

Nightlife

Sydney after hours. Edited by Sarah Theeboom

505: alive and kicking

Still hard to find and still hip as hell, the new 505 is everything a great jazz venue should be.

By Sarah Theeboom

Over the last five years, if you were listening in the right places, you might have heard the whispers about an underground music venue called 505. Until this year, the secret Surry Hills location was communicated only by word of mouth, directing you to an intimate warehouse address where you paid \$10 to sit on the floor, drink whatever you brought with you, listen to jazz or world music, and appreciate a unique Sydney vibe.

Although difficult to find, the 505 fold, once penetrated, offered a strong and supportive community. Musicians played there for a fraction of their regular fees; punters turned up to listen to artists they had never heard of; the neighbours never once complained in five years; and the venue directors shifted their furniture around every week to turn their lounge room into a jazz club.

“505 proves that an artist-run space can survive”

Kerri Glasscock and Cameron Undy started the original Monday night shows in 2004 because that's the night most musos have off. It was a way for local performers to test out new or experimental material in front of a respectful audience made up of other artists. Glasscock has a theatre background and Undy is a musician; they drew from the resources of their immediate circle and 505 became known for providing both artistic freedom and a high calibre of performance. After two and a half years the artist-run space began to support itself. Kerri and Cam moved out, and Wednesday nights were added to the programme.

“Sydney audiences have been stifled for a long time by the normality and sameness of what's been on offer,” says Glasscock. “For a while there in the 2000s every place felt the same: every pub had a glossy chrome refit and pokies room. In recent years the public has tapped into the underground subculture thing again and 505 proves that an artist-run space can survive and be self-reliant.”



Red light district The new 505 is located on the premises of an old strip club



And survive it has. After five years 505 has outgrown its old and much-loved space and this year moved to a new Surry Hills address. It now operates as an above-board music venue – no longer underground, but still under the radar. The old ethos remains: it's still word-of-mouth, it's still as cheap as they can make it, and it still exists for the local community. But now it's open six nights a week and provides a home to Jazzgroove musicians' collective and Café Carnivale's world music events.

The creative decisions will continue to be made in the same way. There is one rule about what gets played at 505: both Glasscock and Undy have to like it. It's a system that has served them well: he provides a professional opinion, and she adds the layman's ears. More variety of performance is likely in the new venue as they now have the physical and decibel space for larger ensembles and more upbeat music.

The success of 505 marks a change in Sydney's cultural landscape. More left-of-centre, artist-run

performance spaces are operating; and there has been a surge of activity in the warehouses of the inner city. Glasscock thinks that council support, changes in legislation and state government funding have helped a previously bland city to diversify. But you also need the right venue, and many patrons will be sad to bid goodbye to the space they've become attached to.

However, nostalgic 505ers are still able to visit the old venue for a fix. Glasscock and Undy are keeping it open as a theatre space, and hope that 505 will do for local theatre what it did for local music. “The space holds a great energy for development, plus with all the history, we didn't want to lose it,” says Glasscock. So if you keep your ears open, you might start to hear whisperings through the grapevine about a secret, underground theatre somewhere in Surry Hills.

To join the 505 mailing list and find out where the new venue is, email venue505@mac.com

10 hot spots in 2010



1 Café Lounge
Check out their sin-e (pronounced shin-ay) acoustic nights every Tuesday. 277 Goulburn St, Surry Hills 2010. (02 9356 8888).

2 Oxford Art Factory
Arguably the best sounding gig venue in town. 38–36 Oxford St, Darlinghurst 2010. (02 9332 3711).

3 505
(See left)

4 Slide
Classy cabaret almost every night of the week with dinner packages available. 41 Oxford St, Darlinghurst 2010. (02 8915 1899).

5 Ching-a-lings
Thursdays are hip-hop nights and the small bar gets pumping. 133 Oxford St, Darlinghurst 2010.

6 The Gaff
Hellfire fetish night on the third Friday of the month. 16–18 Oxford St, Darlinghurst 2010. (02 9380 9244).

7 Cabaret@212
Book in for dinner and a show every Friday. 212 Riley St, Surry Hills 2010. (02 9212 1111).

8 Raval
There's live music almost every night upstairs at the Macquarie Hotel. 42 Wentworth Ave, Surry Hills 2010. (02 8262 8888).

9 Gaelic Club
Bands play most nights. Catch everything from reggae to black metal. 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills 2010. (02 9211 1687).

10 Exchange Hotel
Between their many venues, including 34B, QBar and Phoenix, you won't be bored. 34 Oxford St, Darlinghurst 2010. (02 9331 1936).