

London's famed Koko Club spreads its wings to Asia with the launch of Koko Asia here and it is Kuala Lumpur's vibrant local indie music scene that is the main attraction.

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If you talk about British indie rock 'n' roll culture, the Koko Club venue in Camden in London is synonymous with much-storied bands and scene-setting rock history in recent years. In a short span of five years, Koko Club has pushed ahead and emerged as one of the premier destinations in the bustling British capital city for exciting bands and deejays, with music fans from all across the globe thronging the venue.

As the story goes, the venue, which opened in 1900, has gone through various incarnations (cabaret theatre, punk venue, etc) and the likes of Charlie Chaplin, Clash and Sex Pistols have played there, among others.

In 2004, the venue underwent a major facelift (replacing the Camden Palace name) and returned with a vengeance with the Koko Club moniker.

It is also the home of the much buzzed *Club NME* nights and with gigs by Kasabian, Basement Jaxx, Interpol, TV On The Radio and Jarvis Cocker, to showcases from megastars like Prince, Madonna and Coldplay, you have an idea of the sort of diversity and dynamic range associated with this club.

As for popularity, over 400,000 people come through the Koko Club doors every year. So where does Koko Club and Kuala Lumpur figure in the same sentence?

In the fringes of the local music scene, Koko Asia founders David Brown and John Thubron, based in KL, have found fans with an affinity to London's indie electro and alternative scene. A vibrant indie and electro presence as well as a very knowledgeable scene in the Klang Valley (with regards to British music in particular) are, in large part, the reasons that Koko Asia has chosen KL as its base of operations.

With the advent of Koko Asia, much of its parent club's activities in London will be replicated in this neck of the woods. The mission is to start with the grassroots audience, building from ground level up and utilising the existing indie support network in South-East Asia.

In Malaysia, BarSonic @ Zouk KL and KL's pioneering indie-electro DJ collective Twilight Actiongirl will be Koko Asia's first collaborative partners. Koko Asia, in fact, kicks off major proceedings with the Club Koko Asia launch party on Friday night at BarSonic, the very first time the iconic London club flies out of its north London borough of Camden. "We

Koko lands in KL



Live in KL: British indie pop outfit The Standards, featuring energetic frontman Matt Smith, will be making its Malaysia debut at the launch of Koko Asia this Friday at BarSonic, Zouk KL.

have a lot of respect for what Twilight Actiongirl has done over the last four or five years. Really, they've been flying the flag here for indie and electro. Here are some guys we have a natural affinity with and BarSonic is a natural place to start," says Brown, who is one of the pioneering members of the Koko Asia set-up in KL.

"What we want to do is to start a night really targeting the right people straight from

the first event," he adds.

The BarSonic venue and its Friday night resident Twilight Actiongirl will host a special Koko Asia party package, including the Bangkok-based indie pop outfit The Standards, *Club NME* monthly resident DJ Simon Subsonic and KL-based indie rockers the Deserters on Friday night.

"We're very pleased with the line-up. With The Standards, we're bringing a band based in

Bangkok which is a Thai-British fusion that has never been here before. We came across the Deserters because they are a band in Malaysia whose music we really enjoy and and obviously, they're bringing out their new album *Goodbye Oblivion*, so here is an opportunity to hear their new music and sound."

Exclusively from London, Koko Asia will also be bringing in indie stalwart DJ Simon Subsonic, who has been playing at Koko Club for a number of years now, including the *Club NME* series.

"He has 20 years experience on the Brit alternative music scene and he'll bringing in the cutting edge sounds of the indie and electro variety."

The launch party will also be shored up by Mayo (as Johnny Mayo), who is Koko Asia's resident DJ, and Twilight Actiongirl as local residents.

The big plans for Koko Asia though is to open doors for what they have found in this region – lots of really talented bands.

"One of the things we are trying to do is get them (the regional bands) international exposure," Thubron continued.

Besides establishing the Koko Asia brand in these parts, both men have been scouting around the region for potential indie bands to create a scene that mirrors the one in Koko London.

"We're not making this a big heavily funded event, though," notes Brown. "We're trying to keep it within the (indie) spirit and also use this as a model for moving forward, where we're looking to have one local band, one regional or international band, and a local and regional line-up of DJs (for each event).

"It's something not so many people have been doing from a regional point of view and we do see this evolving trend in the music industry which we've experienced in Britain happening here also."

At the end of the day, the main objective for Koko Asia is to have a monthly gig happening in each of the key cities in the Asian region, starting first in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Singapore, before moving on to such markets as Australia and even back to Britain.

In addition, there is a bonus, a competition – the AirAsia Koko London weekender, as Thubron puts it – where Koko Asia will be flying winners to London. All you need to do is arrive before 10pm on Friday night at BarSonic to be entered into the draw to win a trip to Koko London, which will include two nights stay and a tour of Koko Club with VIP guest passes (backstage). Visit kokoasia.com/club_koko.php for more information.

■ *The Club Koko Asia launch party happens this Friday at BarSonic @ Zouk KL, 113, Jalan Ampang, KL. Doors open 9.30pm. Cover charge applies (see zoukclub.com.my). BarSonic Facebook members: Free entry before 11pm. Hotline: 03-2171 1997 (Zouk KL) or email: david@kokoasia.com.*

Gahan on the mend

DEPECHE Mode frontman David Gahan has had a malignant tumour removed from his bladder, the British band said last week, announcing plans to resume a European tour interrupted by the health scare.

One of Britain's most successful and longest-lived bands, Depeche Mode cancelled a string of concerts this month after Gahan was rushed to hospital on May 12, shortly before going on stage in Greece.

The problem was announced as a severe bout of gastroenteritis at the time, but last Thursday's statement revealed the more serious condition discovered after tests.

"While in hospital, further medical tests revealed a low-grade malignant tumour in Dave's bladder, which has since been successfully removed.

"At doctors' orders Dave Gahan must take a break until June 8, to ensure that he makes a full recovery," it said, announcing the band's *Tour Of The Universe* will resume in the German city of Leipzig.

"Dave Gahan sincerely thanks his fans for their support, understanding and patience. Depeche Mode deeply regret any problems or inconveniences the cancellations and postponements may have caused," it added.

The band this month cancelled concerts in Greece, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Croatia due to the health scare.

Upcoming shows in London, Germany and the Netherlands have been rescheduled or cancelled, while later concerts around Europe will go ahead as planned, according to the band's website. — AFP

Southern uprising

THERE is definitely something brewing in the Johor Baru indie circles. It doesn't matter if this scene rarely hits the headlines and the venues are a little ragged for the average punter. What matters is that there is an emerging crowd coming through and supporting their own in Johor Baru.

Apart from ska-punk acts, the indie regulars and the electro-disco shindigs by the JB-based deejay collective KBnL, the Chinese independent music scene is also making waves.

This Saturday sees *The Learn To Fly* music festival advancing the independent music cause in JB. It is the first high profile showcase organised by LO-FLY music production, a new indie label which is based in JB. The mission is to build a network of bands and create a live

platform in the far south of the country for touring acts and of course, the JB Chinese indie music scene.

The line-up for *The Learn To Fly* gig includes powerhouse Chinese independent bands Nao, DengDeng, Citizens of Ice Cream and heavy-hitters Alert the Village and Xerpent. Other acts on the bill include The Naked Emperor, Fetus, Hui She Di Dai, Laila, The Gale, Novelea, The Stereo, The Lipstick Redemption and The Mixed. Merchandise stores and DIY releases will be available at the door.

The festival takes place this Saturday at Golden Green Pub, Jalan Abiad 1, Taman Pelangi, Johor Baru. Tickets: RM25. Doors open 1pm. For more info or advance bookings, call 016-727 3693 or e-mail: lofly9982@yahoo.com.