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SE Lifestyle
HD **Something in the air**
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From a breakfast rave in the CBD to a hootenanny in Reservoir, Melbourne's music scene is as dynamic and diverse as ever. Our trio of tune-loving writers bop along to 25 gigs over a week to capture a musical snapshot of our city

MELBOURNE is Australia's music capital ... that line gets repeated over and over like a pop hit on high rotation.

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But maybe it's true. Maybe the city that gave us Kylie and John Farnham, Skyhooks and The Seekers, Paul Kelly and Paul Grabowsky, Men at Work and Dame Nellie Melba really does have some magic quality that encourages music-making.

Is there something special in the air here?

Weekend decided to test that proposition by sending writers out to chart one week in the music life of Melbourne. Last month, between one spring Sunday and the next, they hunted down musicians of every kind in pubs and churches, bars and bowling clubs, studios and garages, on trams and street corners.

No tone was left unturned as we tuned into DJs and gospel choirs, bagpipe buskers and breakfast raves, accordionists and full-throttle rockers. Our ears hurt sometimes. Our feet were certainly sore. But having collected 25 sounds of the city, we can safely say music really matters here. It's all around us, all the time. A force field of creative energy that can creep up on us we least expect it.

Does that make us a music capital? Read on and listen up...

SIMON PLANT

SUNDAY, 2.25PM The Rechords at the Hootenanny Car Show, Reservoir HOWDY folks and welcome to Reservoir Bowling Club. The manicured greens lie idle in the blazing sun but out front it's a sea of classic cars — Cadillacs and Continentals, Dodges and Valiants — with hundreds of auto fans milling around, admiring the gleaming bonnets, wing fins and whitewall tyres. Every second guy looks like Frankie J. Holden — tats and trucker caps everywhere — but what else would you expect at the second annual Hootenanny Car Show?

"Good to see y'all here," musician Felix says.

Felix is with The Rechords — a popular three-piece outfit with an "Americana" sound — and as soon as he straps on his electric guitar and rips into some rockabilly, the joint is jumping. Up they get, the guys and the gals, caps flying, skirts twirling. It could be a scene in Tennessee, not Melbourne's northern suburbs.

"Here's a slower one for you," Leo says.

He's on guitar, too, and sporting a Nashville shirt with floral motifs. But it's Tyron who anchors The Rechords, slapping his double bass and setting a rock steady beat.

"Western swing? Yeah, that's one description," Tyron says. "But we're country, too. Bluegrass. Blues. It's what you make it." The Rechords — match-fit from constant touring here and overseas — draw on a rich well of material. The Hootenanny gig sees them powering through two dozen numbers and yet the crowd cries for just one more. Yee-hah! SP If you like the sound of this ... see The Rechords at The Yarra **Hotel** (295 Johnston St, Abbotsford) on Nov 29 and Dec 12.

therechords.com.au

SUNDAY, 9.30PM Brazilian jazz at the Everleigh, Fitzroy NO matter where you've been and what you've done at the weekend, the Everleigh's warm interiors and chilly cocktails beckon you up the stairs on a Sunday night.

No judgment, no reservations, no worries. Jack Nicholson lookalike Tamil Rogeon has been piloting the good ship on Sunday evenings in Gertrude St, Fitzroy, for at least a year now. Tonight he has two hired guns in for his usual sparring partner, guitarist Doug Devries who specialises in Brazilian jazz. His pinch-hitters Tom Lee (double bass) and James Sherlock (guitar) easily make their way around bossa nova with plenty of eyes-locked noodling improvisation.

It's low key and it works a treat — there are no bells and no whistles, just standards such as I'll Remember April and frequent solos. The crowd bop along and nothing gets out of hand — unlike a month back.

"We had the whole bar dancing; Brazilian music does that," Rogeon says. He also plays in the Raah Project and TrueLive and does plenty of soundtrack stuff on the side when Red Bull isn't flying him all over the world to put on "bespoke" musical events.

"A guy asked if we'd play some Otis Redding and our line-up at the time was violin, guitar and pandero, a Brazilian tambourine. It wasn't really the right line-up and he said, 'But I thought this was jazz?'. I explained to him it's Brazilian music, inspired by bebop of the '40s and '50s," Rogeon chuckles with a shake of the head. Then everyone drank a Jungle Bird cocktail, the one with dark rum and fresh pineapple and all was well with the world and in unison we said "Obrigado" to the well-coiffed barman. MC If you like the sound of this ... visit the Paris Cat Jazz Club (Goldie Place, city). pariscat.com.au

MONDAY, 12.55PM Stawell Community Choir at Hamer Hall, Southbank HERE'S another Stawell gift ... a community choir that runs on old-fashioned enthusiasm.

Dianne Stewart, a long-time resident of the Western Victorian town, founded the ensemble four years ago. In no time, the Stawell Community Choir attracted more than a dozen singers — farmers and teachers, nurses and shopkeepers — who now attend regular rehearsals in the town hall.

"It's all about the joy of singing. There's no requirement to perform," Stewart says.

And when invited to join the Big Sing, a huge Arts Centre Melbourne concert of popular opera choruses, nine Stawell Community Choir members leapt at the chance. Songster Sue Horvath signed up immediately. "For a lot of us, it was the first time we've ever sung opera," she says. But the prospect of appearing on stage at Hamer Hall, with Orchestra Victoria and in front of 1500 people, was a gift they dared not decline.

"Normally we sing with just a piano or guitar accompaniment," Stewart adds. This year's Big Sing — presented by Victorian Opera — featured 150 singers and choruses from Carmen, La Traviata and The Magic Flute. "If something similar happened again, we'd do it again," Stewart says. Even though Melbourne's a long haul from Stawell ... "It was a great experience. We were singing all the way home in the bus, well past midnight." SP If you like the sound of this ... hear Stawell Community Choir at Carols in the Grampians (Grampians Rd, Halls Gap) on Dec 19. Free.

MONDAY, 6.30PM Monday Night Mass at Northcote Social Club, Northcote MOST of the bands that play Northcote Social Club on a Monday night won't exactly "go places".

But some come along and surprise everybody and some even come back and play the NoSo to ensure they're match-fit for upcoming tours.

All-girl Melbourne band Beaches played here a while back and put on a ripper. Tonight, the bill is headlined by trio Yes I'm Leaving. Lead singer Billy Burke wears a Sonic Youth T-shirt, a sign he has excellent musical pedigree. The Sydney squallers play jaunty, dangerous pop and — surprisingly for a bunch of guys from NSW — they get a decent crowd in.

There's something infectious and magnetic about their sound. Their new record *Slow Release* is a punchy, pungent **group** of songs and they play their little hearts out tonight. It feels like a gig you may tell your mates about one day when Yes I'm Leaving leave the smaller venues for somewhere bigger. "I have a vision, now, now, NOWWWW-WOOD", Burke shouts on the song One. Sounds prophetic. MC If you like the sound of this ... **buy** the CD at yesimleaving.com

TUESDAY, 1PM ANAM Quartetthaus, South Melbourne Town Hall "INTO the music" really means something when you are inside ANAM Quartetthaus. This pop-up live performance space seats just 50 people. So, when you take your seat just metres away from two violinists, a cellist and viola player performing in the round, you can almost hear their breath.

"We're putting the 'chamber' back into chamber music," Australian National Academy of Music program manager Matt Hoy says.

Not even high winds can disturb the performance of Haydn and Dvorak by eight ANAM students. They shape each piece with such care, extracting multiple layers of emotion much as their European ancestors did.

Quartetthaus dissolves the listener-player divide because it's been shaped by the music performed within it. The structure is made from timber, giving the space an attractive "dry" sound, while a circular stage can put listeners behind the cellist at the start and a violinist at the end.

"You get a sense of the personality of each player," Hoy explains. Are they comfortable with that exposure? "It can be a disarming experience for some players but it's a testament to their courage that they are willing to put themselves under the microscope." Watching an audience in the Quartetthaus can be just as revealing. As Hoy says: "They really feel 'present' in the moment. You can tell by the way they lean forward, into the sound." SP If you like the sound of this ... attend ANAM recitals (210 Bank St, Sth Melbourne) on Nov 24 (11am, 1pm, 3pm). anam.com.au

TUESDAY, 6.30PM Glee Club at the Butterfly Club, city THEY call it Glee Club, I call it the safety-in-numbers choir. Every Tuesday night at the kitsch Butterfly Club, up to 40 people gather to sing. They pay \$12 for the privilege of no auditions, no solos, no microphones and no commitment to turn up every week. Perfect, because apart from tipsy karaoke, I have no talent and no experience.

There are after-work corporates with briefcases, chicks catching up over a sing then dinner, and older folk with lovely church voices.

Glee Club has been operating for nine years under the tutelage of musical director and pianist Vicky Jacobs. After class, she was off to play keyboard in the Les Mis orchestra.

Jacobs is super encouraging, urging everyone to have a go. "The worst thing you can do is hit a bum note," she says. In the sea of voices, that's comforting.

We start with vocal warm-ups like a proper choir before launching into three songs. Sheet music with lyrics is handed out. First up there's radio favourite and body-love ode All About That Bass. It's a bit weird singing about "the right junk in all the right places" with a bunch of strangers but you soon get over it.

Next up is Paul Kelly's From St Kilda to Kings Cross. It's a more challenging piece with unnatural timings but we break up the song, practise each section, divide into harmonies at the end and it all comes together nicely, even to my tone-deaf ear. Last up is a sweet Billie Holiday tune called Getting Some Fun Out of Life. Afterwards I feel invigorated.

The hour has flown, my lungs feel like they've had a yoga-style workout. But unlike yoga, my mind hasn't drifted off to what's for dinner. I've been totally focused on the music. MM If you like the sound of this ... Glee Club, Butterfly Club, Tuesdays, 6.30pm. gleeclubsing.com

Continued next page From previous page

TUESDAY, 8.35pm Melbourne Mass Gospel Choir rehearsal, Carlton MUSIC moves us in mysterious ways.

On a cold spring night at Carlton's Church of All Nations, it is moving dozens of people to shake and shimmy, to hug each other and throw their arms in the air. "Hallelujah," they cry around a grand piano. "Come on, get on **board**." Music director Phil Heuzenroeder leads the Melbourne Mass Gospel Choir's weekly rehearsal ... counting them in, setting the pace and urging everyone on. "Imagine you're at a soccer match," he says. As the choir launches into the hymn Jordan River, he tells them: "Remember how powerful you can be ... almost nothing can stop you!" The rehearsals regularly attract up to 80 singers. The youngest is five years old, the oldest 83. And as Heuzenroeder stresses, "we're not just a

bunch of happy clappers.” Sharing the joy is fundamental. There are links with choirs formed by Sudanese and Samoan songsters and they recently performed at the Broadmeadows Detention Centre.

“Sure, we sing sacred music but it’s not necessarily a religious thing,” Heuzenroeder says. “Supporting a diverse community is part of the point of this. We’re sharing our common humanity through song.” Back at rehearsal, it’s time to break for “section” parts. Bass-heavy blokes gather round the piano while altos cluster where their high, fluting voices can be heard through glass.

Later, Heuzenroeder tells me: “There’s something very deep in our cultural roots that makes Victorians so responsive to choir singing.” But do middle-class Australians connect emotionally with music inspired by struggle and oppression? “Connecting can be hard,” he admits. “But when it happens you can feel it.” SP If you like the sound of this ... see the choir at the Falls Festival, Lorne (Dec 28-Jan 1). fallsfestival.com.au

WEDNESDAY, 7AM Breakfast rave, 1000 Pound Bend, city RAVING and behaving — who knew? Say good morning to the “conscious clubbing” movement — taking the fun and friendship of a rave minus drugs and booze. And all starting at a cheerful 6.30am rather than still up from the night before. Who. Knew?

Morning Gloryville monthly breakfast dance parties launched in London last year before hitting a dozen more cities including Paris, Tokyo, New York and Amsterdam. Today, it’s Melbourne’s turn.

It’s 7am and the first of three DJs, Fintan McGivern, has been laying down some seriously funky house beats. The dance floor is going off; a few hundred shiny, happy, sober people grinning from ear to ear and dancing like they never will again. They’re drinking coffee and coconut water. And it smells fresh, too, unlike the pong of a **group** who’ve been dancing ‘til dawn. There’s no strobes or lasers, only the sun coming through the warehouse roof. It’s massive fun and afterwards, everyone heads off to work and uni, clear-headed, energised, minus a hangover and ready to start the day on a natural high.

Most have adhered to the “dress to sweat” dress code. Neon is the primary palette. Some have come as pirates, several are fairies and there’s a Spiderman roaming as well.

Upstairs, like a real rave, there’s a chill-out zone with a yoga class in progress and massage stations. MM If you like the sound of this ... the next rave is at 1000 Pound Bend, 360 Little Lonsdale St, city, Nov 26, 6.30am. morninggloryville.com

WEDNESDAY, NOON Busker Daryl Boyle, Queensbridge Square, Southbank NOT even the Cookie Monster is immune to Melbourne’s booze-fuelled violence after dark.

The man behind the blue fur is Ballarat father-of-two Daryl Boyle. He busks about three times a week, mostly around Southbank, dressed as the Sesame Street fave while playing the bagpipes.

A busker on and off since his early 20s, Boyle wears cricket padding and often a helmet under the costume. He says busking as a mascot earns him about 20 per cent more, but means he’s open to random attacks from behind.

“I’ve been hit and gotten black eyes,” he says. “Protection at night is a must. I’ve been abused and called a beggar and told to get a real job.” In summer, after peeling off the padding and fur, Boyle, 44, is drenched. “It’s like I’ve jumped in the river.” The upsides of the job are heartwarming, though.

“Sometimes I’ll get handwritten notes from people saying, ‘Thanks for making my day’ or ‘I’ve been having a tough time lately so thanks for putting a smile on my face’. That keeps me going.” One punter even got a tattoo of a bagpipe-toting Cookie Monster to remind himself of a top night out with the boys, which involved watching Boyle busk.

A graphic designer by trade, Boyle is one of about 1800 buskers registered by the City of Melbourne. He says earnings fluctuate but busking supports his family while he has returned to study.

He’s been playing the bagpipes since he was a child in his native Scotland and his busking repertoire includes traditional tunes as well as chart-toppers from AC/DC, Pink and Swedish House Mafia. MM If you like the sound of this ... register to be a busker at melbourne.vic.gov.au

WEDNESDAY, 1.05PM Jose Rodriguez performs at the Royal Children’s Hospital, Parkville THE meerkats’ enclosure is a huge drawcard. But live music at the Royal Children’s Hospital is also bringing a smile to patients, family and staff. And one of the most popular lunchtime acts has been Jose Rodriguez — a Chilean musician who plays “the hang”. The UFO-shaped hang is fashioned from two half shells of steel and when players thrum their fingers on its dome, the sound is a cross between percussion and a harp. In no time, Rodriguez has adults tapping their toes and children dancing around his feet. For

Victoria Jones, director of RCH's creative arts program, this is more proof live music can "positively contribute to the healing environment by making it more stimulating, engaging and less stressful". SP If you like the sound of this ... live music happens in the RCH's Main Street every fortnight. rch.org.au

WEDNESDAY, 9PM East Brunswick All Girls Choir, West Brunswick YOUR eyes do not deceive you. East Brunswick All Girls Choir is a misnomer of band name. In West Brunswick (!) the quartet, led by singer and guitarist Marcus Hobbs, are practising songs from their album *Seven Drummers*. The record is raw as hessian and has recently been longlisted for the \$30,000 Coopers Australian Music Prize. The females are Rie Nakayama on bass and vocals and drummer-about-town Jen Sholakis. Between songs guitarist Rob Wrigley does a mean Bob Dylan impersonation, pelvis out, pointing at his band. They're set up in a cramped garage space and as they belt through songs, the decibels are loud enough to make bricks shake. I love it, they sound cacophonous and glorious and I sway along thinking: "This is where the magic happens." MC If you like the sound of this ... see White Hex, Pearls and Little Desert at The Public Bar, North Melbourne on November 20.

WEDNESDAY, 9.20PM Accordionist George Butrumlis at Bistro Vue, city WANT to summon up a vision of Paris? Dine at Bistro Vue when George Butrumlis plays his accordion. Butrumlis has enjoyed a "residency" at the city bistro since it opened seven years ago. It was chef Shannon Bennett's idea and now diners can hear him play three nights a week. "I love the restaurant and I love the gig," Butrumlis says, hoisting his 1960s Galanti accordion across his shoulders. "(But), let's be honest, it has a mixed reputation. So, I play softly. I take it as a huge compliment when people say, 'I've always hated the accordion and you've changed my opinion'." And his repertoire isn't just limited to Parisian standards. Butrumlis has even been known to give a "Frenchy twist" to *Stairway to Heaven*. SP If you like the sound of this ... dine at Bistro Vue (430 Lt Collins St, city) on Monday when George is next in "residence". vuedemonde.com.au

THURSDAY, 1PM Free lunchtime concert at Monash University WHO says there's no such thing as a free lunch? At Monash University you can hear some of the best music-makers around ... without paying a cent.

The university's prestigious Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music holds weekly concerts, open to the public, where students, staff and guest artists perform every kind of music under the sonic sun. The day we called past, two Monash guitar ensembles — one jazz, the other classical — were summoning up the sound of strings, Spring and Spain. Pack a lunch for visiting the Clayton campus, then head indoors to discover new worlds of music. SP If you like the sound of this ... attend free Monash Lunchtime Concerts in the first week of semester one next year. Monash.edu.au

THURSDAY, 3.45PM The Way to San Jose Bar and Restaurant, McKinnon "ONLY vinyl, that's all we play," says Orio Randi at McKinnon's The Way to San Jose.

So don't prop at the big woody bar of this trattoria in Melbourne's sandbelt expecting to hear a pristine CD soundtrack with your cannelloni and vino bianco.

Orio takes pride in the nicks and scratches that come with records in a sleeve and spins them on a lo-fi sound system dating back to the late 1970s.

"Sticking with vinyl and nothing else has a lot to do with my personality," Orio says.

Jazz is a special passion and accounts for 40 per cent of San Jose's 400-strong collection. But regulars are just as likely to hear pop hits from the '80s, when Orio and partner Emma Clarke were teenagers.

"It was a bit quiet here the other day, so our barman Julian (pictured right) whacked on some Toto," he says.

"I'm not kidding ... within minutes the place was jumping. You really can control the level of sound in a restaurant by putting on the right music." Orio, an accomplished furniture maker, thinks long and hard about what gets played. "I like the start the week quietly," he says. "Then build to a crescendo on Friday and Saturday nights." What about daytime? Depends "on the feel of the room".

"Sometimes, you get pretty crazy requests. I try to meet most of them ... if they ask nicely." Does that include Burt Bacharach's *The Way to San Jose*? "Of course." SP If you like the sound of this ... visit Kitty Somerset cocktail bar (565 High St, Northcote). kittysomerset.com.au

THURSDAY, 6.15PM Mikelangelo at Foxtel Festival Hub, Southbank "THE sun beats down on the city of dreams ..." Well, sort of. Mikelangelo — he of the Elvis quiff and Balkan baritone — is deep inside the Foxtel Festival on a freezing spring night. But watching this singer-songwriter perform in a cone of golden light, it is possible to imagine a summer's night.

City of Dreams is Mikelangelo's "love letter" to Melbourne, his adopted home town.

Mikelangelo is accompanied by talented musical mates such as Stu Thomas and Clare St Clare, Miles Brown and a couple of shimmying broads from the Nymphs. But as this 60-minute multimedia set glides to a close, it's the immaculately coiffured man who holds our attention. "I'm from Canberra originally," he explains. "Came south to find love ... and stayed." SP If you like the sound of this ... [buy](#) Mikelangelo's City of Dreams album, in store now.

Continued next page From previous page

THURSDAY, 7.45PM Shanul Sharma sings lyric opera, Prahran "I STILL love metal music and listen to it when I can," tenor Shanul Sharma says.

But the former lead singer of a band named Sobrusion has traded turbo-powered riffs for emotionally charged arias.

We spotted bald-headed Sharma in Lyric Opera Melbourne's production of Werther, at Prahran's Chapel Off Chapel theatre, and were impressed with his confidence in the title role and command of Massenet's music.

"Yeah, you want to give it everything you can," he says, "because this opera is so dramatic, so romantic." Werther is a long way from the pubs and clubs where Sobrusion's [brand](#) of "progressive metal" has typically found a home.

But Sharma, 32, says he developed "quite a high vocal range with the band. I was almost singing like a mezzo soprano. So, making the transition to opera (in 2011) felt somewhat natural." Sharma was a guest tenor with the Australian Army Orchestra, a semi-finalist in the 2012 Herald Sun Aria, and sang Rossini for Opera Australia's schools program. Then Lyric Opera of Melbourne called and invited him to audition for Werther.

"That's the thing about this city," he says. "People here are willing to bank on young artists." SP If you like the sound of this go to Lyric Opera's Bizet & Beyonce at the Opera Bar (13 Somerset Place, city) on Nov 27. lyricopera.com.au

FRIDAY, 1.25PM Melbourne Red Shield Band rehearsal, Doncaster East OUT in deepest Doncaster, the only sounds on weekdays are lawnmowers and magpies warbling in the pine trees. Fridays, when the Melbourne Red Shield Band assembles for its weekly rehearsal, are the exception.

The Red Shield Band is 42-strong, composed of retirement age bandsmen. Des Rundle, 91, is the oldest member and has been playing the cornet since he was eight. Alan Marsh, a third generation tuba player, is the youngest at 62. And today they are under the baton of bandmaster Brian Davies.

Band members, all volunteers in their maroon tunics, want to share the pleasure they get from playing music together.

There are only a handful of those bands left now but happily the Red Shield Band has a busy dance card. Every few weeks, it gathers its trumpets and trombones, its snare drums and cymbals, and heads out to Salvation Army gatherings, senior citizens clubs and retirement homes across the city.

The band sounds rich and sonorous in the slower numbers, brassy and vital in the faster ones. Band secretary Ken Lomer chuckles: "We always tell 'em, 'You might look old, you don't have to sound old!'" SP If you like the sound of this ... see the Melbourne Red Shield Band tomorrow at the Rosebud Salvation Army. salvationarmy.org.au

FRIDAY, 3PM The Violineri, Box Hill BRENTON Fyfield has a crook neck.

"Yeah, need to put it back in," he says. But Fyfield — a talented musician himself — is no chiropractor. In Box Hill, he restores and repairs stringed instruments and the "neck" he's referring to belongs to a shapely, caramel-coloured violin.

"We've got hundreds of them here," he says in the light-washed studio of his retail [business](#) The Violineri. "Most of them with maple backs and spruce tops." Twenty-five years young, The Violineri is also a one-stop shop for cellos and double basses.

"[Business](#) is pretty good," Fyfield says. "People say classical music is on the way out, but we're finding the interest in playing it is actually expanding. Most schools now have a music program and stringed instruments are by far the most popular." When those instruments need a makeover, players troop into The Violineri where the air is heady with resins and glues and the instruments are racked like legs of ham on the wall.

Martin Welch, one of Fyfield's two expert colleagues, sits at one workbench with the tools of his trade: scalpels and chisels, files and hammers. Downstairs, in another workroom, Paul Shields is busy fashioning a bow from penumbuco (a Brazilian hardwood), horsehair and mother of pearl. This is hard, physical labour with each bow taking more than 100 hours to make.

"To do this work well, you've got to do it by hand," Fyfield says. But repairs are not made in silence. Classical music is usually playing at The Violineri. SP If you like the sound of this ... see the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra concert, Melbourne Recital Centre, December 6. brandenburg.com.au

FRIDAY, 9.35PM Spencer P. Jones at the Cherry Bar, Richmond THERE'S no long service leave for musicians. Nope. For many they might just be lucky enough to write a hit and get it synched on to TV shows or commercials. But at the Cherry Bar, every Friday night, gravelly voiced and wilfully gruff rock survivor Spencer P Jones plugs in his trusty axe and goes for it. He's gotta. Man has to eat. The crowd is meagre, but appreciative. Spanish tourists, Sydney musos and local film creatives are all here drinking in his barbed wire blues. Jones makes plenty of cheeky asides and then rips into an incredibly moving song he wrote with The Escape Committee titled When He Finds Out. The line that smarts is: "His eyes just like burnt sausages, a dartboard for a mouth." MC If you like the sound of this ... see Tangerine Dream, Melbourne Town Hall, tomorrow, 7pm. \$55. thatsmelbourne.com.au/mmww/event/tdream1

SATURDAY, 2.50PM Eduard Volchek plays piano at The Langham, Southgate LARA'S Theme from Doctor Zhivago is a happy fit with white chocolate pannacotta while Nat King Cole's Mona Lisa suits scones, jam and clotted cream. What about Moon River?

"Any time is good ... people ask for that song every time I play," The Langham's resident pianist Eduard Volchek says.

The Russian-born musician has been tinkling ivories at the Southgate **hotel** for 14 years and is a **firm** fixture on weekends during The Chocolate Bar Afternoon Tea. And with more than 800 numbers in his repertoire, he can meet just about any request.

"Sometimes, they want to talk and watch me perform," he says. "Other times, I stay in the background." Volchek, who traded Moscow for Melbourne 25 years ago, keeps busy on the concert circuit and has three albums to his name. But nothing interrupts his Langham gig where the applause is always sweet. Like the food. SP If you like the sound of this ... hear Eduard Volchek at The Langham every weekend from noon to 4pm. langhamhotels.com.au

SATURDAY, 9.15PM Jimmy Barnes at the Palais Theatre, St Kilda TALKING in that high-pitched, Scottish accent, Jimmy Barnes can sound like he has breathed in a helium balloon. But when this gutsy Aussie rocker manhandles a mic and starts to holler ... boy, it's like he's chewing gravel.

On stage, at the start of his 30:30 Hindsight tour, Barnes roars and screeches and tears every song to bits. And with the volume turned up so high it leaves your ears throbbing, there's no way of knowing what he's singing about. Still, you get the picture. Love and hate, pain and blame ... all the usual travails of a working-class man.

"This one's a love song," Barnesy squeaks. Sounds the same as the last one to me. Doesn't matter. I'm just sitting back, like everyone else in this shabby thunderdome, and admiring Barnesy's powers of endurance.

A month earlier, he was laid low recovering from back surgery. Now, this 50-something is stomping like a wild animal in the **company** of musos almost half his age.

"You've been good," he tells the audience with a wave. Not so bad yourself, Barnsey. SP If you like the sound of this ... catch Jimmy Barnes and his band at Mitchelton Winery, Nagambie, December 13. jimmybarnes.com/tours

SATURDAY, 10.20PM DJ Lauren Mac at Veludo, St Kilda "YOU'RE only as good as your last song," Lauren Mac says in the glitter-ball gloom of St Kilda's Veludo Bar. If that's right, this Melbourne DJ is right in the groove. Bopping behind her swaying console, three CD turntables at her fingertips, Mac has Veludo's teeny dancefloor heaving with bodies as she punches out Duke Dumont's Won't Look Back, then Daft Punk's One More Time and Jubel by Klingande.

"I love seeing people get up and dance," she says. "If they're not doing that, you're in trouble. The mood at a place can chill in a few minutes if you're not careful." Mac's career is tracking nicely. Three DJ sets a week is not unusual for this singer-songwriter, rising to six or seven during peak periods like the Spring Carnival. "Melbourne is without doubt the capital of Australian music," she says.

Away from clubland, Mac is a **firm** favourite at high society gigs, from Portsea Polo to the Birdcage at Flemington.

"Being a DJ can pay well if you have a **business** mind," she says. But the party is over if you're not staying in tune with trends.

"You can lose touch so quickly. So, you need to know who's charting, who's touring, who people are talking about." And in case you were wondering, Mac doesn't flip vinyl. This DJ travels light with headphones and a hard drive and assures us: "I've got thousands of songs in my head." SP If you like the sound of this ... see Lauren Mac DJ-ing at The Emerson (143-145 **Commercial** Rd, Prahran) on Nov 22. theemerson.com.au

SUNDAY, 7.10PM Emerald **Hotel**, South Melbourne JAZZ is leaking on to Clarendon St.

You can hear it as you approach the Emerald **Hotel**. Melancholy notes from a clarinet. Yep, Stevenson's Rockets are in residence and doing their regular Sunday night gig.

"We never prearrange anything," band leader and clarinetist Jo Stevenson says. "And we hardly ever rehearse," adds drummer Ian Smith. "Better that way." That's because these guys — with bass man Chris Ludowyk and pianist Steve Grant — have played together for decades and know the Great American Songbook inside out. The Emerald's bistro is a favourite "residency" of theirs and it's easy to see why. With butcher's paper thrown over timber tables, lamps glowing and **wine** glasses brimming with shiraz, it feels convivial — especially on a balmy spring night when regulars are slurping oysters and carving into steaks.

"We're playing the music we love," Stevenson says. But is there a future for Rockets-propelled jazz in Melbourne?

"Yeah, there's still an audience for this kind of music. No question." SP If you like the sound of this ... see the band live tomorrow at the Emerald **Hotel** (415 Clarendon St, Sth Melbourne). emeraldhotel.net

SUNDAY, 9.45PM Ding Dong Lounge, **Chinatown**, city ON one side of Market Lane, diners are finishing their Flower Drum dinner and stumbling into the night. On the other side, at Ding Dong Lounge, the night is just beginning. This nightspot, entered through theatre-style double doors, is a portal into '70s New York. Tonight, its dinner and a show with Brian Nankervis and members of the RockWiz Orchestra.

The Orchestra cooks up a rich gumbo of sound, spiced with some gifted guest artists: laid-back string man Ross Hannaford; those sassy sultans of swing, Vika and Linda Bull; and the inimitable Garry Gray. Mr Gray has a way of casting spells. Voodoo Magic, he calls it. Whatever it is, the vibe at Ding Dong is so hot you just have to shake a leg.

"Time for one more song?" Nankervis asks. Oh, yeah. SP If you like the sound of this .. eat at Girl with the Gris Gris at Ding Dong Lounge, see our review page 13

SO, there we have it. Another week of gigs down, another seven days of politely negotiating with my understanding partner about how many rock, pop and miscellaneous shows I'd like to see versus how many I need to see.

As Melbourne Music Week begins, so to do the gentle leave requests. I'm listening to The Peep Tempel's album for: a) my judging role as one of the panel for the \$30,000 Coopers Australian Music Prize; **b)** a bruising start to the day — this Melbourne trio may have a terrible name but their blustery, thoughtful garage rock is like caffeine for the ears, and c) because as Plato said: "Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and life to everything." MIKEY CAHILL

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