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Chelyabinsk Breaks Through With 'Cosmic' Festival

By Inna Kiyasova

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When people hear the word "metagalaxy," they often imagine something cosmic, associated with a part of the universe. But in fact, the meaning of this word is quite far from astronomical.

"Metagalaxy" is the only international festival and competition of trip-hop, a genre consisting of downtempo electronic music that originated in the early 1990s in Bristol, and experimental hip-hop music in Russia. Musicians from different cities around the former Soviet Union who have passed the last qualifying round of the festival will play at Chelyabinsk's Garage Underground club on April 6.

"Metagalaxy" is the perfect opportunity for young and unknown artists to get noticed. The festival supports all the artists in their quest for self-improvement and strives to discover new names on the Russian abstract music scene.

The trip-hop festival will showcase artists from across the former Soviet Union.

The event was first held in 2011 when it was moderated by a jury of famous electronic musicians from Germany, Holland and Italy. This year, the jury will be even more impressive, featuring Sofa Surfers, The Herbaliser, Hidden Orchestra and Arts of Beatdoctor. Some of these ensembles are signed by well-known record labels like the Dutch Q4 and the British Ninja Tune.

The festival's main guest is an unusual and charismatic pianist from Norway who created the new form of jazz music called "Nu Jazz." The 49-year-old composer and producer, Bugge Wesseltoft, is going to visit "Metagalaxy" as a headliner.

"I'm very curious about what to expect," Wesseltoft said. "I do know the young electronic scene in Russia is very interesting with interesting artists."

He added that there was nothing strange about him coming to Chelyabinsk in a quest for new music.

"Everywhere I travel in the world — Middle East, Asia, Africa — I hear so much good music and meet so many talents. I think today with the Internet one can become famous wherever you are in the world," he said. "Today, listeners want to hear and discover new and unique music that sounds different. So in my opinion, artists coming from 'strange' places in the world will have a big advantage in the future, being exotic and different. So please just keep on working! Soon you will be more known and more interesting than 'Western' music."

Wesseltoft is preparing a brand new electronic solo set for the visitors of "Metagalaxy" and might also play some of his older tracks, though normally he just prefers to be creative and spontaneously improvise groovy music.

The winner of "Metagalaxy" will receive 20,000 rubles ($630) while the second and third places are bestowed with award cups.

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

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