

A Firm Foothold on Jazz for April

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Alexei Kozlov will play The Beatles.

This will be the second year when the world celebrates International Jazz day on April 30, a date established by UNESCO. In 2013, the central events will take place in Istanbul, and one of the exciting announcements made so far applies to legendary musicians, pianist Herbie Hancock and saxophonist Wayne Shorter, regarding their appearance as conductors of a high school big band.

Russia is joining in nominally with saxophonist Igor Butman's participation in the Istanbul events, although the country's neighbor Armenia, for example, is expected to host an extensive open-air event in Yerevan. However, without fixing on that special occasion, Moscow is going to welcome a number of notable jazz ensembles over the next month, and The Moscow Times traditionally draws up its top picks.

"Beatlomania" Festival at Igor Butman Club Na Chistykh Prudakh, April 4-6

This is the third year of the "Beatlomania" festival, one of the numerous events based on the

legacy of the most famous band of all time. This one is particularly enthralling because the task it sets for jazz musicians is to arrange Beatles' songs in an original way, not just to replay them.

Duke Ellington
was greeted
by fans —
and followed
by KGB
agents —
when he first
came to Russia
to perform his
jazz music.

This year, the festival also involves young, talented vocalists — participants of Russia's version of "The Voice" singing television show and the "Novaya Volna" (New Wave) competition, Polina Zizak and Mark Yusim, respectively.

An interesting set is planned for the second day when jazz pianist and flutist Vladimir Nesterenko sits down at a Hammond organ, rented by the Igor Butman Club specially for this event, and shares the stage with the soloist of the Duke Ellington Orchestra, Stafford Hunter on trombone, together with other members of his trio. This will be followed by a performance of the band of saxophonist Denis Shvytov joined by vocalist Aset Samrailova.

On the last day of the festival, music lovers will have a great opportunity to meet saxophonist Alexei Kozlov, one of the veterans of Russian jazz and fusion, and leader of the group Arsenal. In keeping with his multitasking roles on the Moscow scene — he is a club owner, a lecturer and a musician — the saxophonist will present a musical lecture about the influence that The Beatles had on the street culture of Soviet Russia, to be followed by a full set of music by the legendary British band.

Steve Lukather at the Moscow International House of Music, April 12–13

Although guitarist and vocalist Steve Lukather regularly performs with a bunch of jazz fusion acts, his main genre fits into pop rock and features smart and powerful guitar solos. The American artist has been nominated for 12 Grammys and has actually won five.

Lukather emerged in the late 70s as a member of the award-winning Californian hard rock band Toto, which is going to celebrate its 35th anniversary this year with a world tour. The guitarist himself has successfully released his 7th studio album, "Transition," earlier in January and is going to introduce it to the audience in Moscow two days in a row.

Atomic at Cultural Center Dom, April 20

This joint Norwegian-Swedish band, which primarily specializes in contemporary European jazz, unites musicians who are known for being members of other different free jazz ensembles.

For more than 10 years, Atomic has continued their search through the fresh sound of European jazz, a style of music that sounds rather avant-garde for bebop and post-bop adepts, but is bound to interest the regular audiences of high-quality experimental places like the band's upcoming Dom venue. Atomic mixes melancholic Scandinavian rhythmic structures with sophisticated yet thrilling solos, which make them extremely popular not only in Europe but in the United States and Japan as well.

Duke Ellington Orchestra at the Moscow International House of Music, April 24

When the orchestra of the legendary Duke Ellington first arrived in the Soviet Union in 1971, it was received as prophetic. Dozens of fans, along with KGB agents, followed his orchestra from city to city and in St. Petersburg a group of local young jazz musicians made their way through the security to the airfield to salute their hero by playing "When the Saints Go Marching In."

This year, the only orchestra that has the legal freedom to play the songs of the renowned jazz composer turns 90. Their anniversary sets an occasion for another visit to the land of Ellington's ardent fans. Duke Ellington's Orchestra will perform such world famous compositions of the maestro as "Caravan" and "Take the A Train."

It is also worthy of a mention that trombonist Stafford Hunter, who is going to appear both at the "Beatlomania" festival and on the bandstand as part of Duke Ellington Orchestra, has a solo performance at the Igor Butman Club Na Chistykh Prudakh on April 7, to be joined by Vladimir Nesterenko Trio. In addition to the trombone, Hunter can play an extremely rare instrument — a seashell!

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