The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Syrian Wedding Singer Headlines Electro Music Festival

By Timothy Misir

July 02, 2014



Wedding singer Omar Souleyman will make his Russian debut Sunday.

Moscow's best nightclub Arma 17 may have closed its doors but fans can rejoice this weekend as the team behind the nightclub are putting on "Outline," a two-day festival on a man-made island on the Moskva River.

The event sees more than 50 acts on four stages at Mnevnikovskaya Poima this weekend, split into an evening program on Saturday and a day program on Sunday.

The highlight of Saturday is undoubtedly minimal techno producers Ricardo Villalobos and Max Loderbauer, who will perform their "Re: ECM" set, which samples recordings from famed German jazz and classical music record label ECM, including compositions by Estonian minimalist composer Avro Pärt and Russian composer Alexander Knaifel.

Petrozavodsk experimental folk duo Love Cult, who are releasing a new track every day for a

year to celebrate their sixth anniversary, will also perform, as will top Russian electronic music export Nina Kraviz.

See Moscow Times interview with Love Cult: Love Cult's Hazy Soundscapes Recall the Frozen North

Other acts to look forward to on Saturday include Finnish ambient musician Vladislav Delay, who will perform with German artist AGF, who will provide live visuals, and British musician Darren Cunningham, better known as Actress, who has released four critically acclaimed albums of abstract post-dubstep he calls "R&B concrète."

On Sunday the festival begins with a day program headlined by Omar Souleyman, a Syrian wedding singer-turned international pop star. Souleyman, always dressed in sunglasses and traditional Syrian clothes, first toured the West in 2009 and quickly rose to stardom, playing the Nobel Peace Prize concert in 2013. He will perform in Russia for the first time at Outline.

Souleyman sings in Kurdish and Arabic using and blending different styles from the region such as dabke, a kind of Arab folk dance with Western beats and keyboards. He has more than 700 releases to his name — mostly on cassette bootlegs of live shows — since he began performing in 1994 but was only discovered by Western audiences after the U.S. label Sublime Frequencies put out "Highway to Hassake," compiled from his cassette releases, in 2006.

His first properly recorded album was released in 2013, but even he agrees that he is best experienced live. "When I go into the studio, I have a fixed program I have to go with; I don't have the luxury of making mistakes, of singing what I want," Souleyman said, in a recent interview with British newspaper The Guardian.

Souleyman's music video for "Leh Jani" which brought him international acclaim. (YouTube).

Also on Sunday, Moritz von Oswald, one-time member of German new wave band Palais Schaumburg and now a well-respected electronic music producer, will perform with Dominican reggae singer Paul St. Hilaire, aka Tikiman, who made his name as the voice of Berlin's deep space dub techno scene.

The final day will see a line-up of more than 30 international and Russian DJs including Arma 17 founder DJ Abelle and Detroit house music producer and legend Theo Parrish. The latter will perform a rare live set with a full band playing tracks from his "Sound Signature" label and music from his soon to be released album "Footwork."

Outline takes place on July 5 and 6, 102A Ulitsa Nizhny Mnevniki. More information at www.outline-festival.ru*.*

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Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/02/syrian-wedding-singer-headlines-electro-music-festival-

a36969