

International Jazz Day 2026: Mumbai Swings To A Month Of Jazz Brilliance

On April 30, International Jazz Day brings a citywide celebration of rhythm, legends, and live performances across iconic venues

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For Mumbai's live music scene, April could well be called the 'Jazz Month'. After the World Jazz Festival organised on April 19 by Banyan Tree at the St Andrew's Auditorium, Bandra, multiple events will be held on April 30 to celebrate International Jazz Day.

At the Tata Theatre, the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) is organising a concert by Singapore vocalist Alemay Fernandez. She will be joined by pianist Sharik Hassan, bassist Edwin Livingston and drummer Ben Scholtz. The set will include tunes from the Great American Songbook, besides originals.

For a long time, jazz maestro Louiz Banks spearheaded the International Jazz Day celebrations at NCPA, in collaboration with Unesco. Last year, he took the show to St Andrew's. This year, Banks will join an exclusive group at Gaylord restaurant, Churchgate, with vocalists Joe Alvares and Tea, and guitarist Sanjay Divecha. The gig is called Legendary Indulgence.

The Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC) is organising two shows on April 30. Departing from the regular practice of just having a musical performance, the Studio theatre will host the Danceworx, a dance academy that brings the dynamic spirit of jazz to the stage. The event, titled the The Blues Note: A Jazz Testament, is being choreographed by Ammith Kumar.

Next door, at the Cube theatre, percussionist Emmanuel Simon will lead The Latination, a collective dedicated to Latin-jazz and Afro-Cuban jazz. On stage with him are pianist Anurag Naidu, saxophonist Jarryd Rodriguez, bassist Yohaán Pissurlenker and drummer Shivang Kapadia.

While regular jazz venues like The BlueBop Café in Khar, Bonobo in Bandra and Asilo at St Regis, Lower Parel, are likely to have their own programmes, the celebrations spill over to AntiSocial, Lower Parel, on May 2, where guitarist Adil Manuel is curating a Jazz Day gig. There will be performances by the Adil Manuel Collective, featuring vocalists Dominique Cerejo, Alyssa Mendonsa and Shubhangi C, and keyboardist Rahul Wadhwani, besides the group Pink Moss. DJ Aoki Yabaaai will spin some modern jazz.

Mumbai has always had its own devoted audience for jazz, right since the time of the Jazz Yatra, held every alternate year at the erstwhile Rang Bhavan from 1978 to 2002. The festivals Jazz Utsav and Jus' Jazz attracted aficionados for a few years. Today, the two big events are the NCPA International Jazz Festival, held every November, and Banyan Tree's World Jazz Festival in April. NCPA also has the Legends series, which has hosted pianist Cyrus Chestnut, trumpeter Randy Brecker,

and drummers Lenny White and Peter Erskine. At NMACC Grand Theatre, the Sounds of Jazz event has featured Lebanese trumpeter Ibrahim Maalouf and the famed Cuban collective Buena Vista Social Club

In April, US-based pianist Charu Suri played her mix of Hindustani ragas and jazz at the NMACC Studio. This was followed by the World Jazz Festival at Andrew's. Now in its sixth year, the event was also held in New Delhi, Pune, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. The concerts are curated in association with the Netherlands-based saxophonist Alexander Beets, who invites musicians from different regions. This year's line-up had musicians from South Africa and Australia. The Dutch contingent included trumpeter-vocalist Michael Varekamp, Hammond organ player Wiboud Burkens, double bassist Marius Beets and drummer Gijs Dijkhuizen.

The evening began with a Brazilian jazz set by Australian pianist Georgie Aue, who played compositions by Gilberto Gil and Antonio Carlos Jobim, including The Girl From Ipanema, besides Tania Maria's Yatra-Ta. In a diversion, she played the Norah Jones number Don't Know Why. The powerful-voiced and colourfully-dressed Titi Lupizo then joined trumpeter Muneeb Hermans on some traditional South African music, lending a world music flavour.

After the break, the Wiboud Burkens Organ Trio was followed by a final quintet featuring Varekamp on vocals and trumpet, and Alexander Beets on tenor saxophone. There was vintage American music, from classics like Ain't Misbehaving, A Night In Tunisia and What A Wonderful World, to a moving funeral song.

The World Jazz Festival was a great beginning. Gear up for more magic this coming week.