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Make Music Pasadena 2014: Ten memorable moments from Saturday's festival

by Seraphina Lotkhamnga on [June 10, 2014](#)



Thousands filled the streets of Pasadena on Saturday for the Crown City's annual [Make Music Pasadena](#) festival, which once again brought a diverse lineup of artists for a day of free shows. From the streets to parking lots, alleys, parks, coffeehouses, pubs and pop-up stages located within Old Town Pasadena, every nook and cranny was filled with eager bands playing for eager music fans, if at least not the curious passersby. That's Yuna on the main stage, above, and following are some highlights (with fun photo galleries to follow) from Buzz Bands LA staff writer [Seraphina Lotkhamnga](#) and contributing writer [Britt Witt](#):



► Seems like it's own feat to get a musician all the way from Tel Aviv, but how about her seven-piece band? While [Ester Rada](#) certainly has the gravitas to take a stage on her own, being graced with the whole shebang shot spine-tingling chills, even in the noon heat. Bouncing between English and Hebrew, the stunning frontwoman had an infectious energy as her tunes spanned jazz, rock powerchords and tribal undertones. — *B.W.*



► When [Moses Sumney](#) played the Buzz Bands LA stage during [last year's Echo Park Rising](#), we knew it wouldn't be his last neighborhood festival. Now the "it" boy, Sumney has traveled the word and played with some of the bigger names (Solange, Beck, Local Natives), but the one-man-show — whose looping and vocal talents continue to wow — still sounded comfortable as ever while providing what he called "daytime ambiance" (with Joshua Willing Halpern joining him on guitar). "Man on the Moon" sounded haunting even in a bright, sunny setting at the Playhouse District stage Sumney even debuted a brand new song. Not even an ambulance (which zoomed past in the middle of his set) could have broken down his cool demeanor. — *S.L.*



► And for the quintessential indie-pop band, [Finish Ticket](#) had curious bystanders popping out of the local shops to get a good listen. To put them into relatable SoCal terms, they're the Young the Giant of the Bay Area, hailing from Alameda, a little island East of San Francisco. Packing charming melodies, two sets of brothers, and almost a decade of honing their sound, FT was tight, exciting and fulfilling. The quintet appropriately played a faster-paced version of "In the Summer" to get the audience moving and officially won hearts with their spot on cover of the Killers' "When You Were Young." — *B.W.*



► Another baking-in-the-sun-worth-it set came by way of Durham, N.C.,-based electronic duo [Sylvan Esso](#). "It's hot out there, man," shouted vocalist Amelia Meath. "You guys are warriors in the heat." Just having opened for Tune-Yards at the Fonda a couple of nights before, Meath and Nick Sanborn is no doubt another male-female, vocal-beats pairing. However, Meath brings her vocal talents and arrangements over from her trio Mountain Man, which is what makes Sylvan Esso's R&B-tinted songs like "Coffee," "Play It Right" and "Dreamy Bruises" so intriguing. — *S.L.*



► Up the grassy knoll and to the iconic Levitt Pavilion amphitheater was [Run River North](#), barefoot and hair flipping. These six pals have been making music since 2011 but finally caught the radar this past winter and now they're steamrolling music lovers. With fiddles, tambourines, drum shimmers, an acoustic guitar and lyrics about rattling bones and running rivers (go figure), they inject a lot of energy into their folk music. What sets them apart? Maybe lead singer Alex Hwang jumping into the grass with the crowd while the band pounds on their instruments. They were true crowd pleasers for the tantalizing live rendition of "Beetle." — *B.W.*



► If you've ever wondered what it would be like to see and hear Snow White play a ukulele, a lion play slide guitar, and a guy wearing a horse's head play a tom drum, then [Bloody Death Skull](#) is your band. They'll answer all your questions (including ones you didn't even think you had) with songs like "Sky Ferreira," one of a [stream of singles](#) that take the absurdist to a new level of absurd. Daiana Feuer's bright, childish coos bounce all over the place with explicit lyrics that are wonky and filthy but hilarious. It's a good thing they were playing in the cozy Old Towne Pub instead of a pop-up stage in front of a church. — *S.L.*



► When you're done ogling [Aaron Embry's](#) sculpted biceps and headscarf flair, his folk tales take you right out of a small pub in Pasadena to a big worn porch in the South. With a harmonica around his neck and a guitar over his shoulders, Embry strikes a familiar I-totally-feel-like-a-true-American tone. Between songs, he was tongue and cheek, making great for stage banter and relieving any pressure. It especially got fun with audience interactions, like when his glued onlookers uninhibitedly sang along to "Pale Blue Eyes." — *B.W.*



► [Yuna](#) may have been second to last on the Luckman-curated Main Stage, but she certainly performed and pulled in the fans as if she were the headliner. (No offense to DJ/producer [Slow Graffiti](#) and his music, but let's face it; her live band would never have to deal with a moment of silence just because a flying beach ball hit a key on a Macbook.) The Malaysian pop singer and ukulele player was an absolute star donning a gorgeous head warp and chic sunglasses as she floated those butter-smooth vocals out into the swaying crowd via songs like "Lullabies," "Favorite Things," "Escape" and "Rescue." — *S.L.*



► Searching for a much-needed break from hoofing it between the umpteen stages, stumbling upon a seminary tucked away from the crowds was more than welcome. Add a gentle serenade from [John Isaac Waters](#) and Make Music Pasadena has never been so soothing. Surrounded by quiet toddlers and relieved parents, the folk singer-songwriter and his chocolate-colored acoustic guitar were joined by Alex Rhodes and Will Grambling for a full, albeit quiet, performance. John's tranquil alternative country trills traveled across the 50 feet of separation to fill the corridor with hushed joy. Except the man on his cellphone that didn't get the 'this is a quiet place' memo. Can't be 2014 without it. — *B.W.*

► If there was another feel-good moment to be had that evening, an intimate one was found at the Old Towne Pub during [yOya](#)'s set. The band, whose members are actually former Pasadena residents, played to a packed pub, their songs making the small room feel much bigger than it was. Now toting a live drummer, Alex Pfender and Noah Dietterich let their falsettos fly high and their energy through the roof. — *S.L.*

Photos: Yuna, Sylvan Esso, Finish Ticket and Moses Sumney by [Carl Pocket](#); Ester Rada, Run River North, Bloody Death Skull, Aaron Embry and John isaac Watters by [Zane Roessell](#)

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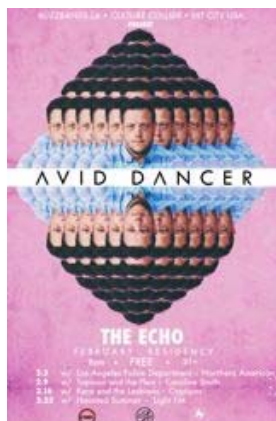
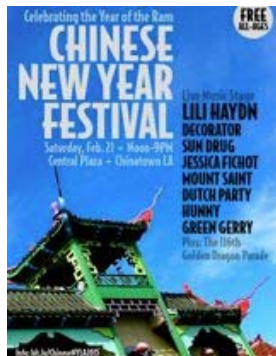


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