



Live music

LIVE AND



Festival season is nearly over. But don't pack away your grimy T-shirt just yet! **Time Out** picks the top five live acts that'll make you dance, shout and freak out this month

LOVE



HEO

Xie Tianxiao

A rocker since the early 1990s and former Cold Blooded Animal frontman, Xie Tianxiao talks roots, reggae and Peking opera!

How does it feel to be considered one of the 'godfathers' of Chinese rock?

I don't have strong feelings about this actually. I am just numbed by it. I am happy that I can get recognition from others, but, to be honest, I don't care about how people judge me.

How did you start your rock career?

Some of my friends did something bad and came to me for protection. I harboured criminals and was caught. Because I was a kid, I was put under house arrest for three months. I had nothing to do so I borrowed a guitar. It changed my life.

You spent some time as a street performer in the US. How come?

I wanted to see how long I could live in New York on nothing. When I arrived I only had a little money and had to find a cheap apartment. Then I borrowed a guitar from a friend and started playing my own music in the street and at subway stations. I only spent

cash on watching live shows and drinking.

We hear you used to sing Peking opera.

It's not true, I never learned it formally – some stories about me are just not true. I did join some Peking opera shows when I was young, though.

You made a reggae album recently. Why?

It's to show my respect to Bob Marley. I want to write music like he did. But on the whole, I don't really like reggae music – it can be too verbose.

What are you working on now?

I will release an EP quite soon called *Ba Yewan Ranhei* (Dye the Night Black). *Gissing Liu Xie Tianxiao* plays Modern Sky Festival on Mon 4



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'You can't spend your entire career making the same album'

Anderson in 2003 (and again in 2007) that fell under his spell. As Mao Chuan of Beijing rock band Perdel (*below*) enthuses: 'No words can describe how good Anderson is. He has his own style and no one can ever replace his music.'

Part Bryan Ferry, part Morrissey, with a dash of Bowie thrown in for good measure, the skeletal cheeks and sunken eyes remain the same, but has

Anderson finally grown up? His last album, *Slow Attack*, was a departure from the 'Britpop' of old. Gone are the yearning odes to sex, poppers and Saturday nights; gone is the sleaze.

'You can't spend your entire career making the same album,'

Anderson argues. Yet, after a seven-year hiatus, Suede have reformed and are about to start touring again. As expected, he is cagey on such talk (the PR did warn us), but the good news is that Beijing is the only stop on his Asia tour where he will be playing Suede songs.

After 20 years in the business, Anderson is a veteran and retains, he says, 'a healthy suspicion about the music industry'. Certainly, he, more than most, has had his share of public beefs with bandmates, and when it comes to the business side, 'I can take it or leave it,' he admits, 'but I'm never cynical about music.'

No matter what, China loves Brett Anderson: his style, his voice, his music, his presence. And for any budding young Chinese rock stars, he has this final message: 'To be a good frontman, you've got to be reaching for madness,' he says. 'Anyone who doesn't is a failure.' What more is there to say? *Gareth Clark*

Brett Anderson plays Modern Sky Festival on Sun 3

Brett Anderson

In the fallout from the Britpop explosion, **Brett Anderson** is one casualty yet to reap the nostalgia dollar. At their 'commercial' height, Suede were the skeezy uncles of Britpop, a come-and-get-me wink of sleaze-rock, cheekbones and chemicals. But since the band's break-up in 2003, Anderson, by his own admission, hasn't been 'as commercially successful'.

Peers such as Blur's Damon Albarn remain as bankable as ever; Oasis are stadium-fillers in whatever line-up they choose; even Pulp's Jarvis Cocker crops up in the odd Wes Anderson film – but after a slew of solo records, is Brett the forgotten man of Britpop? Not in China.

Back in 2003, as the rocks loomed for the good ship Suede, they embarked on one last tour and were brought to Beijing by the enthusiasm of Shen Lihui, head honcho at Modern Sky, who remembers it as an 'unforgettable gig'.

As Anderson recalls: 'We were one of the first alternative rock bands to come to China, and this was the first big rock show some of these kids had been to. In the front row of the gig was a line of armed soldiers and the audience just pushed through them. They didn't care about the guns. There was great energy.'

Commercially, the show wasn't a success, but it was the Chinese kids who heard and saw

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Perdel

Impeccable local Britpop act **Perdel** play small rock clubs like they're headlining Glastonbury, citing bands such as Coldplay, Oasis and U2 as inspiration. And they bring on a bit of Beatlemania among their female fans.

'There is a group of five or six fans that has supported us at every performance in the past year; they appear without fail,' frontman Mao Chuan tells us from the studio where the band are currently recording their debut album.

Made up of Hong Tao (drums), Ma Xiaodong (guitar), Gang Ang (bass), Li Jian (keyboard) and Mao Chuan (vocals), Perdel formed in 2007 and say the name comes from the notion of walking away from the unhappiness in everyday life.

They won us over with the *Sgt Pepper*'s-style uniforms they wore at May's Midi Festival, but they're keeping us guessing as to their attire for this month's appearance. *Jeraldine Lim*
Perdel play the Modern Sky Festival on Sat 2.

Men

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Formerly of **Le Tigre**, feminist electropunk **JD Samson** (*middle*) dishes the dirt on **Men**

Your band name has been the source of a lot of bad office jokes. Why Men?

Yep, we get that all the time. It first came about as a discussion about how men, at times, have more confidence and really push for themselves. We needed a name and we decided we are now Men!

Men versus Le Tigre?

Men is where all our dreams come true. Le Tigre taught me a lot about making music, but I think Men is where I have grown to be.

And how does that sound?

We like to consider our music 'shredding at the gay club'; it's danceable pop, but also jamming guitars and political content. *Jennifer Conrad*
Men play the Inter City Music Festival on Sun 3



CMCB

Vocalist Ou Zi spits at the crowd, '*Shen cai bu cuo*' ('Good shape'), and '*Tiao de bu cuo*' ('Dance well'), to which they adoringly shout back, '*Jue bi de*' ('Definitely') in the song '*Jue Huo Er*'. It's a signature moment in a CMCB (Chinese MC Brothers) show, a Chinese rap-metal act that looks to bands such as Limp Bizkit and Linkin Park for inspiration. 'It actually describes a state of life. We are trying to tell everyone that if you love CMCB and love music, you will remain young forever, have a very good figure, and be able to jump the highest,' says Ou Zi. We just can't argue with that logic. *Ng Wan Ling* CMCB play the Inter City Music Festival on Sun 3

More bands you can't miss...



Queen Sea Big Shark (pictured, Modern Sky, Saturday 2) will debut songs from their forthcoming album. American act **...And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead** may have an overly pretentious name, but they rock it with extreme stage antics (Inter City, Sunday 3). Metal act **Liquid Oxygen Can** (Modern Sky, Monday 4) put on an explosive live show. California pop-rockers **Rooney** (Inter City, Saturday 2) are fronted by Robert Schwartzman, brother of actor Jason. Wildly talented tripped-out art rockers **Duck Fight Goose** (Modern Sky, Sunday 3) make a rare trip up from Shanghai. **Second Hand Rose** (Modern Sky, Saturday 2) mix rock, cross-dressing and bits of Chinese music. See listings for details and ticket information.

Festival fashion

So just what are the hip young Chinese kids actually wearing to music festivals these days?

At some point, you've likely spotted the leprechaun-like presence of Wang Xiaobei bouncing around his booth and barking into a loudspeaker, or being the first in the crowd to mosh. Or you may, at least, have seen the young designer's toad-emblazoned T-shirts, part of his '*Odi et amo*' line, which (in case you didn't know) is Latin for 'Hate and love'.

'I used to be very scared of toads when I was a kid, so much so that I would smack them to death with a bat,' reveals Wang. 'However, as I grew older, I realised that we should not judge things by their appearance. Toads may look ugly and harmful, but they are living things! Everyone should have a big heart and accept things for what they are.'

But there's other animal imagery, as well: 'I use a lot of snakes, and the basis of that design is actually snakes in condoms,' he continues. 'Snakes usually give bad vibes to people. However, in my designs, they are trapped in condoms, illustrating my notion of respecting and protecting ladies. What I want to say here is that women are not sex tools.' Now there's a T-shirt slogan!

Wang, who's been to about 15 music festivals this year, and will have his goods at the Modern Sky and Inter City festivals while he's busy rocking out at Zhenjiang's Midi Festival, sees festivals as a way to publicise his brand.

'I wouldn't say that I am an amateur in the fashion industry. In fact, I am proud to say that I am the top clothing brand at Chinese music festivals,' he boasts, likely accurately. 'I am probably the only fashion designer in Beijing who visits all the festivals. Most of the attendees are 16-30, and I think that they are able to better understand my thoughts and accept my designs.' *Ng Wan Ling*



Toad boy Wang Xiaobei keeps it real!

The other looks on show

Blue and white sailor shirts are practically the uniform of young Chinese rock fans and a nod to rocker He Yong who first wore the style onstage in the late '80s. The look is completed by the red neckerchief of the Young Pioneers, a communist youth group.

Then there are the trends we can't explain, like the ubiquitous **clip-on animal ears** worn mostly – but not exclusively – by overly cute girls.

And at the InMusic Festival this summer on the Zhangbei grasslands, revellers wore **white masks** à la Jason from the *Friday the 13th* horror movie series. Of course, maybe you'd want to conceal your face, too, before dropping your trousers in front of a load of strangers (pictured left). Above him, the flag reads, '*Bu yao jiu gun*' or, loosely translated, 'If you don't like it, just piss off.' *JC*

