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Abu Dhabi named as the International Jazz Day Host – here's what to expect

Get ready to jazz up your calendars

by Lone Summers
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Abu Dhabi is set to make some seriously groovy waves in 2025 as the Global Host for International Jazz Day.

Mark your calendars for April 30 because this cultural hotspot is gearing up to showcase its unique blend of Arabian and Emirati traditions with the universal language of jazz.



Teaming up with the region's Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT), Abu Dhabi will be putting its rich cultural heritage in the spotlight.

Fans of the genre can get pumped to hear the haunting melodies of the Oud, Qanoon, and Ney mixing with jazzy rhythms, introducing the world to the captivating sounds of Arabic Jazz.

As a UNESCO Creative City of Music, Abu Dhabi is all about celebrating the fusion of local musical traditions with jazz, a relationship that spans generations. Thanks to significant investments in its cultural sector, Abu Dhabi has become a global arts hub, attracting top cultural institutions while nurturing local talent and preserving its Arabic roots.

But there's more to it than just music. International Jazz Day in Abu Dhabi will also feature educational programs and community outreach initiatives. Local schools will get a musical boost with workshops and masterclasses hosted by institutions like Berklee Abu Dhabi and New York University Abu Dhabi, inspiring the next generation of jazz enthusiasts to make smooth tunes. Cue the saxophone.

Since its inception by UNESCO in 2011, International Jazz Day has been a powerful force for unity, celebrating jazz's ability to foster dialogue, freedom of expression, and respect for diversity. With over 2 billion people worldwide impacted through performances, educational programs, and community initiatives, International Jazz Day continues to grow under the guidance of the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and jazz icon Herbie Hancock are buzzing about the announcement.

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, said: “International Jazz Day heads to Abu Dhabi in 2025, infusing new energy and basking in the mélange of cultures. The celebration in this cosmopolitan city will embody the power of jazz to unite and delight in our shared humanity.”



Herbie Hancock, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, also said: “Jazz is a language of unity and a beacon of hope that continues to inspire new generations of artists from all corners of the globe. In Abu Dhabi, a renowned group of international artists will join us to share their musical vision, build bridges through the power of music, and create harmony in our diverse world.”

And HE Mohamed Al Mubarak, Chairman of DCT Abu Dhabi, also expressed his excitement: “We are honoured that Abu Dhabi has been selected as the Global Host for the 2025 edition of International Jazz Day. This recognition underscores our city’s thriving music scene and unwavering commitment to cultural diversity and artistic excellence.

“As a UNESCO Creative City of Music, Abu Dhabi has long been a beacon of musical innovation, where traditional Arabian melodies blend seamlessly with global genres, creating a vibrant and unique cultural tapestry. Hosting International Jazz Day reaffirms our dedication to the arts and provides a global stage to showcase our dynamic music scene. Our city consistently celebrates and nurtures musical talent from around the world.”