

# 10 seriously cool music festivals in the Middle East

By Ridhima Sinha and Laurel Munshower | January 24, 2019



GROOVE ON THE GRASS IN DUBAI

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**It's time to fuel your musical wanderlust with this year's festivals from Dubai to Morocco**

**W**hether it's soul-stirring music you're looking for or an indie band playing against a stunning backdrop, music festivals are the ultimate escape from reality. Here is our annual roundup of the region's top crowd pleasers.

## **1. Winter at Tantora | Al-Ula County, Saudi Arabia | December 20, 2018 - February 8, 2019**

There's still time to catch this brand-new festival in one of Saudi Arabia's most stunning sites, a sandstone landscape that was once inhabited by the Nabateans. Each weekend over the multi-week festival features Arabian musicians alongside arts and cultural activities. [winterattantora.com](http://winterattantora.com)

## **2. Groove on the Grass | Dubai | February 8, April 26, October and December TBA**

Taking place a handful of times each season at the Emirates Golf Club, this thumping festival brings in the electronic greats - and there are few better examples of that than in the upcoming February edition, which features dance-pioneers Underworld. Along with art, a marketplace, food trucks and activities, it's a holistic experience in a verdant setting. [grooveonthegrass.net](http://grooveonthegrass.net)



UNDERWORLD IS PLAYING GROOVE ON THE GRASS ON FEBRUARY 8

### 3. RedFest DXB | February 14-15, 2019

Dubai's coolest festival where cool chart-toppers (previous years: Rita Ora, Bastille, Demi Lovato, Iggy Azalea) take over the emirate for one epic weekend. From quirky street food vendors to eye-popping art installations, this critically acclaimed fest has it all. This year showcases Macklemore and Camila Cabello, among others. [redfestdxb.com](http://redfestdxb.com)



REDFEST DXB

### 4. Dubai Jazz Festival | February 20-22

The region's biggest jazz festival has an immense line-up of legendary musicians, Grammy award-winning artists, critically acclaimed jazz and contemporary groups, and pop sensations that covers over 50 years of music history - this year headliners include funk-group Jamiroquai, Brit-band Snow Patrol and Grammy-winner Alicia Keys. [dubaijazzfest.com](http://dubaijazzfest.com)



STING AT DUBAI JAZZ FESTIVAL 2016

### **5. Mawazine | Rabat, Morocco | June 21-29**

Each year, the picturesque town of Rabat in Morocco plays host to some massive names in music such as Lauryn Hill, Elton John, Stevie Wonder and Rihanna. Expect this year's lineup to live up to its "world music" tag with tunes from Morocco, Africa, Asia and North America.

[festicket.com](http://festicket.com)

### **6. Istanbul Jazz Festival | July TBA**

Top jazz artists from across the globe feature alongside rock, electronic and world-music stars.

Past performers include Joss Stone, Ray Charles, Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. [caz.iksv.org/en](http://caz.iksv.org/en)



JOSS STONE AT ISTANBUL JAZZ FESTIVAL 2016

### **7. Jerash Festival | Jordan | July TBA**

Held in the artsy little town of Jerash, the five-day fest combines Arabic folk dance and poetry with international art and music. Guests can expect to be entertained by some 40 artists, including dance troupes representing Circassian, Spanish and Chinese cultures. [jerashfestival.jo](http://jerashfestival.jo)



THE HISTORICAL SETTING AT JERASH

### **8. Wicker Park Festival | Batroun, Lebanon | September TBA**

For several days every September, the coastal city of Batroun opens some of its most charming private beach houses to the public for performances by alternative musicians from around the world. Emerging local talent, such as The Wanton Bishops, Interbellum and Safar, are a real highlight. There are also quirky classes like Brazilian *capoeira* and instrument-making.

[wickerparkfestival.com](http://wickerparkfestival.com)



THE WICKER PARK FESTIVAL

### **9. Cairo Jazz Festival | October TBA**

Founded by pianist, composer and producer Amro Salah, considerable jazz talent from the region, such as Riff band and Nour Project, attract thousands of music lovers to the city for three days every year. [cairojazzfest.com](http://cairojazzfest.com)



THE CAIRO JAZZ FESTIVAL

### **10. Yasalam After-Race Concerts | Abu Dhabi | November 28 - December 1**

First staged in 2009 to celebrate the inaugural F1 race in Abu Dhabi, the festival celebrates motorsport, music and the community over the course of several days in events such as the popular After-Race Concerts. Previous headliners include The Weeknd, Lionel Richie and Guns 'N' Roses. [yasalam.ae](http://yasalam.ae)





ENRIQUE IGLESIAS AT YASALAM 2015