

MONTRÉUX

→ SOUNDING OUT

Pierre Perrone visits the Swiss city every music fan has heard of

Music fans of all hues and genres have heard of Montreux, the jewel of the Swiss Riviera. Everyone is familiar with the hoary guitar riff that introduces Deep Purple's 'Smoke On The Water', and lead singer Ian Gillan bellowing out 'We all came out to Montreux, on the Lake Geneva shoreline' as he did this summer at the concert that closed the 45th edition of the Montreux Jazz Festival. The event was launched by the visionary Claude Nobs – 'Funky Claude' also namechecked in Purple's signature song – to put his hometown on the musical map has succeeded beyond his wildest expectations.

Over the course of two weeks, the 24,000 population of Montreux welcomes ten times as many visitors, with many staying in the municipality of La Tour-de-Peilz or neighbouring Vevey, another picturesque town located in the Canton de Vaud.

A master operator, consummate cook, engaging raconteur and compulsive archivist, Nobs famously gave the Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin boxes of Swiss chocolates to secure her first booking at the festival, and still has the knack for putting on one-off events such as A Night Of Global Gumbo, curated by legendary producer and Montreux regular Quincy Jones, or a Brasil! bill featuring the delightful Maria Gadú, Ana Carolina and

Maria Rita. This summer, the fortnight also featured guitar heroes Carlos Santana, John McLaughlin and BB King – nearly as constant a presence as the sculpture of his bust alongside the effigies of Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald in the Montreux Palace Gardens – and a healthy spread of world music acts including Rubén Blades, Youssou N'Dour, Alpha Blondy and Femi Kuti.

A favourite destination of the British aristocracy since the beginning of the 19th century, Montreux and its environs became the residence and recording location of choice for tax exile superstars like Keith Richards, David Bowie and Queen in the mid-70s. Indeed, Queen



Revellers enjoying Music in the Park: the only open-air stage at the Montreux Jazz Festival



During the festival there are New Orleans-style jazz performances on board trains

FESTIVALS

Montreux Jazz Festival

Jazz may remain at the core of what is a very lucrative brand name – with Montreux Jazz Cafés due to open in Paris and Zurich next year, and London and New York in 2013 – but the longest-established event of its kind in continental Europe branched out into other areas a long time ago, and regularly welcomes emerging and established world music names. Nobs and his team don't just cherry-pick the best of the acts touring in the summer, but also sprinkle the schedule with one-off bills exclusive to the festival, boats and train trips, and free workshops and outdoor concerts held in parks along the gorgeous Geneva Lake shoreline.

June 29-July 14 2012, various venues, mostly Montreux Music & Convention Centre, Grand-Rue 95, 1820, Montreux, www.montreuxjazz.com

Cully Jazz

Launched in 1983 in Cully, another picturesque location on Lake Geneva, Cully Jazz never intended to tread on the toes of its illustrious Montreux neighbour. Holding this more bijou event in the spring means the two have happily continued ever since, to the great delight of jazz and world music fans. Cully Jazz tends to avoid the rock leanings of Montreux and this year welcomed Gilberto Gil, Omar Sosa and Mola Sylla as well Ballaké Sissoko and Vincent Segal, Seun Kuti and Egypt80. The festival makes the most of the numerous *caveaux* (wine-cellars) in and around Cully as befits its location at the heart of the terraced vineyards of the district of Lavaux, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Spring 2012, Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville 2, 1096 Cully, www.cullyjazz.ch

spent so much time on the Swiss Riviera they eventually bought Mountain Studios, a state-of-the-art facility located within the walls of the modern Casino building. Sadly, the studios closed down in 2002, though Queen obsessives still make the pilgrimage to admire the taller-than-life statue of Freddie Mercury, erected near the Place du Marché in 1996, five years after the death of the singer who had made Montreux his second home.

But Montreux's connections with music go back much further since the classical composer Igor Stravinsky lived in the municipality between 1914 and 1920, while Patrick Juvet, the disco singer of 'I Love America'

fame, was also born there in 1950. Unlikely but true, a hippie commune established in Montreux in the late 60s also played its part in the festival's early success.

Cajun revivalists Mama Rosin, the rootsiest Swiss act around, with a growing following in the UK, are based at the other end of Lake Geneva, and play all over the area, including the medieval village of Yvoire, just over the border into France, less than an hour from Montreux. Geneva and Lausanne are certainly bigger than Montreux but neither can match its standing and reputation as a destination for musicians and music fans.



Some Montreux Jazz Festival concerts take place at Château de Chillon, located on Lake Geneva, just outside of Montreux

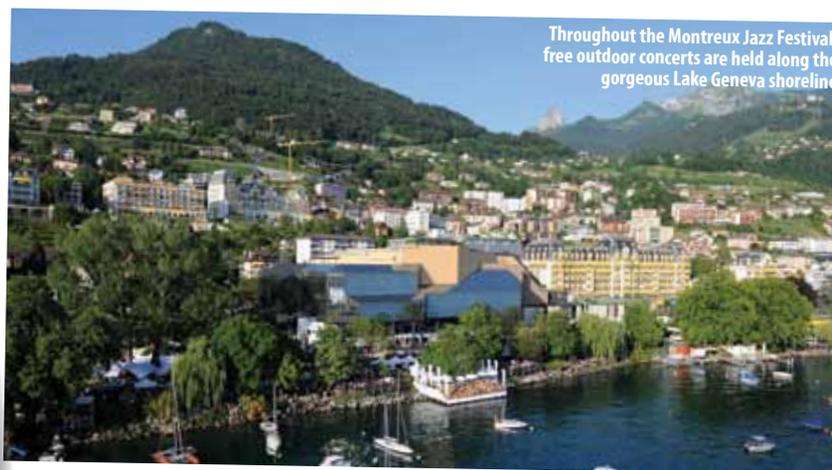
Paléo Festival

A different kettle of fish to Montreux, since it takes place in the open and turned into a bit of Glastonbury-style mud bath this year, Paléo started out in 1976 as a three-day folk festival in Nyon, keen to differentiate itself from its big brother, but ditched the folk label a decade later. It has become a six-day event whose 36th edition this year welcomed international acts like Robert Plant and Anna Calvi rubbing shoulders with French *chanson* artists and a strong world music presence in the appropriately-named Village du Monde which this year focused on the Caribbean. It included appearances by legend Calypso Rose and Boukman Eksperyans from Haiti, but also welcomed Los Van Van and Chucho Valdés from Cuba. Next year, the Village du Monde will put the emphasis on musicians from the Middle East. Paléo draws 85% of its audience from the immediate surrounding area and the rest of French-speaking Switzerland, 10% from France, and only 1% from other countries and remains one of the European festival scene's best-kept secrets.

July 17-22 2012, L'Asse Nyon, yeah.paleo.ch/en



Paléo is Switzerland's largest open-air festival



Throughout the Montreux Jazz Festival, free outdoor concerts are held along the gorgeous Lake Geneva shoreline



Usine à Gaz in Nyon

VENUES

Rocking Chair

With the NED Music Club, Montreux's alternative venue near the railway station, currently in limbo, thank God for Rocking Chair in neighbouring Vevey, which has picked up the slack. Over the last few years, the small venue has hosted gigs by the likes of Tunisian *oud* player Dhafer Youssef and Amadou & Mariam, and will welcome Imperial Tiger Orchestra and Professor Wouassa, two Swiss exponents of Afro-beat, in December.

Avenue Gilamont 60, 1800 Vevey, www.rocking-chair.ch

Usine à Gaz

A versatile venue located in Nyon, Usine à Gaz puts on plays as well as puppet shows for kids, *chanson*, jazz, rock and world music events and makes the most of its location and catchment area between Geneva and Lausanne.

Rue César Soulié 1, 1260 Nyon, www.usinegaz.ch

RECORDED MUSIC STORES

Sadly, despite its reputation with music-lovers, Montreux doesn't have a stand-alone record shop anymore. However, the flea market on the lakeside, held from April until October, is worth exploring, and not just for the odd yodeling gem.

MEDIA

All Swiss French language dailies – *Le Temps*, *24 heures*, *La Tribune de Genève*, *Le Matin* – have comprehensive arts coverage and most have weekend listings supplements.

However, most useful is *Paradiso*, the Monday-Friday evening programme presented by Yann Zitounie on La 1ère, the radio Suisse-Romande station. Live guests, sessions, festival news and interviews with a strong emphasis on *les musiques du monde*, it's a great listen and lives up to its Paradiso name.

www.rsr.ch/#/la-1ere/programmes/radio-paradiso/