(Possible Title) Aussie Music Kulcha

By: Jordan Kalb

Heading down under to the welcoming and relaxed land of the sunburnt country we will take a gander at a variety of music based events from large International gatherings, commercialized events with big name headliners, traveling festivals, a yoga and spirit festival, the club/venue scene, an Aboriginal performance, and Australia’s famed full on psy-trance bush-doofs.

Australia has an outsized selection of diverse events that take place all year round due to the ideal outdoor festival climate. Surrounded by ocean, lush mountain ranges, and dense rainforests this divine island provides quite a sensory experience. Aside from the wet seasons in the tropical northern territories, and the cooler “winter” months in the southern regions this country is a pretty spot on place to host or attend events.

After five years of immense planning and organizing Eclipse 2012 was born. This camping and music festival was an International 7-day conscious gathering in early November in the Australian desert. The music went 24-hours a day over seven stages, and happened over the week of the Total Solar Eclipse. The location in Palmer River, Far North Queensland was precisely chosen so that the eclipse could be viewed from any point on the fest grounds. The line-up was primarily comprised of electronic music and DJ sets, but also showcased were some harmonious performances from live bands. A large scene of healers, workshops, live artists, dancers, and fire experts were present as well. Some of the headliners on the ballot included: Beats Antique, Random Rab, Bird of Prey, Opiuo, Cello Joe, DJ Luna, Double Tech, Dub FX, Eskmo, Fat Freddy’s Drop, DJ Merkaba, Felix DaCat, and Alex and Allison Grey amongst hundreds. There was a moment of silence during the passing of the Total Eclipse, but other than that this festival was a hardcore dance party! The event was very well organized and the experience flowed seamlessly.

Big Day Out was an enormous commercialized one day event that traveled to Sydney, Gold Coast, Adelaide, Melbourne, and Perth. Taking place over the month of January this event held a cast of very well-known headliners including: Red Hot Chili Peppers, Vampire Weekend, The Killers, The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Pretty Lights, Band of Horses, The Bloody Beetroot (LIVE), Kaskade, and Animal Collective. The Gold Coast event in particular was held in the Parklands, a large race-track style arena venue just off the coast. Many attractions, rather distractions, were distributed around the grounds such as carnival rides, El Jimador Mexican Wrestling Ring, and a silent disco. The event designed for the masses was fuelled primarily by alcohol, and the congested herds of people munching fast food didn’t radiate that “peaceful” welcoming feeling as did Eclipse. However, the artists put on some exquisite performances and allowed many to see bands that don’t tour frequently.

Medicine for the People, a spiritually raw band promoting global healing, have been making a massive impact. They recently made the trek down from the United States to do a three month tour of Australia. Making a stop in Byron Bay they performed a show at Kulchajam, a no alcohol no shoes venue. Tucked back in the midst of a booming yoga community this was an ideal spot for their style of music. Spreading spiritual messages of transformation, these glowing souls were a hit in OZ.

Amongst a chain of sustainable communities Mullumbimby was the home to Byron Spirit Festival in early March. This 3-day yoga, music, and spirit fest took place at various venues, yoga studios, and parks around the community. It was a smaller, more humble event with many well-known yoga instructors and Tantra teachers, healers, performers, artists, and musicians like: Mooji, Nahko and Medicine for the People, Gyuto Monks of Tibet, Dave Stringer, Kevin James, Sacred Earth, the Future Sounds of Yoga, The Temple Step Project, and Guru Dass. Yoga classes and healing sessions were held during the day, and a few special concerts took place during the evening hours. Xavier Rudd made a special guest appearance during both Medicine for the People shows. An open invitation chocolate Kundalani yoga ceremony was held one of the evenings. There attendees participated in the drinking of a blessed cocoa while practicing yoga and meditation. A special act of enchanted nature, Dream Drone, took the entire crowd on a journey as they layed down and closed their eyes to the sounds of eight didgeridoo players wandering the dance floor. This experience drew on the hearts and minds, providing space and time for all to come together as they tune into the same vibration, center themselves, live within the moment, and just BE. As part of the festival there was access to Crystal Castles, a sanctuary in the hills of the Shambhala Gardens housing several sacred statues from Indonesia as well as giant crystal formations.

An event at a recently closed down venue, The Casbah, titled Hoodoo Moon welcomed some United States folks, Love and Light, to the land of OZ in early February! Joining these Cali kids were locals Beat Play, Ear Wig, and Lubdub, and traveling from the UK were Quanta and Akasha. VJ Plankton was on the screens, and River Rat and Dreadagade productions covered the audio. The venue, resting above the Buddah Lounge, is a petite club stationed in Cairns, Queensland and hosts a handful of the cities’ Psy-Dub and Psy-trance parties. Love and Light headlined with an upbeat psychedelic dub feel mixed in with a series of melodic intricate rhythms. Opening with a remix of Queen’s ‘Fat Bottomed Girls’, these guys kicked off their set as crowd pleasers. They were entertaining alone, with their sporadic buoyant behaviors on stage, just fueling off of the crowds’ energy! Billy dread wrapped up the evening around 5am, and lets just the say the Casbah got rocked!

Heading south approximately halfway down the eastern coast this pint-sized sustainable counter-cultural community of Nimbin, home of the 1973 Aquarius Festival, held the Aquarius 40th Birthday Fundraiser at the Nimbin Town Hall in late February. It was an Aboriginal gathering of local dancers and story tellers displaying their roots through music. Present at this event was: Gumaroy Newman, Yidaki Yulugi, Azadoota, and Matt James. Placed within the hall was a kid’s chills space, an outdoor kitchenette area, and walls of lighting and décor. The show was very interactive and comprised of primordial drumming, didgeridoo performances, and Aboriginal speakers. The patrons and staff organizers were all free spirited and blissful, and the crowd was made up of primarily locals vibrantly dancing with no inhibitions. This provided the event with a very homey and sincere atmosphere.

Australia also has a wicked full on underground psychedelic-trance party scene, also known as “bush doofs,” which are parties held in the woods. They range from events with just a few close mates, to huge ragers like the Eclipse festival. They are usually not advertised to the public and invites are on a word-of-mouth or hear-say basis. They vary from local DJ’s experimenting on a set of decks, to larger acts brought in from across Australia and overseas. Décor and lighting installations are often strewed around the festivity space. Primarily, it’s an outlet for like-minded folks to congregate in the bush free from society, set times, and guidelines, and run amuck to some hardcore trance beats for an evening…or even a week.

Heaps of concerts, festivals, gatherings, and spiritual experiences, with much International influence and inspiration, flow throughout Australia. The legendary Bluesfest finds its way to the rich, divine, and aesthetically pleasing acreage of Byron Bay yet again for its 24th annual Blues and Roots music festival. Winning Australia’s 2010 Event of the Year, this 5-day camping and music festival with six stages and over 200 performances, is happening over the shift from March into April. Some of the acts consist of: Paul Simon, Robert Plant, Ben Harper, Santana, Iggy and the Stooges, Steve Miller Band, Counting Crows, Wilco, Xavier Rudd, SOJA, The Lumineers, and the Taj Mahal Trio are merely a fraction of the acts due to make an impression this year on the grounds of Australia’s most eastern point. The welcoming nature of this country, its’ people, its’ vibrant landscapes, and its’ worry-free lifestyle creates such a powerfully potent music scene and positive experiences.