

Rome's live music scene

11/06/2015 - [Articles](#)

A guide to Rome's best venues for all genres of live contemporary music, from rock to jazz.

At first glance you could be forgiven for thinking that there was not much of a live music scene in Rome, and in all honesty you won't be much wiser unless you know where to look.

Although there are multiple small street publications dealing with the cultural and underground life of the city, they are distributed haphazardly and, even if you are lucky enough to stumble across some on a night out, they are likely to be out of date, leaving you no wiser for future events. Local websites are similarly shambolic and it is often difficult to search methodically for what is happening.

The key to finding the best music venues and hangouts in Rome is to leave the historic centre. With the exceptions of Monti, Testaccio and S. Lorenzo, which are reached easily by public transport, the befriending of Italians with cars, motorbikes and scooters is highly recommended to take you to the clubs and festivals out of town. Taxis are also notoriously hard to find once outside central Rome, so having an Uber account is helpful after a night out when there are no cabs in sight.

The largest summer festival in Rome is without doubt the aptly-titled [Rock in Roma](#). The term "festival" is used quite loosely in Italy and means an entirely different thing than it does to those used to British or American style festivals. Rock in Roma is a series of concerts featuring the biggest of the big hitters of past and present, extending from June to September (rather than an all-day or weekend festival as one may expect) and spread over (usually) three different-sized stages throughout a racecourse site on Via Appia Nuova 1245 in the south-east of the city, near Ciampino.



Slash performs at Rock in Roma on 23 June

So far details of 11 shows have been released including Alt-J (14 June), Slipknot (16 June), Slash (23 June), Damien Marley (1 July), The Chemical Brothers (2 July), Robbie Williams (7 July), Stromae (8 July), Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds (9 July), Muse (18 July), Lenny Kravitz (27 July) and Linkin Park (6 Sept), but undoubtedly there will be more to come as there are usually about 20 concerts in total.

The biggest cultural and musical centre in Rome is the stunning Auditorium Parco Della Musica, designed by architect Renzo Piano. Although the majority of its music events are of the classical variety, in June and July its outdoor Cavea amphitheatre houses the [Luglio Suona Bene](#) "festival",

featuring many internationally-acclaimed rock and dance acts, and everything in between. Highlights this year include The Pet Shop Boys (25 June), Counting Crows (4 July), Toto (5 July), Of Monsters and Men (8 July), Paul Weller (9 July), Burt Bacharach (11 July), Lauryn Hill (13 July), Ben Harper and the Innocent Criminals (20 July), Mark Knopfler (21 July), Damien Rice (25 July), and last but not least, Björk (29 July). Visiting the auditorium's website throughout the year is also highly recommended as interspersed with the world-famous jazz and classical musicians are other international heavyweights such as Jackson Browne (24 May), performing in the beautiful Sala S. Cecilia.



Ben Harper performs for Luglio Suona Bene on 20 July

Further afield in EUR are two great venues, [Atlantico](#) on Viale dell'Oceano Atlantico 271d, and [PalaLottomatica](#) in Piazzale dello Sport. The Atlantico is ridiculously hard to reach, but is a first-rate space in every other way. Both places are open mostly through the colder months, and PalaLottomatica gigs later on this year include monsters such as The Dave Matthews Band (20 Oct), Nickelback (25 Oct), Deep Purple (6 Nov), Scorpions (9 Nov) and Simply Red (14 Nov).

A favourite mellow hangout for 20 to 30-something-year-old Romans is [Circolo degli Artisti](#) (temporarily closed), across the bridge from the hip Pigneto neighbourhood. As well as presenting emerging and mid-level international and Italian bands in its simple but great-sounding music box, it has a large outdoor garden space with cosy bars and comfortable seating areas which are open and bustling each night. Regularly on weekends its garden turns into a flea-market, showcases new street food, or is full of creatives showing short films. In short, there is always something going on at Circolo – and if you need to pop out for food on the opposite side of the tracks then you can return to Circolo and its after-hours alternative disco until the wee hours of the morning, every morning.

Now to the nitty-gritty of where to go on a nightly basis to see live, local music, or dance the night away. Contrary to popular belief, Rome has a robust bona fide rock scene, with many strong emerging acts of good quality. Although it is almost impossible to find a radio station featuring young or smaller artists here in the big smoke, there are live clubs aplenty showcasing new talent every night of the week.

North-east of the centre, on Via Pietralata 159, [Lanificio](#) is a smaller but more beautiful version of Circolo degli Artisti, and in addition to great live music evenings it holds a parade of different market days in its gorgeous outdoor space and rooftop, and dance and other “arty” performances in its main space.

The well-known occupied space [Angelo Mai Altrove](#) on Via delle Terme di Caracalla is a hidden gem near Circo Massimo. Open all year round, it is used more in summer as its somewhat barn-style venue is relatively open air. Angelo is more than a little rugged, with a no-frills outlook on the bar, stage and seating area, but it is a massive space that always turns into a party with dj sets following every live music show, and dance moves can be practiced to perfection as there is no limit to available floor space, no matter how crowded it gets.

If you want to see new acts, head to cosier locales in S. Lorenzo such as [Le Mura](#) on Via di Porta Labicana 24, [Lian](#) (docked on the river Tiber under Ponte Cavour) and [Closer](#) on Via Vacuna 98. Further up the road on Via Casilina Vecchia 96/c is [Cohouse Pigneto](#), which showcases performance and musical artists best described as experimental, and crazy fun. On the other side of the tracks and nestled just behind Circolo is [Init](#), on Via della Stazione Tuscolana 133, often overlooked because of its vicinity to Circolo, but well worth the visit and packed with great young rock acts and their rocker/hipster cool audience.

If transport is no problem, two of the more hardcore clubs that tend to host music of the heavier variety are [Traffic](#) (way out on Via Prenestina 738) and [Blackout Rock Club](#) on Via Casilina 713.



Caffè Letterario

Ostiense is home to multiple dance and live music venues. If techno and dubstep is your thing, head to [Rising Love](#) on Via delle Conce 14, and if dancing to more commercial dance/disco/house music in super funky surroundings rocks your boat then look no further than [Goa Club](#) on Via Giuseppe Libetta 13, or [Caffè Letterario](#) on Via Ostiense 95, while nearby is a pumping little area known as Portonaccio. Comprising only a small cluster of streets, it is perfect if you are looking for a more “Italian” experience, as foreigners are few and far between, the clubs are large and glamorous, and the nights are long. [Monk Club](#) on Via Giuseppe Mirri 35, and [Vinile](#) on Via Giuseppe Libetta 19 are two favourites of this author, but most of the clubs here have both rock and disco music on offer, all right next to each other.

If you refuse to leave the historic centre but are looking for something a little different than your “normal” bar, head to [Rialto](#) on Via di S. Ambrogio 4 for some live music in the Jewish Ghetto, [Nur Bar](#) on Via di Teatro Valle for a boogie near Piazza Navona, and for burlesque check out [Micca Club](#) on Via degli Avignonesi 73 near Piazza Vittorio. Micca features both local and international burlesque acts, and also djs catering for that era, so costumes, period hairdos and swing-style bopping are all part of the experience.



Alexanderplatz

An article about music venues in Rome cannot be complete without mentioning jazz. [Casa del Jazz](#), near Porta Ardeatina, is a fabulous auditorium confiscated from the mafia that showcases the greats of the genre. [Alexanderplatz](#) on Via Ostia 9, [Boogie Club](#) on Via Gaetano Astolfi 63, [Be Bop Jazz](#) on Via Giuseppe Giulietti 14, and [Stazione Birra](#) on Via Placanica 172 highlight musicians across spectrums, ranging from emerging to established acts.

The trick with following Rome’s music scene is to keep a lookout on clubs’ Facebook pages and websites, join mailing lists, or try to find one of the many forms of elusive street press. Otherwise it is easy to miss a gig that elsewhere would be deemed unmissable.

The great thing about Rome is that most gigs (even the large concerts) are reasonably priced, and most clubs have something happening most nights and come with spacious hangout or outdoor areas, so exploring is made much easier.

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This article appeared in the May edition of Wanted in Rome magazine.