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Kourelou takes Londoners on a journey across the rich musical plains of Greece, the Balkans and Asia Minor

On Friday night, Greek band Kourelou provided the European leg of a musical journey that spanned three continents for the first *A World in London (AWIL) Live!* at Rich Mix in Bethnal Green. A capacity crowd whooped, clapped and danced to songs performed by this seven-piece band whose youngest member, vocalist Vangelitsa Giamaiou is just 20-years-old and 32 years younger than its oldest, violin virtuoso Nikos Kyrios.

Wedged in the middle of three live music sets, London-based [Kourelou](#) warmed temperatures with their exotic, southern Mediterranean soaked songs. Their name, meaning ‘patchwork’, is an accurate reflection of how the band has traversed the rich musical plains of Greece, Asia Minor and the Balkans to source their songs. Their opening number was the lively *Garsona* (‘Waitress’), a song from Smyrna in the Rebetiko style, about a proud waitress making all the men drunk with her sweet looks while pocketing generous tips. *Skaros*, about village life in the Epirus Mountains (northwest Greece), was beautifully animated in a solo by Nikos Kyrios, while *Balkanio* is a piano-led Jazz-infused new composition from the band. Kourelou even dipped into popular culture with their rendition of *Misirlou* (‘Egyptian’) – a big hit in the region in 1927 that gained global prominence in the 90s as the re-worked soundtrack for *Pulp Fiction*. Several songs from the set will feature on Kourelou’s forthcoming debut album *Rags and Raindrops*.

Also on the *AWIL Live* bill was the six-piece [SOAS Sizhu Ensemble](#) (China), who opened the evening with their gentle renditions of music from the Jiangnan region of China played on traditional instruments. The evening’s final act was Mulele Matondo Afrika (Congo) whose conscious lyrics and mixture of traditional African rhythms and contemporary beats had the entire audience moving and chanting along with them.

The evening’s final song was an improvised jam between several members of Kourelou and Mulele Matondo Afrika, offering a perfect illustration of how the capital’s diverse communities and cultures harmonise.

Kourelou band leader Pavlos Mélas, a singer-songwriter guitar player, said, *“All the bands were great and the cultural combinations were so diverse. Yet as the last jam showed, diversity does not mean disconnection – people with completely different backgrounds can share the same stage and produce something homogeneous.”* Mélas added, *“The most pleasing aspect for us was the fantastic reception Kourelou got from an enthusiastic, mixed crowd of Londoners. That’s so encouraging for us as a relatively new band, which to date has mainly played for the Greek community.”*

The event was produced by arts and heritage charity [Cultural Co-operation](#) and hosted by global music guru [DJ Ritu](#), who presents the long-running *A World in London* radio show.

Cultural Co-operations Executive Director Selina Papa said, *"It's so important for us Londoners to remember how global, multilayered and unique our identities are, and to celebrate our differences and similarities through music. A World in London Live was a joyful opportunity for 400 people to celebrate together – and here's to many more!"*

AWIL Live! marks an exciting new development in the ongoing collaboration between Cultural Co-operation (CC) and DJ Ritu. The partnership first came together in July 2014, when DJ Ritu was invited to host CC's weekly Resonance FM show, drawing together their many contacts and respective years' experience of promoting local and global music. Their next event will be in June.

ENDS/

Notes to Editors

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

For more information/images/interviews, please contact PR Ipek Ozerim at Prickly Pear.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kourelou, www.kourelou.co.uk

Formed by Pavlos Mélas a little over a year ago after performing at the Southbank production, 'Greece Is The Word', this group of virtuoso musicians love to entertain both in and outside of the UK's Greek community. The band's broad repertoire is shaped by five core members whose instruments include violin, bouzouki, baglama, tzoura davul, defi, piano and guitar, further enriched by guest singers, musicians, and dancers.

A World in London (AWIL)

DJ Ritu's radio show AWIL was first broadcast on BBC London 94.9 in 2006. It continues to showcase the most exciting global sounds in London across two weekly Wednesday shows: new music reviews on [SOAS Radio](#) (16:00) and live music on [Resonance FM](#) (18.30) in conjunction with [Cultural Co-operation](#) and its [Artist Network](#). A unique platform, AWIL's friendly organic, full-world format extends from traditional folk and classical music through to contemporary fusion, with a firm emphasis on life stories and global cultures told through music. In the past 12 months, featured artists have included the cream of London talent such as Khiyo, YANTRA and Olcay Bayir, alongside the giants of World Music, Bebel Gilberto, Javier Limon, Magos Herrera, Debashish Bhattacharya, and Mokoomba.

Cultural Co-operation, www.culturalco-operation.org

CC was set up in London in 1987 as an independent educational charity with a mission to unite people through high quality engagement of each other's unique cultural heritage, through festivals, events, broadcast and professional development for artists and young people. As part of its work, CC runs an Artist Network, which currently comprises over around 1000 creative practitioners, both ensembles and solo artists – world musicians, dancers, spoken word performers, writers and visual artists – from 80 national and faith communities across London's 29 boroughs. The Artist Network offers a range of free services generating opportunities for cross-cultural artistic collaborations, professional development training, inter-faith and intercultural encounters, media exposure and contact with industry powerbrokers to enhance prospects for paid work.

DJ Ritu, www.djritu.com

DJ, broadcaster, club promoter and Rough Guide contributor, East London born DJ Ritu began her career as a pop music DJ in 1986, before moving into global beats at club ASIA in Islington. She began touring internationally in 1991, often the first DJ to introduce 'world' sounds in many countries, while guesting at legendary global music clubs in the UK such as The Mambo Inn. In 1994, she co-founded Outcaste Records, signing Nitin Sawhney and Badmarsh (& Shri), as well as creating Club Outcaste, which was frequented by Bjork, Goldie, & Talvin Singh. Artistic director of two bands, The Asian Equation and Sister India, Ritu has performed in over 30 countries, from Istanbul to Cape Town, Cairo to Riga and at major venues and events such as the Royal Festival Hall, the Big Chill, Sfinks, and WOMAD. This long-time pioneer continues to set new trends through her regular London club nights, including leading Bollywood night Kuch Kuch (15 yrs) and the Middle Eastern flavoured Hoppa (12 yrs) and her BBC and independent radio shows.



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