The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Sounds of Space Rock to Take Off at Club Milk

By Alec Luhn

April 19, 2012



Spanish group Exxasens returns for the festival, which hits Moscow on Saturday and Sunday, after shows in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg.

Russia's space industry may be languishing after a series of failed launches, but space rock is on the rise here, if this weekend's Astral 2 music festival is any indication.

Astral's international roster features a variety of musical flavors including space rock, post-rock, post-metal, shoegaze and ambient, but in general the groups shun vocals and embrace sonic experimentation within the format of a traditional rock band. Most sets will be accompanied by video performances.

Astral "was based on the idea of a festival of so-called 'cosmic' music," said Tatyana Donchenko, spokesperson for the indie label FBITS, or Flowers Blossom in the Space, which is organizing the festival.

“Post-rock is a unique genre. … There is no language barrier, and musicians convey their emotions to the public directly,” she added.

The event will come to Moscow’s club Milk on Saturday and Sunday after performances in St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg earlier this week.

This weekend marks the festival’s second incarnation following its staging in Moscow last September, which featured British post-rockers Maybeshewill.

This year, the lineup has grown in geographical reach and includes an American band called, aptly enough, The American Dollar. The New York-based duo plays uplifting post-rock with ambient leanings, much like fellow U.S. duo Lymbyc Systym, who performed in Moscow in March.

The band played Moscow and St. Petersburg in 2011 and has a local fan base, according to Donchenko. In an e-mail, guitarist Richard Cupolo and drummer John Emanuele noted the intensity and patience of Russian audiences and lauded the local music scene.

“It seems there is far more interest in the more obscure instrumental bands,” the pair wrote. “In the States, some people will perhaps know of bands like Sigur Ros or Explosions in the Sky, but that is mostly where it seems to end.”

The other bands hail from Europe. The Spanish group Toundra plays post-metal tinged along with doom metal and stoner rock, while their compatriots Exxasens infuse their post-rock with pop sensibility and musical humor (their track “Sky in Red” fades out to the strains of the Soviet national anthem). The Swedish bands pg.lost and Moonlit Sailor contrast in much the same way: pg.lost dabbles in doom-metal dirges, while Moonlit Sailor is more pop-oriented.

Mooncake and I Am Waiting For You Last Summer represent the Russian post-rock scene with delicate guitar work, heaping helpings of delay and, in the case of I Am Waiting, nods to electronic music styles.

According to Donchenko, the biggest problem organizers face is attracting an audience to listen to nonmainstream music, but she said last fall’s festival brought in about 500 attendees and that this weekend will draw still more.

“We are growing,” she said. “This fall it will be even more awesome.”

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/04/19/sounds-of-space-rock-to-take-off-at-club-milk-a14225