The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ex-Fugee Embarks on Two-Month Russian Tour

By Nick Dowson

February 08, 2011



Forte has rebuilt his career since leaving prison, recording more than 60 songs and playing over 40 shows. He has two upcoming gigs set for Moscow. **John Forte**

Grammy-nominated musician John Forte, whose life has taken him from poverty to private school to stardom and jail, will soon begin a two-month tour of Russia.

The singer, producer and rapper was once in The Fugees but spent eight years in jail after being caught with cocaine in a drug bust at Newark Airport in 2000. His sentence was commuted by then-President George W. Bush in 2008 after a campaign supported by Carly Simon, whose son went to school with Forte.

Another former classmate, Christophe Charlier, deputy CEO in oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov's Onexim Group, is behind Forte's trip to Russia.

"I have known of John's talent ever since we were students together at Exeter. I particularly

enjoy his voice and the poetry and elegance of his lyrics," he said.

The tour will see Forte begin in Moscow with a concert at club B2 on March 1, before going on to St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan and Yekaterinburg. He will then return to the capital for a month of collaboration with local artists and the recording of an album.

"I'm not going with many expectations for the trip ... but with an open mind, aiming to learn as much as possible, as a student of music," Forte said in a phone interview. "I want to learn from the Russians, not just from popular music but from native music, folk music, with open eyes, open ears and an open heart."

He said he was interested to see what Russians thought of his lyrics and that he was up for dropping into bars for impromptu gigs while he is in the country.

Forte learned to play the guitar while in prison and will sing and play on the tour. He said that musically he has moved on from The Fugees, "which were great for globalizing hip-hop and urban music," but now "music has become very substantive for me" and is less about selling records.

The tour will see a blog and a video journal come out of it as well as an album.

"I hope that the project will portray the beauty of Russia to people who would not otherwise have had a chance to discover it," Charlier said. "I am also excited to showcase John's talent and music to a wider audience."

The tour will end with a charity concert at club Milk Moscow on April 24 to raise funds for three charities: The Happy Hearts Fund, set up by a survivor of the 2004 Tsunami disaster; the Naked Hearts Fund, which builds and supports safe play areas in Russia; and Operation Smile, which provides surgeries for children with a cleft lip or other facial deformities.

John Forte plays on March 1 at B2 and on April 24 at Milk Moscow.
B2: 8 Bolshaya Sadovaya. Metro Mayakovskaya. 650-9918, B2club.ru.
Milk: 9 Ulitsa Sergeya Makeyeva. Metro Ulitsa 1905 Goda. 726-0998, milkclub.ru.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/02/08/ex-fugee-embarks-on-two-month-russian-tour-a4865