

Band by Band: Loretifest 2009

In terms of showcasing both local and international live music, the annual festival Loretifest is to Vietnam what Glastonbury is to the United Kingdom. This year's roster of international bands promises to be the best yet. Words by Will Peach.

Rumours surrounding the lineup of this year's Loretifest have been flying around the city at a feverish pace. Would Australian rockers Regurgitator return? Or would they be making way for a new international headliner? The likes of Pink and No Doubt also came on the agenda, only to be quickly dropped.

One thing is for sure. Music lovers won't be left disappointed. With a line-up featuring more international acts than ever before, and the best the local scene has to offer, it's going to be one hell of a music feast. Read on to get the who's who on this year's performers.

● I Heart Hiroshima

www.ihearthiroshima.com

Brisbane indie-pop darlings, I Heart Hiroshima, have had quite a time since the release of debut album *Tuff Teef* in 2007. Receiving a number of accolades including "Best Up and Coming Australian Band" by Street Press Australia and "Single of the Week" on iTunes for their track *Shakeytown*, the three-piece band, comprised of members Susie Patten, Matthew Somers and Cameron Hawes, are eagerly anticipating their first trip to Vietnam and to Loretifest.

"I'm very excited to see what goes on up there," says lead-singer and drummer Susie, who categorizes I Heart Hiroshima's sound as "off-kilter, warped pop songs, that are sweet and rusted at the same time".

Coming to Vietnam following the recent release of their eagerly

anticipated second album, *The Rip*, produced by Andy Gill of Gang of Four, the group spent the first half of the year playing across Europe alongside The Rakes and Maximo Park.

"We like coffee, party mixes and everything Larry David," says Susie.

But what to expect from I Heart's live performance?

"Two guitars, drums and three sets of lungs playing songs that are fun and without pretence. And maybe someone who talks a little too much."

You said it, Susie.

● Ratatat

www.ratatatmusic.com

New York City-based electro-outfit Ratatat provide perhaps the most anticipated performance of the festival after almost blowing the roof off Ho Chi Minh City venue Pacharan earlier this year.

Comprised of duo Mike Stroud (guitar) and producer Evan Mast (synthesizers), the band has toured alongside the likes of Daft Punk, Bjork, Interpol, Franz Ferdinand and The Killers, playing big-name festivals like Coachella, Fuji Rocks and the O2 Wireless Festival.

"I hate describing our music, but I guess it's sort of arty and dorky, but can still be somewhat badass and dancey at the same time," says Mike, who is looking forward to another trip to Vietnam.

"I thought the countryside was beautiful and I'm looking forward to



I Heart Hiroshima



Ratatat





Keith Nolan of Cannonball



Mojo Webb



some extra time there on this trip," he adds.

As for Evan, who got well acquainted with the crowds in Saigon last time, this year's Loretifest provides a unique opportunity.

"It's nice to be in a place where the idea of having a band come from far away and play a show is still rare and exciting," he says.

Interestingly, if it wasn't for music, Mike says that he'd be a baseball player and Evan a gardener. Thankfully their groundbreaking psychedelic light show and ear-splitting sound saves them from this.

● Cannonball

www.myspace.com/cannonballbluesrockband
Blues-rock band Cannonball are based in Bangkok, but has a lineage that can be traced back further afield to Ireland, Australia and Sweden. This year's performance at Loretifest also sees the band feature two very special guests in Joe Comings (guitar) and award-winning vocalist Eddie Baytos.

Formed in 2000, band members cite the highlight of their careers as playing alongside legendary artists like Ike Turner, The Blues Brothers, The Wailers and UB40. Their debut album *The Blues is a Good Man Feelin' Bad* has received radio airplay in the States and Australia, and has lead to recent live appearances at the Phuket, Ko Samui and Bangkok Blues Festivals.

Looking forward to bringing their high-energy groove-based blues music to the audience of Loretifest, the band cites Vietnam as a "special and magnetic place to play".

Guest vocalist Eddie also sees it as his chance to expose Vietnam to his very own unique sound.

"I would like to turn the crowd on to my music called Zydeco," he explains. "It's a fusion of world music from African-based rhythms to Latin influences as well as Ska and Blues."

God help us!

● Goo

www.facebook.com/goothai
Bangkok-based rockers Goo return to Vietnam after a triumphant gig in Hanoi earlier this year. Comprised of members Bee (vocals and guitar), Oh+ (bass and guitar), Tuan (guitar) and former Suede drummer Simon Gilbert, they're an odd-sounding lot but promise a "raw, dark, honest and very loud" set full of energy and heart.

"It's all about the music. Everything that we want to say is conveyed there," say the band, who expects the Loretifest crowd to be "really up for it and really getting into the spirit."

Formed from the ashes of former Bangkok-based band Futon, Goo have played seemingly everywhere, from Berlin to Tokyo, London to Saigon. Their return to Vietnam comes on the back of soon-to-be-released album *Siamese Tease*.

As for the gig in Saigon, the four-piece adds: "We love being onstage and hate sound checks."

Thankfully we'll only be getting a taste of the former, unless you turn up in the morning, that is.

● Paul Ubana Jones

www.paulubana.com
Anglo-Nigerian guitarist Paul Ubana Jones may have grown up in East London, the birthplace of Charlie Chaplin, but there's nothing silent about his gigs.

Having received his first guitar aged 11, and being stunned by the sounds of Bob Dylan and Howlin' Wolf, Jones has been playing and performing ever since, racking up a total 36 years of life on the road.

A festival veteran, he has performed at the Calgary and Philadelphia Folk Festivals, the Transmusical Festival in Paris, The Byron Bay Blues Festival in Australia and The Christchurch International Jazz and Blues Festival in New Zealand.

"I cherish being able to pass on my knowledge and passion in music to young people still looking to find 'meaning and direction' in their lives," he says, ahead of bringing his unique brand of roots and electro-acoustic songwriting to Loretifest for the first time.

● Mojo Webb

www.mojowebb.com
Loretifest veteran Mojo Webb will be appearing for the third-year running and promises some "crazy-off-the-wall guitar playing" that will certainly get the crowds moving. This time he'll be bringing in a five-piece band with him.

The Brisbane-based bluesman has toured with his band all over the world, but claims South-East Asia as his spiritual home.

"We love the experience of coming to South-East Asia, expressing our feelings and making people smile and dance while doing it," says Mojo.

Keen to foreground Loretifest's charitable aspect, lead-singer Mojo shows a great level of respect for what the festival is all about. Last year he even took time out from his schedule to visit one of the schools for the blind that Loretifest supports.

"It's a great feeling to know that through Loretifest, we can be of some assistance to these kids," he explains. **W**

RICO GONZALES

RICO GONZALES