

# arts & life

## A minor scale

A host of world-famous performers are set to play the Dubai International Jazz Festival. However, Sarah Wolff turns her attention to a number of lesser-known names whose shows promise great things

Jazz is too often seen as an exclusive form of music, with a reputation for esoteric improvisations played in painfully cool and life-threateningly smoky clubs. As a result, the whole genre can often seem wilfully intimidating and elitist. Not so the Dubai International Jazz Festival, though. The festival's main programme might be groaning under the weight of its line-up, including such instantly recognisable names as James Blunt, John Legend and Incognito, but there are hidden gems in the week leading up to these shows. Everything from neo-soul to bebop is represented and though the artists may be lesser-known, their performances are no less worthwhile. They include the multilingual world musician Elizabeth Ayoub, crooner Judy Wexler, jazz diva Lisa Hugo and the UAE's most popular cover band, Marwan & the Mojos, along with plenty of others.

Ayoub is a new addition to the festival's line-up of sparkling, young performers who will grace the Network Stage venue. The green-eyed beauty is of Lebanese descent and looks forward to making her UAE debut. "I am very curious about the type of crowd that will be there," she says. "This will be my first time performing for an Arabian audience, which will be mixed of course, but it's definitely a point of excitement for me."

Ayoub grew up in Venezuela and now lives in the US, between Miami and New York. As a result of her cross-cultural upbringing, she writes songs in English, Spanish and Arabic. Her latest album, *Océanos y Lunas* (Oceans and Moons), will be released later this spring and the singer plans to premiere the new tunes at the Dubai Jazz Festival. *Océanos y Lunas* was recorded with the famed Spanish music producer Javier Limon in Madrid and Beirut, but Ayoub's voice maintains the same unembellished quality no matter what language she is singing in.

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