



Egypt celebrates International Jazz Day in the arts center of the Grand Nile Towers in Cairo on Monday, April 30 - Egypt Today/Mustafa Marie

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By: [Mustafa Marie](#)

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CAIRO – 1 May 2018: Egypt celebrated International Jazz Day in the arts center of the Grand Nile Towers in Cairo on Monday, April 30.

Security was tight and many necessary measures were taken in numerous areas of the event, which added a sense of safety amongst the participants. Attendees and jazz enthusiasts mingled together and socialized, conversing and exchanging knowledge about jazz and jazz-related topics, while bands prepared to go on stage and perform.

Different bands performed on stage, while observers cheered them on and sometimes sang along with the vocalists. People of all ages, ethnicities and religions were found among the attendees, which serves the main aim of the event very well — to unite people of all backgrounds, ethnicities and gender in an effort to ignore any conflicts that may be pulling people apart.

Many voluntarily events are organized in Egypt, but many jazz enthusiasts who attended the event announced their hopes for more efforts on the governmental level.



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Ziyad Hisham, a guitarist, freelancer and jazz enthusiast, was among the attendees. He performed with numerous jazz bands, such as Baheya and Sarah. He believes that the Cairo Jazz Festival, organized by Amro Salah, is going to contribute greatly to raising awareness about jazz amongst Egyptians. However, he wishes that Egypt would provide more venues that would focus more on jazz music and help promote it.

Yasmin Farah, a 21-year-old student and fan of jazz music, made sure she attended the event. She stated that she got bored with all the alternative music genres and that she was interested in exploring something new to her.

Jazz concerts are becoming more common in Egypt recently, according to Farah, and she finally gave in to the vibe and decided to attend Cairo's Jazz Festival. She hopes that efforts will be maximized in the future to better market jazz in Egypt and turn Egypt into an international jazz hub.

As a musician, Kamal Naseem expressed his happiness in taking part in such an event. He claimed that jazz became a huge part of many people's lives, not only in Egypt, but worldwide. He said it is quite an honor for such an event to be organized in Egypt, and he hopes for more to come.

Ahmed El Badry, a drummer, said that he always had a passion for jazz; but unfortunately, growing up in Egypt, he had very little resources to further pursue his passion and take it to a higher level, as jazz was not very popular in Egypt. He claims that jazz is for everyone and does not target certain age groups or segments of society. Moreover, he hopes that the media would take a more serious initiative in raising awareness about the jazz scene in Egypt and help promote its activities more often.

Osama Al Taweel has participated in numerous jazz events and concerts both locally and internationally. He is part of the band Telepwetic but also performs as a freelancer with other bands. He believes that, in Egypt, jazz has its own elite community, many of whom attended the event. According to him, jazz now has many subsets, including fusion jazz.

When asked about his opinion regarding the goal of jazz music, Taweel stated that jazz is an important genre of music, which several bands in Egypt use as a style for their performance and for expressing themselves and the obstacles that their generation may be facing.

Boghdady Band, Big Band Society and Cocoon are some examples of jazz-based bands in Egypt that Taweel likes to listen to. He hopes there will be more initiatives taken on the governmental level to promote arts and music in Egypt, especially jazz.

Tatiana Villegas, cultural program specialist at UNESCO's Cairo office, stated that, in 2011, UNESCO designated April 30 of every year as International Jazz Day, with the aim of unifying people through a musical means.

Herbie Hancock, a world famous pianist and UNESCO goodwill ambassador for intercultural dialogue, founded this annual event in an effort to promote unity and harmony amongst people of all races, cultures and backgrounds.

Jazz originated in New Orleans, USA, but quickly spread throughout the world, Villegas said, adding that many subgenres of jazz have even been created, such as Latin jazz and Arab jazz.

Villegas claimed that jazz has a diplomatic role, as it enables people to express themselves in different intercultural dialogues, adding that jazz events are designed to focus on the unity of humanity and bringing people together regardless of their differences. She stated that jazz seeks peace, fights discrimination, and is an excellent way to bring together people when they are trying to find solutions for issues such as gender equality, violence, poverty and more.