

PENANG JAZZ FESTIVAL

We catch up with Liyana Fizi, Bihzhu and Rafal Sarnecki ahead of their Penang performances



LIYANA FIZI

WHAT SPURRED YOUR INTEREST IN JAZZ?

I'm amazed by the skill and freedom of jazz improvisation. It's not easily mastered and takes a lot of work, dedication, as well as groove and fluidity.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO AT THE FESTIVAL?

Aside from my performance with the James Boyle Trio with Bihzhu, I am most looking forward to being there, on the festival grounds! The vibe of the festival is warm and lovely, with music in the air. It feels like you're on holiday.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT BEING ON STAGE?

Having the freedom to express who you are musically. By holding the audience, there is an interaction and a bond that happens that cannot be found elsewhere. It's exhilarating.



RAFAL SARNECKI

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START IN MUSIC?

Everyone in my family played some kind of instrument so I was always surrounded by music. I played the recorder and piano as a child but then I got into heavy metal as a teenager and picked up the guitar. My father took notice of my musical interests and sent me to music school. By chance, the school I attended specialises in jazz so that's how it all started.

YOU ALSO TEACH MUSIC. WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT IT?

Teaching music connects you to a younger group of musicians who are always on top of the new trends in various music genres. It allows you to meet new people and that's an inspiring experience in itself.

HAVE YOU BEEN TO MALAYSIA BEFORE? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN PENANG?

No, I haven't! I'm really looking forward to playing my own composition to the Malaysian audience and getting their feedback as well as meeting all the musicians there.

TEXT: MEDINA AZALDIN. PHOTOGRAPHY: WAYNE TAYLOR

BIHZHU

WHAT'S THE STORY BEHIND YOUR SINGLE BRIGHT VEINS?

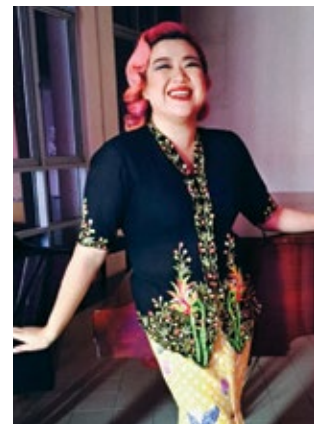
I was at a spiritual retreat in where the facilitator's closing remarks resonated deeply with me. She said "Do you know what we are most afraid of? We're afraid of embracing our own greatness." After that I sat on a bench surrounded by trees and the song pretty much wrote itself. There was a sense of identity, roots and belonging that I was unconsciously searching for.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM YOU AT THE FESTIVAL?

Jimmy Boyle is one of Malaysia's greatest composers and the chance to perform his songs with the James Boyle Trio is a dream come true. I'm from Penang so performing with Jimmy Boyle is a big deal. Liyana Fizi and I will bring our own unique touches to the show; sharing them with the new generation is the best way to honour him.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE THING ABOUT PENANG? ANY UNDER-THE-RADAR SPOTS TO RECOMMEND?

I love the Art & Garden, it's a beautifully curated outdoor space that serves as an art gallery. I'm also obsessed with Colonial Kitchen, they serve good old Hainanese recipes. Must haves: the wildboar goulash, the mushroom pie, the pork steak.



WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

« HEAR »

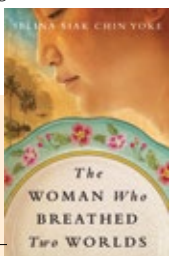
THE ROLLING STONES: BLUE & LONESOME

After a 10-year break, the legendary band has released an album of blues covers with a guest appearance by Eric Clapton.

« READ »

THE WOMAN WHO BREATHED TWO WORLDS BY SELINA SIAK CHIN YOKE

Set in old Malaya, this tells the tale of Chye Hoon, who attempts to preserve her rich Nyonya culture in the face of growing Westernisation.



« SEE »

PASSENGERS

Jennifer Lawrence and Chris Pratt are passengers on a spaceship to another galaxy. They've been put to sleep for the 120-year journey, but awake 90 years early when the ship malfunctions.



Penang Island Jazz Festival, The Bayview Beach Resort Gardens, Penang. December 1-4, 2016. penangjazz.com