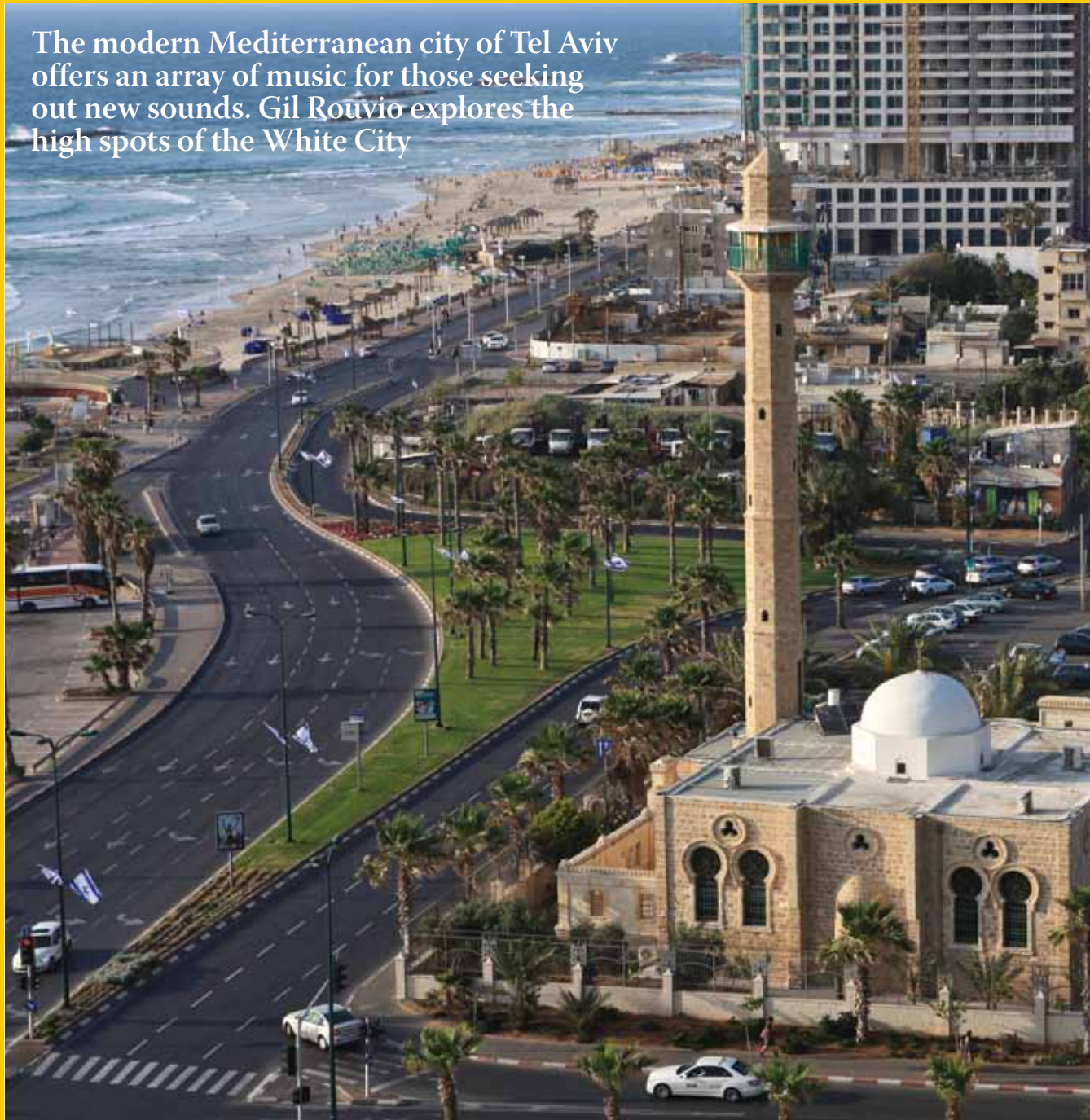


The modern Mediterranean city of Tel Aviv offers an array of music for those seeking out new sounds. Gil Rouvié explores the high spots of the White City



To fully understand the musical and cultural character of the city of Tel Aviv, one needs to be familiar with the many characteristics of Israel – and then forget about them altogether.

Even for the Israelis, Tel Aviv has its own pace of life – which derives from its traditions, politics and demographics – but at the same time it has managed to break away from all this and create something new and free, a city that can almost completely ignore all the chaos that characterises the state of Israel in the 21st century.

Famed for its Bauhaus architecture, which UNESCO recognised in 2003 by giving it World Heritage status, the so-called 'White City' sees itself as the cultural and economic capital of Israel – the city that

never stops – while critics describe it as a 'bubble', a state within a state. The truth is probably the almost impossible combination of the two. We are in the Middle East after all.

Tel Aviv is without a doubt the beating heart of Israel's music industry. For many artists, living and working here is imperative for success and recognition, even in such a small country. The city hosts most of the academic institutions, as well as performance venues, recording studios and major telecommunications systems.

Israel itself is a melting pot; it unites more than 60 cultures of exiles from all over the world. Almost every musical genre created in Israel can be traced back via the musical heritage of its composer. Even the most prominent artists of recent

Israeli rock have deep connections with their roots, bringing to the fore sounds and instruments from places as diverse as Iraq, Greece, Ethiopia and Russia. The most popular and successful music in the last decade is a mixture of pop with strong influences of Mediterranean music. If you switch on mainstream radio, you will most likely hear guitars and *bouzouki*, drums and *darbuka*, loops and quarter tones – usually all in the same song.

In the neighbouring picturesque port city of Jaffa (inset right), with its distinctly Arabic atmosphere, you'll find a wealth of musical diversity amongst the local musicians.

This year was declared the Art Year in Tel Aviv ([www.artyear.co.il/en](http://www.artyear.co.il/en)), marking the completion of three new establishments: the renewed national

Habima Theatre, a new wing at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and the new extension of the Tel Aviv Cinematheque. Throughout the year and up until early 2013, many events are being held, including several music concerts. Tel Aviv is home to an extensive world music scene, as well as jazz, that has gained a reputation around the globe. All year round, performances of leading international artists alongside new emerging ensembles can be sought out.

More and more tourists and locals are beginning to grasp the uniqueness of Tel Aviv as a cultural phenomenon in Israel and the Middle East. This is a city that, despite its proximity to one of the world's notorious conflict zones (and which has suffered violence and terrorism directly), manages to create a work environment that is rich and fertile and offer its residents and visitors a sense of almost normality. A city known for its patience, Tel Aviv is one of the world's finest and friendliest LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) travel destinations, a home to both the secular and the religious. The city's soundtrack consists of all of these differences, melting them together into something new, with ties and respect to its origins and traditions.



MINISTRY OF TOURISM (WWW.GOSRAEL.COM)

## FESTIVALS

### Tel Aviv Oud Festival

Held every year in August, this week-long festival, celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, is solely dedicated to the king of Middle Eastern instruments – the *oud*. The programme offers traditional musicians alongside newcomers as well as some great collaborations.

Every August, various venues, [www.tzavta.co.il](http://www.tzavta.co.il)

### The White City Festival

This new festival lasts for ten days in the month of May and features a great array of distinguished Israeli and international musicians who come together to celebrate the diverse and vibrant cultural scene of Tel Aviv. The first edition of the festival took place this year at the Tel Aviv airport and was hosted by Bobby McFerrin.



## VENUES

### The Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center

The home of the Israeli Opera (above right) is a focal point for cultural and artistic events in Tel Aviv. World music performances have included Sara Tavares, Sierra Leone Refugee All Stars and local music star Idan Raichel.

Sderot Sha'ul HaMelech 19, [www.israel-opera.co.il/eng/](http://www.israel-opera.co.il/eng/)

### Zappa Tel Aviv

A modern and stylish club, which has a 'Blue Note' feel, this is a must-play venue for locals, as well as many leading international artists.

24 Raoul Wallenberg, Tel Aviv, [www.zappa-club.co.il](http://www.zappa-club.co.il)

### East West House, Jaffa

An atmospheric Arabic building with high ceilings, archways and a courtyard (pictured above), this is an ideal setting to hear traditional music. It was also the first non-profit, alternative world music venue in Jaffa. Guest musicians have included ones from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, India, Turkey, Europe and the US.

16 Dr Ehrlich Street, Jaffa

### White Night

Held annually on the last Thursday of June, the event, which starts at sunset and lasts until the early hours of the morning, offers a variety of free concerts featuring Israel's finest musicians all across the city and the coastline.

[www.telavivme.com](http://www.telavivme.com)

### International Exposure for Jazz & World Music

The first edition took place last year at the Yellow Submarine in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv's Levontin7 club. Primarily an industry event, its aim is to showcase the best jazz and world music acts Israel has to offer [see #82]. Concerts are also open to the public and last year's featured artists included *oud* player Nino Biton and his Maghreb Orchestra, The Alaev Family and Yair Dalal.

November 21-24 2012



### Tzavta Club

A leading force in culture, art and political protest, Tzavta offers a cultural bridge between the various strands of Israeli society. The venue hosts many world music performances with an emphasis on co-operation between Jews and Arabs.

30 Ibn Gabirol Street, [www.tzavta.co.il](http://www.tzavta.co.il)

### Levontin7

A small club located in the south of the city, this is the home for Tel Aviv's independent music scene, with an emphasis on jazz, world and indie-rock. Last October it hosted delegates to the International Exposure for Jazz and World Music (see details above).

[www.levontin7.com](http://www.levontin7.com)

### Ha'ezor (The Zone)

A bar, concert and jam sessions club built on the ruins of one of the largest dance venues in the city. The zone now offers a unique homely atmosphere where the audience surround the musicians as they jam. Open every night (except Friday), from 8.30pm until the last customer leaves.

Harechev13, Tel Aviv