, Circular Quay,
+61 (0)2 9251 2797, www.thebasement.com.au

Sydney Opera House

One of the world's most impressive and recognisable modern buildings has hosted some of world music's biggest names. Last year saw performances by the likes of Salif Keita, Mariza, Toumani Diabaté, Yasmin Levy, Idan Raichel and Cesaria Evora. Surprisingly the acoustics in the main hall are appalling, but the smaller venues – the Studio and the Opera Theatre – sound fantastic.

Bennelong Point, +61 (0)2 9250 7111,
www.sydneyoperahouse.com

La Cita

Probably the hottest Latin club in Sydney at the moment, La Cita is part of the Tokyo-based Salsa Sudada brand of bar/restaurants. Salsa, *bachata* and reggaeton dance classes are held throughout the week, with live local bands on Thursdays and Latin DJs in the upstairs bar. Nice water views too.

9 Lime Street, King Street Wharf, City,
+61 (0)2 9299 9100, www.lacita.com.au

The Vanguard

Intimate bohemian blues'n'roots club in trendy inner-city student suburb. A mixed bag of local, national and increasingly international performers, including nu-Gypsy band Monsieur Camembert, Aboriginal troubadour Archie Roach and American fretman Bob Brozman.

42 King Street, Newtown, +61 (0)2 9557 7992
www.thevanguard.com.au

WORLD MUSIC MEDIA

Web

Diaspora Worldbeat
www.diaspora.com.au

Radio

SBS 1107 AM/97.7FM National multicultural
www.sbs.com.au
2000 FM 98.5 Community multicultural
www.2000fm.com
Koori Radio 93.7FM Aboriginal.
www.gadigal.org.au

Print

Vibe Australia (Aboriginal, www.vibe.com.au); and the street press *The Drum Media* (www.drummedia.com.au), *Brag* and the newly launched *Time Out Sydney* (www.timeoutsydney.com.au).



ROUGH GUIDES DO DOWN UNDER "CAPTURES THE VIGOUR AND EXCITEMENT"

The Observer reviewing *The Rough Guide to Sydney*



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