

THE FORTRESS

Stronghold of free speech and thought!

December, 2025

2025: THE YEAR AI BECAME REAL AND STARTED TO HAVE AN IMPACT FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE ACROSS MANY AREAS OF HUMANITY!



AI becomes a reality in the music industry and now royalty payments!



AI and its impact become active discussions at the United Nations!

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20

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THE FORTRESS!
Page 1

NEWS ARTICLES FROM IAIJ JOURNALISTS
Page 2

GENERAL NEWS AND EVENTS AT
FOF.
Page 56

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT FOF & IAIJ
Page 64

THE FORTRESS

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WELCOME TO THE FORTRESS!



Maurice Ali

This issue is special in that we have taken up the issue of AI at the highest levels and begun advocating for humanity in general. As for the rest of our organizations things keep progressing as always!

So from all of us at IAIJ and FOF, we hope you enjoy this edition of The Fortress!

Maurice Ali, President

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International Association of Independent Journalists Inc.

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NEWS ARTICLES FROM IAIJ

JOURNALISTS

Order, Elegance, and Release: Strauss Capelle Vienna in Ruse

Strauss Capelle Vienna · Ruse, Bulgaria · 29 November 2025

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria)

On the evening of 29 November in Ruse (Bulgaria), Strauss Capelle Vienna took the stage with the quiet assurance of an ensemble fully at ease within its own language. From the first moments, a sense of order and expectation settled in the hall: the red-coated orchestra finding its position, the audience attentive, the music already present in the poised stillness of the players. What followed unfolded with structural clarity, as elegance, tension, and release emerged organically over the course of the evening, shaped through proportion, balance, and sustained focus.



Strauss Capelle Vienna on stage in Ruse, establishing the orchestral sound and formal presence at the opening of the concert.

Please click on the link below to access the article:

[https://fortressoffreedom.com/Strauss_Capelle_Vienna.pdf\[/quote\]](https://fortressoffreedom.com/Strauss_Capelle_Vienna.pdf[/quote])

George Enescu International Festival 2025

A Personal Chronicle from August 24 to September 21

A photographic and narrative record from six days at Romania's largest classical music festival.

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria)

The George Enescu International Festival, held between 24 August and 21 September 2025, stands as one of Europe's most ambitious and far-reaching classical music events. For nearly a month, Bucharest becomes a meeting point for leading orchestras, conductors, soloists, and contemporary creators, shaping a cultural landscape that blends tradition, innovation, and human connection.

Although the festival spans dozens of performances across multiple venues, this article follows six days and seven concerts, offering a personal chronicle of encounters, energy, and artistic depth within Romania's most iconic musical celebration.



Strauss Capelle Vienna on stage in Ruse, establishing the orchestral sound and formal presence at the opening of the concert.

Please click on the link below to access the article:

https://fortressoffreedom.com/George_Enescu_International_Festival_2025_Personal_Chronicle_Diana_Nikolova.pdf

Neil Young vs. Artificial Intelligence!

(Will quantum brains take music?)

By Ryan Robichaud (Canada / Oct 25 2025)

So here we are in 2025 wondering whether humanity has a chance against robots, artificial intelligence, and the matrix that we are more and more everyday seemingly living in. I've painstakingly, messed around with roughly 40 or so different A.I. programs, while gritting my teeth and falling asleep on my keyboard for weeks and I can tell you, it can get costly and time consuming just trying to figure out which one to use, and then how to use it properly. You could spend hundreds of dollars in subscription fee's and usage credits (that's right! it's like when cellphones first came out and you had to pay for minutes!) and you haven't even come up with a structured system of creating yet!

A.I. certainly isn't click, click, boom! It requires prompts, and refining prompts, and editing, and more trial and error, and self-learning than one may think. So, even if it takes the music industry over it's not going to be everyone who can easily delve in and get massively rich, and even if they do it certainly won't be at quantum speeds.

Now that we have the absence of potential instant easy fame and riches covered, does A.I. in the right hands have the potential to do better at making rock and roll and/or country music (we'll leave out electronic music for now, since that may actually be a better use for A.I. driven music generations, but that's another topic of discussion) better, faster or more entertaining, than 27 Grammy nominations and 2 time Grammy winner, 9 time Juno awarded (31 Juno nominations), twice Rock n Roll Hall of fame inducted, Eddie Vedder vetted, autobiography worthy, "Godfather of Grunge" dubbed, singer/songwriting legend: Neil Young!

Here's the facts (Artificial Intelligence vs. Neil Young):

A.I. is great for one thing if nothing else and that is learning, and more relevantly research! Facts, facts, facts and statistics are at my fingertips on this one, and I was able to figure out at quantum speeds the information I am about to share with you. Though there are dozens of A.I. music generators and approximately 170 million (2023) fully A.I. generated tracks out there, I was able to find one! Yes, just one A.I. band that gained any traction at all, hitting a million listens per month on Spotify and that band is "Velvet Sundown" also found on YouTube and maybe even TikTok (but I apparently don't have the attention span to have checked the platform that caters to those with the shortest of attention spans, namely TikTok, but I'm sure it's there because TikTok has everything)!

So then, Neil Young vs. Velvet Sundown! Round one! Where did Velvet Sundown come from? What's his/her/they're/they's/its story? I don't know because his/her/they're/they's/it doesn't exist before the creation of the music! But I can tell you that Neil Young, was a straight up badass! A humanitarian, a political activist and a legend, dubbing him a rockstar in my books before I knew him, or was even born for that matter. He opened a copyright infringement lawsuit against President Trump during his election campaign for using his music, showing he backs down to no-one including the leader of the free world! Is A.I. going to fight against Ticketmaster, for overcharging its fans at concerts?! I don't think so, but Neil did do just that!

I mean, the guy is loved, he's known, he's adored by people all over the world, for not just his music but also his story, his achievements and accolades, his badassery, and his influence and endeavours. These are things that make a rockstar! These are things A.I. music generators will never be capable of pinning to their trophy wall.

Round 2! Let's not forget to talk about the feeling, the passion! Oh wait, let's save the best for last and that'll be round 3. First, let's cover the obvious problem of going to see a live show, tour dates and collaboration with other artists. I mean, what do we do? Do we turn the SkyDome in Toronto into a satellite, to get more AI generated, fake pictures, of incoming false flag alien encounters, like 3i/atlas, and scrap outings all-together? No!

Ok, the 3rd and final round! Quality! Passion! Feeling! Does A.I. have it or not? Well, I listened to a few songs by the only A.I. band of notoriety out there, namely "Velvet Sundown", and here's my opinion in non-biased form. I was actually quite impressed with the timing, song-structure, professional studio (like) sound, general voice tonality, and even the lyrics. Overall, there's way worse being done out there, by humans for sure. But! I'm not A.I.! I'm a writer, a creator, a musician, an artist, and a human with a personality and passion, and a drive to be freaking original and different! Velvet Sundown is (you guessed it) lacking passion, and drive, because it doesn't feel when it sings, it doesn't emphasize the energy of emotion at just the right time, and frankly from the few songs I listened to, there really wasn't much to have emotions about in the first place. Just real mathematical genericness...

Anyway, you get my point. Maybe you see it how I do, maybe you don't, and that's ok as that's what makes us human.

A.I. has many uses, and even in music it could be a very powerful tool. Maybe an artist who doesn't want to have to rehearse a song he just wrote a hundred times, before putting the guitar away, and just singing, he could let A.I. take the reigns and provide a mathematically, seamlessly timed, instrumental to practice his voice to (something I plan on admittedly experiencing with, to prepare for raw studio recording after). Maybe a talented songwriter suffers in the composing department, has no bassist or drummer around but wants a full sound to work with. It could solve a lot of low-budget issues for a starving artist with a lot of talent, to give him/her a foot up in developing a working demo, including an artist not having a space that is noise friendly to work out of. Bring in real musicians later, but have a working product now. Again, a very powerful tool! Completely replace a human's creativity? Not in a million years (in my opinion), unless you see music as disinteresting in the first place, amidst

your caviar and \$80,000 champagne bottle, or just work too much to care about it. That being said, as a singer/songwriter myself and as many many people out there (as we were all born/made/whatever to be creators) are musicians, painters, sculptors, architects, engineers, novelists, journalists, writers, dancers, and other forms of artists; we “I believe”, will always have a need for human creativity, and those artists who create are legion and presumably will agree with me.

Again, this is just my take on the subject, a thought with the likeness of a grain of sand on the beach of an ever infinitely expanding universe, in the void of space, more vast than the space there is for further questions and discussions!

Martin Garrix Ignites Sofia: A Night of Global EDM at Vidas Art Arena

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria)



Martin Garrix stands on top of his DJ desk at Vidas Art Arena, raising his hand to the crowd as smoke and visuals fill the stage.

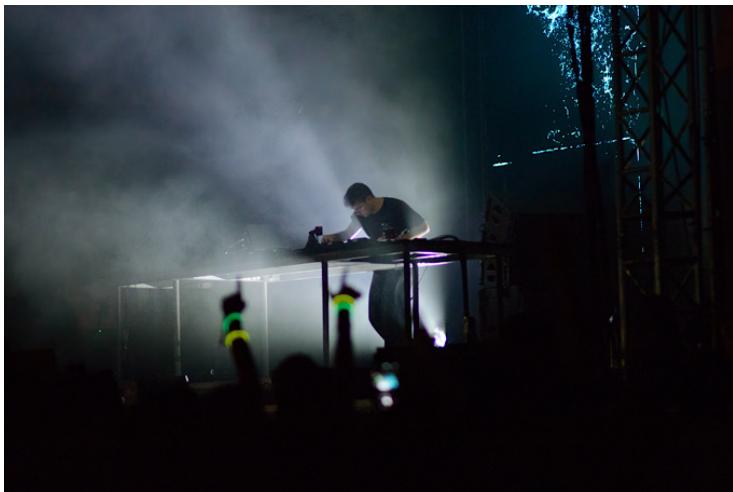
Sofia, August 22, 2025 — The Bulgarian capital witnessed one of its most spectacular summer nights as Dutch DJ and producer Martin Garrix delivered a large-scale electronic music performance at Vidas Art Arena. Organized under the banner of AURA Festival by Fest Team, the event drew thousands of fans who came not just for a concert, but for an immersive experience where music, visuals, and energy collided.



Martin Garrix on stage as powerful white light beams spread across Vidas Art Arena.

From Breakthrough to Global Headliner

Garrix's story is now part of electronic music history. A decade has passed since *Animals* catapulted him onto the world stage, yet its opening notes remain instantly recognizable at festivals worldwide. In Sofia, that track set the tone early, reminding fans why it became a defining anthem of the 2010s.



Martin Garrix leans over his DJ equipment, framed by a single beam of light cutting through the smoke-filled arena.

What followed was a two-hour journey through the producer's catalog: euphoric moments like High on Life, crowd-chanting sing-alongs to In the Name of Love, and newer cuts such as Starlight (Keep Me Afloat) with DubVision and Shaun Farrugia, alongside Gravity, his 2024 collaboration with Sem Vox and Jaimes. The set highlighted his continuing presence among leading international EDM performers.



Martin Garrix performs in front of vivid blue LED visuals during his headline show at Vidas Art Arena.

Sound, Light, and Fire

The staging matched the music's scale. Vidas Art Arena was transformed into a stage design featuring LED walls, programmed visuals, and coordinated light effects, ranging from violet tones to green smoke.



Martin Garrix performs under vivid purple lights and heavy stage smoke at Vidas Art Arena.



Martin Garrix silhouetted on stage as the arena fills with green lights and dense smoke effects.

At key moments, the show incorporated flame effects, laser projections, and a cross-shaped lighting installation.



Martin Garrix performs as flames shoot across the stage during his set at Vidas Art Arena.

Effects were synchronized with the music to emphasize transitions and drops. The audience, silhouetted by pyrotechnics and stage lighting, actively responded throughout the performance.



Flames erupt from the stage as the crowd raises their hands during Martin Garrix's show at Vidas Art Arena.

Connection with the Crowd

Beyond production, Garrix's greatest strength remains his presence. He didn't just stay behind the decks. He climbed onto them, pointed toward the sea of people, and mirrored their energy with visible enthusiasm. His gestures maintained engagement with the audience. At only 29, he still performs with the energy typical of a major international touring artist, and in Sofia, it was.



Martin Garrix forms a heart gesture on stage in front of a giant illuminated cross at Vidas Art Arena.

Setting the Stage

Before Garrix's arrival, Bulgarian DJ BOBE and French producer Citadelle primed the arena with sharp, high-energy sets. Their performances built anticipation without stealing momentum, ensuring that by the time the headliner appeared, the atmosphere was already electric.



Martin Garrix on stage with Citadelle during the performance at Vidas Art Arena, marking their joint moment in front of the crowd.

AURA and Fest Team: Raising the Bar in Bulgaria

The concert carried the momentum of AURA Festival, the new three-day electronic music event launched in June 2025 by Fest Team with the theme Celestial Gardens. Staged at Vidas Art Arena, AURA featured headliners such as Hardwell, Lost Frequencies, and Afrojack, and established a higher standard for large-scale EDM productions in Bulgaria. Building on that success, Martin Garrix's solo night reinforced the same vision, confirming Sofia's capacity to host large-scale performances comparable to major European festival venues.



Martin Garrix plays through a haze of smoke and light during his performance at Vidas Art Arena.



Martin Garrix raises his right hand mid-set at Vidas Art Arena in Sofia.

More Than a Concert

When the final smoke clouds drifted over Vidas Art Arena and the last beats faded into the night, the sense of collective release lingered. For thousands in attendance, the Martin Garrix show was a major event in Sofia's 2025 summer cultural calendar, reinforcing the city's role in the international electronic music circuit.

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Affordable Housing: A British Illusion That is Anything but Affordable.

By Matthew Burnett (United Kingdom / Aug 10 2025)

In the midst of a worsening housing crisis, the term "affordable housing" has become a buzzword among politicians, governments, and developers alike. But peel beneath the surface, and it's frighteningly evident that what's being peddled as a solution is, in fact, a skillfully disguised extension of the issue.

In the United Kingdom, "affordable housing" is officially defined as costing no more than 80% of the local market rent. However, in locations where market rents are already high, this definition falls short for working families.

A two-bedroom flat in Croydon, for example, rents for approximately £1,600 per month. What about the "affordable" version? £1,280 which is still out of reach for many. "I work full time in the NHS, and I still can't afford to rent an 'affordable' flat without Universal Credit," says Kristina Hemsley, a healthcare assistant in South London that I interviewed outside of Mayday Hospital. "I don't know how they expect ordinary people to survive."

Recent data in a simple online search from Shelter shows that over 1.2 million households are on waiting lists for social housing, while new developments often contain minimal "affordable" units and sometimes none at all.

Even shared ownership, often marketed as a stepping stone onto the property ladder, brings hidden traps. Buyers often find themselves paying full market rent on the remaining share, service charges, and hefty maintenance fees while owning just a sliver of the property. "It's like renting with extra paperwork," says Bradley Edwards an electrician from Hounslow, and a potential shared ownership buyer. "I thought I would be buying my way into stability. Instead, I'd be stuck paying £1,100 a month for a 25% stake.

Worse still, the definition of affordability is tied to market rates, not household income. With wages stagnating and inflation driving up living costs, the gap between what's affordable and what's available continues to widen. The term 'affordable housing' is deliberately misleading. It should be based on what people can afford and not market rents.

Ultimately, the system appears designed to maintain the illusion of progress while protecting profit margins.

Affordability should be tied to income and not already inflated local rents. Working families will continue to remain priced out of their own communities and must rely on benefits to top up the rent.

Affordability means having a roof over your head without fear of eviction, debt, or choosing between rent and heating. Until that becomes the standard, we must call out the myth for what it is: an illusion dressed as a solution.

Hills of Rock 2025: Titans and Underground Heroes Unite in Plovdiv

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria) | July 25 - 27, 2025

Plovdiv's Hills of Rock stormed back to the city's Rowing Canal for its sixth edition, drawing more than 35,000 fans and reaffirming its status as Bulgaria's flagship open air rock festival. Across three sweat soaked days and three stages, the 2025 line up balanced titans of the international scene—The Smashing Pumpkins, Machine Head, Sepultura, Mastodon—with a proud contingent of Balkan and European underground talent. When main-stage photo pits closed, the side stages answered with intimacy, keeping the energy flowing seamlessly from one act to the next. By the time the final cymbal crashed, Hills of Rock had once again proven that volume, heart, and passion are what define this unforgettable festival.

DAY 1- The Noise Beneath the Mountain

Rise of the Northstar – Main Stage



Frontman Vithia of Rise of the Northstar commands the stage during their main stage performance at Hills of Rock 2025, captured mid-gesture in one of his signature crouched stances.

Since emerging from Paris's 19th arrondissement in 2008, Rise of the North Star have ridden a singular blend of 90s New York hardcore, groove metal heft, hip hop attitude, and shōnen manga iconography to cult status across Europe and Japan. Friday's Plovdiv slot also marked the first Bulgarian date of their Showdown (2024) tour, and they arrived with cinematic intent: a towering LED wall flickered with panels from Fist of the North Star.



Eva-B, guitarist of Rise of the Northstar, locked into rhythm during their Hills of Rock 2025 set, wearing the band's signature oni-inspired mask and revealing his full-leg tattoos in mid-performance.

From the first bass drop, the Paris trio whipped the front rows into a conveyor belt of crowd surfers. Guitarist Eva-B locked into low-slung, hip-hop-inflected grooves while pre programmed bass tracks filled the low end and drummer Phantom delivered piston tight kick patterns under strobe lighting. Front man Vithia punctuated each breakdown with karate pose freezes and mid air kicks, turning the platform into a living manga panel.



The frontman of Rise of the Northstar walks toward drummer Phantom, showcasing the band's signature "WELCOME" jersey during a dynamic moment at Hills of Rock 2025, framed by a massive backdrop and TAMA kit.

Musically tight and visually stylized, their set felt less like a chaotic eruption and more like a controlled display of power. The crowd responded with hands raised and heads nodding — locked in the band's deliberate rhythm and martial presence.

KSMR – Na Tumno Stage



A member of Bulgarian indie-alternative band KSMR delivers lead vocals while playing bass on the Na Tumno stage during Hills of Rock 2025. Wearing sunglasses and framed against textured lighting, his performance captured the group's introspective energy.

Varna's alt rock hopefuls KSHMR—winners of Wild Child Fest 2018—came of age in front of their biggest crowd to date. Since forming on the Black Sea coast in the mid 2010s, the trio have honed a melodic, Brit pop tinged sound that favor airy choruses over distortion. Their chiming guitar lines and reverberant textures floated over clean Fender tones, coaxing gentle sways rather than fist pumps. A quietly confident set that hinted at bigger festival slots ahead.

Extreme X – Main Stage (Restricted Pit Access)



A bassist from Extreme X performs on the Hills of Rock main stage, surrounded by fog and flanked by a wall of Marshall amps. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, he strikes a defiant stance under moody lighting during a crowd-heavy moment captured from the audience zone.

Boston stalwarts Extreme—together since 1985—proved they are far more than a nostalgic sing along. Nuno Bettencourt's fret wizardry and Gary Cherone's elastic stage presence steered the crowd from hard groove riffing to a stripped back acoustic interlude without ever losing momentum. With the photo pit strictly limited, most lenses captured only long range silhouettes—bassist Pat Badger in wide brim hat and shades, stoic amid a swirl of stage fog and towering Marshall stacks. Even at that distance, the band's tight interplay carried across the canal, sealing a lesson in veteran showmanship.

Urban Grey – Stroeja Stage



The vocalist of Urban Grey launches mid-air during an explosive moment on the Stroeja stage at Hills of Rock 2025. Wearing a Slapshot t-shirt and showcasing heavily tattooed legs, he delivers raw energy under dramatic lighting and stage smoke during the band's high-intensity hardcore set.

Entering their twenty fifth year, Sofia's Urban Grey remain the beating heart of Bulgaria's hardcore underground. Founded in 2000 by guitarists Bebo Berberov and Chavdar Valchev, the quintet cut their teeth in storied DIY haunts such as O!Shipka and The Box, self releasing the bruising debut *Fearfight* (2003) before sharpening both message and musicianship on *Age of Awareness* (2008) and 2018's EP *Ωmega*. Their metallic New York style grooves, layered with Balkan melodic inflections, underpin lyrics that tackle corruption, inequality, and the dignity of working class life.



Urban Grey's bassist in full headbanging motion during their performance on the Stroeja stage at Hills of Rock 2025. Her flying hair and focused grip on the instrument capture the visceral energy of the set, set against a stark black-and-white backdrop.

Hitting the Stroeja platform just after sunset, Urban Grey wasted no time, launching straight into their first song. Over 35 relentlessly paced minutes the band volleyed double kick barrages, half time breakdowns, and gang vocal choruses that sent a stream of stage divers over the barrier. Mid set, the tempo intensified further, with tight breakdowns and call and response shouts keeping the pit churning. The crowd's intensity never waned, sustained by intermittent floodlights, underscoring the band's relentless energy



Urban Grey's vocalist unleashes a roar through a megaphone during their the Stroeja stage set at Hills of Rock 2025. The image captures a raw moment of intensity and protest, emphasizing the band's hardcore roots and commanding presence.

Day 2: Between Fire and Focus

Day Two of Hills of Rock 2025 offered sharp contrasts, balancing scale with intimacy, international icons with underground staples, and chaos with control.

GASP – Na Tumno Stage



GASP's frontman captured mid-verse during their opening set on the Na Tumno stage at Hills of Rock 2025. With minimalist staging and clenched intensity, the band set the day's tone with raw, post-hardcore energy.

Formed in Varna in May 2022 by guitarist George Todoroff, the five piece melodic metalcore outfit GASP have built momentum through club gigs along the Black Sea coast and 2024 streaming singles like "Nothing Can Stop Me," all while tracking their still untitled debut album.



Two members of GASP trade riffs and energy on the Na Tumno stage at Hills of Rock 2025. The band's synergy and confident stage presence electrified the crowd despite the early set time.

Opening the early afternoon on Day 2, they delivered a brisk barrage: duelling down tuned guitars, rapid double kick runs, and screamed clean vocal trade offs that sliced through the midday heat. A small but devoted knot of fans kept a compact pit circling in front of the barricade, punctuating breakdowns with two step footwork that kicked up fine dust—perfect back lighting for wide angle shots. GASP stuck to terse between song nods and hand signals, letting tight musicianship do the crowd work. By the final chord, even passers by drifting toward the food stalls had paused to film the last drop, suggesting the Varna newcomers won more converts than any early slot could expect.

Wolfmother – Main Stage



Wolfmother frontman Andrew Stockdale mid-riff during the band's explosive main stage set at Hills of Rock 2025. His signature curls and vintage guitar tone brought a wave of 70s hard rock revival to the festival crowd.

Formed in Sydney in 2004 around vocalist guitarist Andrew Stockdale, Wolfmother vaulted onto the world stage with their self titled 2005 debut and a 2007 Grammy win for “Woman”. The current touring trio—Stockdale, bassist James Wassenaar, and drummer Christian Condon—took the Hills main stage at exactly 18:00 and set up in front of towering amplifier stacks that glowed under the stage lights.



Andrew Stockdale of Wolfmother bows into a riff, raising his hand in a defiant salute during their Hills of Rock 2025 performance. The Australian rockers delivered a vintage-charged set full of fuzzed-out guitars and throwback swagger.

Throughout their set, Wolfmother delivered an unbroken surge of fuzz drenched riffs, mid tempo swing, and Stockdale's distinctive falsetto howls. His Gibson SG shifted seamlessly from heavy rhythm chunks to wah tinged solos without breaking the groove, earning appreciative shouts from the front rail.



Andrew Stockdale of Wolfmother strikes a theatrical pose mid-song, lifting his guitar while singing into the mic during Hills of Rock 2025. His signature curls and vintage SG guitar defined the band's charismatic main stage set.

It was a masterclass in less-is-more — and the crowd soaked in every second.

AXEZ – Na Tumno Stage



The bassist of AxeZ unleashes a fierce headbang mid-performance at Hills of Rock 2025, his hair flying as he leans into the groove with intense focus. Captured on the Na Tumno stage, the image reflects the band's raw energy and unfiltered stage presence.

AXEZ, one of the most exciting young names in Bulgaria's underground metal scene, hit the Na Tumno stage with full-force energy and zero hesitation. Originally formed in Varna about a decade ago, the band blends old-school thrash roots with a sharp, modern edge — and their Hills of Rock set was all about speed, attitude, and stage presence.



The lead vocalist of AxeZ performs with calm intensity on the Na Tumno stage at Hills of Rock 2025, gripping the

mic with steady focus. Wearing sunglasses and a sleeveless Axez shirt, he delivers his lines with quiet force as a fellow band member emerges in soft focus behind him.

From the moment they started, it was clear they came prepared. Hair flew, kicks landed, and every movement on that small stage felt larger than life. Whether locking into tight grooves or exploding into chaos, they owned the moment and pulled the crowd right in with them.



A shirtless guitarist from Axez performs on the Na Tumno stage during Hills of Rock 2025, immersed in the moment with a subtle smile. His curly hair, textured guitar, and relaxed posture contrast with the raw energy of the performance. The stage backdrop is faintly visible behind him.

Visually, AXEZ gave one of the most photogenic sets of the day. Their intensity translated straight through the lens — every frame filled with movement, sweat, and purpose. It was a short set, but not one anyone near the stage will forget soon.

GREESH – Na Tumno Stage



Greesh performer points mid-set on Na Tumno stage, Hills of Rock 2025.

GREESH is a Sofia-based band combining alternative rock, electronic textures, and industrial undertones into a tightly focused live performance. Their lineup features guitar, bass, drums, and live synths — delivering a sound that balances raw instrumentation with layered digital elements. Rather than rely on genre clichés, the band builds dynamic tension through rhythmic interplay and evolving sonic textures.



Bass player from Greesh performing on Na Tumno stage during Hills of Rock 2025.

On the Na Tumno Stage, GREESH delivered a set marked by cohesion and intensity. The guitarist and vocalist led with sharp riffs and clipped vocal delivery, supported by pulsing bass and steady, deliberate drumming. The synth player added atmospheric depth while engaging the crowd with precise timing and confident transitions.



Vocalist and guitarist of Greesh performing live on Na Tumno stage during Hills of Rock 2025.

Visually, the performance stood out for its interplay of smoke, contrast, and silhouette — a set that translated exceptionally well into black and white photography, capturing the band in moments of focus, grit, and drive.

Reaven – Na Tumno Stage



Lead vocalist and guitarist of Reaven performing during their set on Na Tumno stage at Hills of Rock 2025.

Hailing from France, Reaven have steadily built a following across Europe with their polished blend of pop-rock, synth textures, and emotionally charged songwriting. Known for blending modern alt-pop sensibilities with classic rock structure, the band has toured extensively throughout the continent — but their appearance at Hills of Rock 2025 marked a notable introduction to many in the Bulgarian audience



Crowd raising hands during Reaven's performance on the Na Tumno stage at Hills of Rock 2025.

Taking the Na Tumno stage in the early evening, Reaven delivered a clean, confident set defined by tight harmonies, sweeping choruses, and the kind of stage chemistry that only comes with mileage. Their sound was radio-ready, but never formulaic — melodic yet sincere. Frontman Romeo Bassi led the charge with charismatic vocals and a crowd-aware ease that drew people in, song by song.

By mid-set, the once-casual audience had closed the gap to the stage, fully invested. Fans sang along, raised hands, and locked eyes with the performers — creating a visual rhythm that translated beautifully in photographs. The performance was a reminder that emotional intensity doesn't always need distortion — sometimes melody and precision hit just as hard.

Vendetta – Stroeja Stage



Frontman of Vendetta mid-gesture during an intense moment on the Stroeja stage at Hills of Rock 2025, backed by a bandmate wearing the group's name on his shirt.

As one of the most respected names in Bulgaria's hardcore scene, Vendetta have long stood as torchbearers of uncompromising aggression and social defiance. Formed in the early 2000s and rooted in Sofia's underground, the band has built a reputation on relentless live shows and a sound that fuses hardcore punk with metal intensity — always direct, always personal.



The vocalist of Vendetta points toward the crowd while performing on the Stroeja stage at Hills of Rock 2025, gripping the microphone in his tattooed hand under dramatic lighting.

At Hills of Rock 2025, Vendetta took the Stroeja stage and made it feel like the center of the festival. Vocalist Kalinwasted no time asserting control, pacing the edge of the stage with clenched fists and laser focus, spitting every word with razor-sharp urgency. There were no gimmicks, no spectacle — just pure catharsis, shouted over walls of distorted riffs and pounding rhythm.



A vocalist from Vendetta grips the microphone mid-performance on the Stroeja stage during Hills of Rock 2025, with bright overhead lights creating a halo effect.

The crowd surged forward with the same intensity, responding not to theatrics but to something visceral and shared. Every pointed gesture and scream into the mic felt earned—a tangible testament to years of sweat, belief, and defiance.

Photographically, it was a gift: harsh lighting, hard contrast, and full-body expression. The band didn't just play — they embodied the moment.

DAY 3 - From Cyber Mayhem to Underground Frenzy

Vukovi – Electric Surge on the Main Stage



Janine Shilstone of Vukovi performing on the main stage at Hills of Rock 2025.

Hailing from Kilwinning, Scotland, Vukovi have spent over a decade forging their own niche in the alt-rock scene — blending infectious pop hooks with heavy riffs, glitchy electronics, and a fearless visual identity. Fronted by the magnetic Janine Shilstone, the band emerged in the early 2010s and gained momentum with their self-titled debut and 2020's *Fall Better*, which pushed their sound further into experimental territory without losing its emotional punch.

At Hills of Rock 2025, they opened Day 3 on the main stage with the energy of a headliner. Janine burst onto the scene in a stars-and-stripes top, platinum hair whipping as she prowled the platform with a grin that flipped to a scream in a breath. Her presence was electrifying — switching between punk defiance and pop-star clarity without missing a beat.



Janine Shilstone of Vukovi raises her microphone during a main stage performance at Hills of Rock 2025.

Behind her, bandmate Hamish Reilly (guitar/synth) drove the set with tight riffing and electronic textures that gave the songs their volatile, layered power. Their music — somewhere between alt-metal, electro-pop, and unfiltered emotional release — had the early-day crowd moving from the first downbeat.

Though their slot was early, Vukovi delivered a set that was anything but warm-up. It was a declaration — loud, vivid, and unforgettable.

Static-X – Main Stage



Xer0 of Static-X performs in full cyber makeup and costume during their Hills of Rock 2025 main stage set.

Emerging from the industrial metal surge of the late 1990s, Static-X earned their reputation with a sound they once dubbed “evil disco” — a blend of pounding riffs, electronic samples, and high-octane aggression that stood apart from their nu-metal peers. Their 1999 debut *Wisconsin Death Trip* became a cult classic, anchored by the distinctive presence of frontman Wayne Static.



Close-up of Xer0 from Static-X wearing his signature cybernetic mask during their performance at Hills of Rock 2025.

After Wayne’s passing in 2014, the band went silent — only to reemerge years later with original members Tony Campos, Koichi Fukuda, and Ken Jay joined by the enigmatic Xer0, a masked vocalist paying tribute to Static’s visual legacy while injecting renewed energy into the group’s live presence.



Xer0 from Static-X bows his head mid-performance, framed by his signature robotic mask and gear during Hills of Rock 2025.

At Hills of Rock 2025, Static-X brought that legacy to the main stage in full force. Taking the crowd by storm in the early evening, they delivered a set marked by mechanical precision, dense distortion, and cybernetic visuals. Xer0's towering hair and cybernetic visuals evoked a dystopian character, flanked by the band's looming puppet mascot — part horror, part homage.



The menacing stage puppet from Static-X's set looms over the crowd during their performance at Hills of Rock 2025, embodying the band's signature "Evil Disco" aesthetic.

Static-X didn't just play songs. They resurrected an era — rebuilt, rearmed, and roaring into the present



Static-X guitarist Koichi Fukuda plays with intensity during the band's performance at Hills of Rock 2025, captured mid-riff in a dynamic black-and-white frame.

Dope – Stroeja Stage



A guitarist from Dope captured mid-jump during their performance at Hills of Rock 2025, releasing a burst of water spray into the air under the concert lights.

Formed in New York City in the late '90s, Dope burst onto the industrial metal scene with a venomous blend of distorted guitars, electronic grit, and street-level nihilism. Led by Edsel Dope, the band quickly made waves with their debut *Felons and Revolutionaries* (1999), earning a loyal following through relentless touring and raw, confrontational performances. Known for blurring the line between metal, punk, and industrial, Dope's sound has remained unapologetically aggressive across decades and lineup changes.



A guitarist from Dope captured mid-air in a dramatic leap during their high-energy performance at Hills of Rock 2025, framed against beams of stage lighting.

At Hills of Rock 2025, they brought that same ethos to the Stroeja stage — albeit under pressure. A major technical glitch delayed their set by nearly 40 minutes, as a malfunctioning microphone threatened to derail the night. With only 20 minutes left once the issue was resolved, many bands might have opted for a quick exit. Dope did the opposite.



The vocalist of Dope performing under crossing beams of stage light during the band's intense nighttime set at Hills of Rock 2025.

Launching into a condensed barrage of fan favorites, they sparked a reaction that eclipsed the modest stage. Fans packed in tight beneath the canopy, fists raised and voices shouting every word. "You guys deserve the main stage!" someone yelled — and judging by the crowd's volume, few would've disagreed. Even with time cut short, Dope delivered one of the most ferocious and talked-about sets of the day.



The bassist of Dope captured in a powerful moment with eyes closed and head tilted back during the band's set at Hills of Rock 2025.

Closing Thoughts

Three days of thunderous riffs echoing across the Rowing Canal reminded Plovdiv why Hills of Rock remains a fixture on Europe's summer festival map. From marquee headliners to hungry newcomers, every act sparked moments of shared exhilaration. Whether you found yourself pressed against the front rail, swapping stories in the food court, or capturing frames from the photo pit, you likely left with ears ringing and next July already circled on the calendar.

J Balvin Ignites Sofia with Color, Energy, and Global Sound

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria) | July 1, 2025



J Balvin commands the Sofia stage against a vivid, pulsating backdrop. © Diana Nikolova

Global superstar J Balvin lit up Sofia with a vibrant, genre-defying performance that showcased not only his musical firepower but also his magnetic charisma. Known as the Prince of Reggaeton, Balvin has re-imagined Latin music for a worldwide audience, pairing a kaleidoscopic aesthetic with boundary-

From the first beat, the Colombian artist turned the stage into a living, breathing celebration of rhythm and movement. His presence felt simultaneously larger-than-life and intimately connected—a rare balance that underpins his status as one of the most influential Latin artists of his generation.



A dynamic jump captures Balvin's fearless spirit and unstoppable energy. © Diana Nikolova

From Medellín to the World Stage

Born and raised in Medellín, Balvin cut his teeth in the city's thriving reggaeton and hip-hop scenes before rocketing to global fame. Over the past decade, he has blazed an innovative path, fusing reggaeton with pop, trap, and eclectic world sounds. Chart-toppers like "Mi Gente," "Ginza," and "Ay Vamos" dominate playlists, while collaborations with Beyoncé, Rosalía, and Bad Bunny have cemented Latin music in the mainstream. His bold visuals and message of positivity continue to inspire—and unite—fans everywhere.



Pointing skyward, Balvin invites fans to celebrate and release. © Diana Nikolova

A Technicolor Night at Vidas Art Arena

Taking over Sofia's Vidas Art Arena, Balvin unleashed a torrent of energy that kept the open-air crowd moving as one from start to finish. He leaped across the stage, threw his hands to the sky, and urged fans to mirror his every move, turning each song into a joyous call-and-response ritual. His soaring jumps and defiant hand gestures radiated confidence and freedom, capturing the rebellious spirit that has made him an icon far beyond Latin music.



A powerful close-up: Balvin's intensity connects even the farthest fans. © Diana Nikolova

More Than a Concert: A Manifesto

Balvin's expressive style—arms thrust upward, fingers flashing rock-and-roll horns, pointed straight at the audience—created a sense of intimacy even in a venue of thousands. Every gesture felt like a personal invitation to celebrate life's highs and push through its lows together.

As sunset painted the sky in soft pastels, Balvin's electric-blue outfit blazed even brighter against the fading light. Whether he was laughing mid-song, leaning toward the front rows, or unleashing a triumphant shout, he embodied a fearless joy that transcended language and genre.



With a final commanding gesture, Balvin cements his connection with Sofia. © Diana Nikolova

More than a concert, the night felt like a living manifesto of global connection and joyful defiance. J Balvin proved once again that he is not merely a music star but a cultural force—one who celebrates diversity, vibrancy, and the unifying power of rhythm across every border.

About Fest Team

Tonight's spectacle was produced by Fest Team —the Bulgarian live-entertainment company behind some of the country's most ambitious concerts and festivals. From arena-scale shows to boutique cultural events, Fest Team keeps raising the bar for live music in Sofia and across the region. Follow their upcoming announcements on social media or at their official website to see which global stars will touch down next.

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The HU Bring Ancient Thunder to Sofia

Vidas Art Arena • 25 June 2025

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria) • Photos & text © 2025



Nyamjantsan “Jaya” Galsanjamts welcomes the crowd in a sea of blue light. © Diana Nikolova

A visceral opening that shook the arena

From the first throat sung drone, Vidas Art Arena felt less like a concert venue and more like a windswept steppe. Carved horse-head fiddles caught the indigo light, leather tassels flicked in the haze, and a wall of amplified strings, drums, and overtones drew the audience into a sound world where ancient rites met stadium power. The roar that answered those opening bars confirmed The HU’s knack for turning cultural heritage into galvanizing spectacle.



Enkhasaikhan “Enkush” Batjargal bowing a morin khuur under violet beams. © Diana Nikolova

Heritage Carried on Horsehair Strings

Founded in Ulaanbaatar in 2016, The HU fuse deep register throat singing with the morin khuur (horse-head fiddle) and tovshuur (Mongolian lute). Their name, taken from the Mongolian word for “human,” signals a mission to share steppe stories in a universal language. The 2019 debut album *The Gereg* propelled the singles “Wolf Totem” and “Yuve Yuve Yu” onto playlists and festival main stages worldwide, casting Mongolia as an unexpected epicenter of heavy music.

Strategic collaborations have only widened that reach: a hard-hitting “Wolf Totem” remix with Jacoby Shaddix (Papa Roach) and the sweeping “Song of Women” with Lzzy Hale (Halestorm) introduced mainstream rock audiences to steppe sonics without softening the band’s essence.



Jaya urging the crowd amid crimson haze and white beams, performs at Vidas Art Arena. © Diana Nikolova

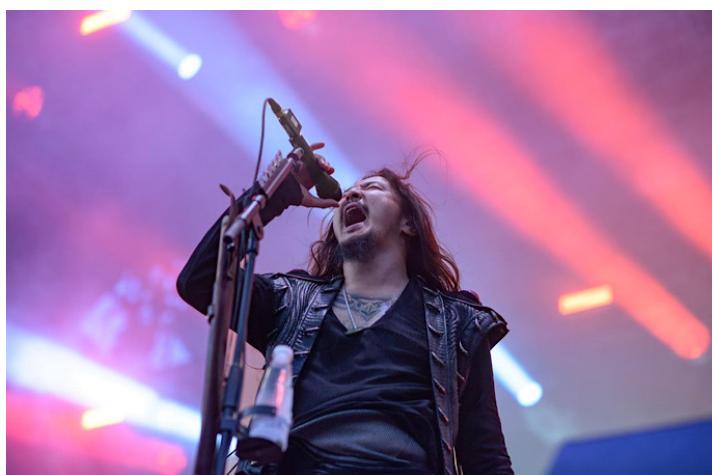
Commanding the Sofia stage

What followed was more ceremonial theater than a conventional rock show. Hypnotic rhythmic patterns underpinned stacked vocal overtones, while beams of violet, crimson, and icy blue sliced through slow rolling haze, illuminating leather armor detailed with knotwork and etched brass. Each color shift marked a new rhythmic pivot, turning the arena into a vivid storyboard of Mongolian myth rendered in light.

The musicians relied on neither pyrotechnics nor gimmicks. Precision playing, layered harmonies, and unforced charisma held the crowd in a grip that felt both primeval and fiercely contemporary.



Galbadrakh "Gala" Tsendbaatar singing and bowing beneath blue-pink back-light. © Diana Nikolova



Jaya releasing a throat-sung roar, framed by magenta strobes. © Diana Nikolova



Temuulen “Temka” Naranbaatar locking in a tovshuur rhythm. © Diana Nikolova

Performer: Nyamjantsan “Jaya” Galsanjamts

Signature contribution: Center-stage voice whose throat-sung growls and soaring overtones cut the mix with organ-level depth and unshakable authority.

Performer: “Gala” Tsendsbaatar

Signature contribution: Warm yet ferocious co-lead; his morin khuur lines and melodic timbre add harmonic grit and emotional lift to every refrain.

Performer: “Temka” Naranbaatar

Signature contribution: Metronomic tovshuur patterns and understated harmonies form the rhythmic spine that anchors sudden dynamic shifts.

Performer: “Enkush” Batjargal

Signature contribution: Stationed on the left side of the stage, Enkush sustained deep drones on the morin khuur, giving the music its rumbling foundation.

Each member showcased individual virtuosity while serving the collective story—music as a living archive rather than a solo showcase.

Sight, Sound, and Symbolism

Traditional attire—braided leather, horsehair tassels, and brass plates—reinforced the image of warriors wielding timeless instruments in a modern arena. Carved headstocks stood like sentinels above the mix, reminding listeners that every note carried centuries of culture. The effect was a multisensory tableau: part shamanic rite, part widescreen cinema.



Profile of Jaya singing into an ice-blue glow. © Diana Nikolova

Cultural Reach Beyond the Stage

The HU's sonic palette now powers both video games and film projects. Their original track "Sugaan Essena" anchors a key scene in *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* (2019), proof that this folk-metal hybrid can stride confidently into science fiction without shedding its roots.

Local Engine, Global Ambition

Behind the scenes Bulgarian promoter Fest Team marshaled the logistics that put The HU on Vidas Art Arena's summer calendar—another data point in Sofia's steady rise as a magnet for arena-scale international tours.

Closing Resonance

By the time the final overtones faded, The HU had delivered more than a concert. They presented a living archive of Mongolian identity, amplified to stadium scale and voiced with such conviction that myth felt briefly tangible. For Sofia, the night was a sonic revelation; for The HU, it marked another milestone on a journey that continues to redraw the map of modern rock.

Global Artists Head to Sofia as Bulgaria's Summer Concert Season Begins

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria / June 9 2025)

Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, is preparing to host an unusually diverse and high-profile series of concerts in the summer and autumn of 2025. International acts from across the musical spectrum, including reggaeton star J Balvin, industrial metal vocalist Till Lindemann, pop legend Robbie Williams, and Latin megastar Enrique Iglesias, are set to perform at venues throughout the city.

Organized by Fest Team, the 2025 concert season in Sofia brings together a strikingly diverse group of international performers. Among the most anticipated are Till Lindemann, known for his powerful stage presence and work as the lead vocalist of the German industrial metal band Rammstein, and Robbie Williams, one of the most successful solo acts to emerge from the UK in recent decades. Enrique Iglesias, whose global appeal spans pop and Latin music audiences, will also headline one of the largest shows of the season. Other acts include J Balvin, Martin Garrix, Dream Theater, The HU, and long-established artists such as Rod Stewart and King Diamond.

The series is expected to draw both local and international audiences, offering a rare opportunity for fans in Southeast Europe to see multiple global headliners within a short period. These events are part of a broader trend that positions Sofia as an emerging stop on the European touring circuit, particularly for artists seeking to connect with fans beyond the usual capitals.

As a contributor to the International Association of Independent Journalists (IAIJ) and Fortress of Freedom (FOF), I plan to cover selected performances from this lineup, focusing on the intersection of global music and local cultural reception in Bulgaria. Follow-up articles and photo reports will be published through IAIJ and Fortress of Freedom later in the season.

The presence of these international artists in Sofia reflects Bulgaria's growing role as a cultural hub in the Balkans, offering space for musical exchange and shared experience at a time when live events remain crucial to the global arts landscape.

IAIJ Decries the Unethical Use of AI!

By Maurice Ali, CEO: International Association of Independent Journalists Inc.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be a good thing in our societies around the world; but unethical use of AI could also be a bad thing in those same societies. For example, IAIJ has always been against the unethical use of artificial intelligence in journalism.

As a journalist organization, IAIJ exists to give the small time journalist or “citizen journalist” a voice on the web and in the places that matter internationally. In our seventeen years as a formal not-for-profit corporation, and twenty one years as an organization known as the International Association of Independent Journalists; we once again give a voice to the common person with regards to the ramifications of AI.



Maurice Ali at the United Nations in May 2025!

On May the 6th (2025) I as CEO of both IAIJ and a music organization called FOFSTOCK, attended an AI event at the United Nations in New York called the “ECOSOC Special Meeting on Artificial Intelligence”, and on May 7th (2025) we attended the “10th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals”. While all the more urgent aspects of AI development were discussed, it was clear to us that the voices most impacted by AI were not being adequately represented. FOFSTOCK was formally invited to these events and actually had a speech if the opportunity arose, but this is a rare occasion for an NGO without consultative status at the UN. We at IAIJ hear the voices of this disparity and as always will report on the issues, but more importantly will be one of their voices at the places that matter where international policy is made. To the ordinary individual or small orgs that have little voice at these places that matter, we are there for them as a voice and advocate to help make the best policy decisions internationally regarding artificial intelligence.

I thank you for your attention.

IAIJ: JOURNALISTS IN ACTION AROUND THE WORLD!

Threaded in Identity: The Alevis of Mădrevo and the Hıdrellez Tradition

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria / May 19 2025)



Participants dressed in festive attire for the Hıdrellez ritual, photographed in the courtyard before the event

The journalist (Diana Nikolova) has presented the article in PDF format (8mb) and can be viewed by clicking the link below:

<https://iaij.org/Threaded-in-Identity.pdf>

IAIJ: JOURNALISTS IN ACTION AROUND THE WORLD!

Digital Entanglement: Navigating a Hyper-Connected World

By Diana Nikolova (Bulgaria / Feb 13 2025)

In today's world, being online isn't just a choice - it's a necessity. Technology has made our lives easier, more efficient, and more connected. We communicate instantly, access vast amounts of information, and automate tasks that once took hours. But as we become increasingly reliant on digital tools, they begin to shape not only our actions but also our perceptions, emotions, and even our sense of self. What started as a collection of our choices is now making decisions for us. Algorithms guide our preferences, mold our interests, and even alter our memories by resurfacing old posts and recommending what we "should" watch, buy, or believe.

The Digital Gold Rush: Data as Currency

Companies are no longer just competing with products and services - they're in a race for data. Information is now more valuable than money, as businesses use it to predict behavior, shape markets, and even sway political outcomes.

*Data-sharing between companies means the information we provide to one service often ends up with dozens of others.

*AI-driven decision-making plays a crucial role in hiring, loan approvals, and even medical diagnoses.

*Cybersecurity risks are more real than ever, with businesses becoming prime targets for hacking and data breaches.

Policies and regulations struggle to keep pace with technological growth, creating loopholes that allow companies and governments to exploit personal data. As a result, our digital footprints are scattered across platforms, making us more vulnerable than ever.

The Loneliness Paradox: More Connected, Yet More Isolated

Social media gives the illusion of connection, yet many interactions are fleeting, surface-level, and transactional. Instead of deep, meaningful conversations, we scroll through curated versions of other people's lives. These digital relationships often lack the depth of real-world connections, leading to a growing sense of emptiness and isolation. For many, social media has replaced genuine human interaction - but it fails to fulfill our need for meaningful relationships. Over time, this can contribute to loneliness, depression, and social anxiety.

The Battle for Truth in a World of Digital Manipulation

In a world where AI can generate convincing fake content, truth is no longer absolute - it has become a battle of narratives.

*Deepfakes, AI-generated texts, and synthetic media distort reality, creating false memories and fabricated stories.

*Algorithmic echo chambers reinforce biases by feeding us only content that aligns with our existing beliefs.

*Social engineering tactics manipulate emotions and decisions by exploiting personal data.

As a result, we live in parallel realities, each person convinced their version of the truth is the only one. Critical thinking has never been more crucial, yet it's increasingly difficult to develop when digital platforms prioritize engagement over accuracy. Governments and legal systems struggle to regulate AI-generated content, while corporations push the boundaries of privacy and ethics.

The Next Generation and the Dangers of Digital Overload

One of the most concerning effects of digital entanglement is its impact on children and young adults. Today's youth grow up immersed in the digital world, often before they have the cognitive and emotional tools to navigate it. Many parents introduce screens to children at an early age - educational apps, cartoons, and games seem harmless at first. But the long-term consequences are serious:

*Shortened attention spans make it difficult for kids to focus on anything requiring patience.

*Impatience and frustration arise when real-world waiting feels unbearable compared to instant digital responses.

*Declining deep thinking means fast consumption of information replaces critical analysis and problem-solving.

A brain shaped by constant digital stimulation struggles with boredom, slow problem-solving, and deep contemplation - all essential for adulthood. Instant gratification fosters emotional dependence on screens, making frustration, rejection, and failure harder to process.

If children never experience struggle, how will they handle setbacks in life? If every answer is pre-packaged, how will they learn to think outside the box? If everything comes instantly, how will they develop the patience needed for long-term success?

A generation raised on constant stimulation struggles with resilience, creativity, and emotional endurance. Research links excessive screen use to mood swings, irritability, and a reliance on social media validation for self-worth. Many children now struggle with boredom, rejection, or disappointment - not because they lack potential, but because their brains haven't been given the chance to build emotional resilience.

Reclaiming Control in a Digitally Entangled World

The digital world isn't going away. It is woven into every aspect of our lives—from communication and work to entertainment and self-identity. Disconnecting completely isn't realistic, but we can learn to navigate it without losing control of our minds.

Being mindful of our digital habits allows us to make intentional choices rather than simply reacting to technology's pull. In a world where truth is often blurred, critical thinking is our best defense. The goal isn't to eliminate digital communication but to ensure it doesn't replace real human connection.

We owe it to the next generation to teach healthy technology habits, helping them avoid overstimulation, instant gratification, and emotional dependence on screens. As AI and the internet continue to evolve, digital entanglement will deepen. The question is: Will we shape our minds, or will we let technology do it for us? The choice is ours - but only if we recognize the urgency of this moment.

Rashtriya Praja Congress Calls For A New Era Of Governance

By Doruvu Paul Jagan Babu (IAIJ Journalist – India / Feb 11 2025)



Meda Srinivas, Founding President of Rashtriya Praja Congress, Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, South India.

Meda Srinivas, Founding President of the Rashtriya Praja Congress (RPC), has criticized the current political system for enabling financial exploitation and social inequality. He asserts that political leaders have misused votes for their own gain, leading to monopolies over public wealth and deepening poverty. RPC aims to restore financial independence and create a just society by addressing systemic flaws. Meda Srinivas, while addressing a party meeting in Rajahmundry on February 9, outlined the future course of action for the party.

- Financial exploitation and the need for reform

According to Meda Srinivas, a select group of political elites have monopolized the nation's resources, leading to widespread poverty and suffering. He argues that voters must recognize how their sacred right to vote is being manipulated by political businessmen rather than true public leaders. The RPC, he claims, offers an alternative path toward financial independence and an equitable society.

- Revisiting India's history

Meda Srinivas contends that historical narratives have been selectively crafted to emphasize the roles of figures like Gandhi and Nehru while downplaying the contributions of other freedom fighters. He argues that the sacrifices of many unsung heroes were instrumental in India's independence and calls for a re-examination of history to acknowledge their contributions.

- Democracy and justice under threat

Despite being the world's largest democracy, Meda Srinivas believes India's current governance fails to uphold basic security and justice for its citizens. He criticizes the corporatization of media, arguing that if such media structures had existed during the freedom struggle, India might still be under colonial rule.

- Environmental and economic concerns

Meda Srinivas highlights the corporate exploitation of natural resources as a growing crisis, stating that unchecked industrial greed is causing environmental damage and health hazards. He calls for urgent action to protect water bodies and forests, urging the government to prioritize public welfare over corporate profits.

- A call for change: Embracing Netaji's vision

As a symbolic move to inspire national pride, Meda Srinivas proposes replacing Gandhi's image on currency notes with that of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He believes this change would instill a spirit of heroism and integrity in the younger generation, countering corruption and unethical political practices.

- A new political vision for India

The RPC, under Meda Srinivas' leadership, pledges to work for the welfare of the people by challenging historical misrepresentations and addressing socio-economic disparities. He calls upon the youth to join this movement and shape a future built on truth, justice, and financial independence.

Keeping Tradition Alive: A Day with the Kukeri in Krupnik

By Diana V. Nikolova (Bulgaria / Jan 23 2025)

Every New Year's Day, the small village of Krupnik in southwestern Bulgaria comes alive with the Kukeri tradition. Known locally as Babugeri, this is more than just a celebration - it's a piece of history and culture that the community keeps alive. I went there to see it for myself, and what I found was a tradition full of energy, pride, and meaning.



The Kukeri, dressed in their traditional fur costumes, walk through the village streets as they prepare for their ritual.

The Kukeri ritual goes back thousands of years to Thracian times. Back then, it was a way to scare off evil spirits and bring good fortune for the New Year. When I asked the mayor of Krupnik about its origins, he explained that this tradition has been passed down by the grandfathers of their grandfathers. It is, in fact, a pagan ritual established before Christ, particularly in the region of southern Bulgaria where Krupnik is located. According to him, the ritual has remained unchanged over the centuries, except that the hives now have longer hair.

I arrived in the village before sunrise, and it was still dark and cold. In the square, men in heavy fur costumes were gathered around a fire. Their costumes, some weighing up to 40 kilograms, glowed in the firelight. It felt like stepping back in time. As the sun came up, the men started visiting houses around the village.



The Kukeri performers continue their ritual under the bright sunlight, with the majestic snowcapped mountains of southwestern Bulgaria framing the scene.

At each house, they performed dances, stomping and jumping to the loud clanging of bells tied around their waists. The sound was so loud it felt like it filled the whole valley. People came out of their homes to greet the

performers, give small donations, and watch the show. Everyone smiled and seemed excited to be part of it.



The Kukeri costumes are made with intricate details, including braided accents and carefully crafted fur.

What struck me was how every part of the ritual had a purpose. The fur costumes and masks turned the performers into protective figures, while the bells were meant to scare away anything bad. The dances symbolized renewal and hope for the year ahead. It's amazing how these ancient meanings still matter to the people here.



The group dances with precision and energy, their movements symbolizing renewal and hope for the year ahead.

What made it even more special was how the whole community was involved. Families worked together for weeks to prepare, making costumes and practicing dances. Even kids joined in, learning the steps and hearing the stories behind the tradition. It wasn't just a performance - it was something they all shared and passed down.



Walking in unison, the Kukeri bring a sense of unity and history to the streets of Krupnik.

In a world where many old customs are disappearing, the Kukeri tradition feels rare and important. For the people of Krupnik, it's a way to stay connected to their roots. For visitors like me, it's a chance to see something real and unforgettable.

As I left the village, I couldn't stop thinking about what I had seen. The Kukeri isn't just a show – it's a living tradition. It's a reminder of how important it is to keep our history and culture alive. If you ever have the chance, visit Krupnik. The energy of the Kukeri will stay with you long after the costumes are put away..

GENERAL NEWS AND EVENTS AT FOF

SOCAN/BMI/ASCAP Now Accepting Partial AI Music

By Maurice Ali (Canada),

International Association of Independent Journalists Inc.

FOFSTOCK

Fortress of Freedom Inc.

FOF Records Inc.

On October 30 (2025) we received this email from SOCAN (a musical rights collective in Canada):



SOCAN, ASCAP and BMI Announce Alignment on AI Registration Policies

SOCAN, ASCAP and BMI today announced they have each adopted policies to accept registrations of musical compositions partially generated using artificial intelligence (AI) tools. These works can now be registered directly with the individual societies.

All three PRO registration policies allow the registration of musical works where AI has been used to assist or augment human expression. These works will be included as part of the full repertoires licensed by each society. Musical compositions that are entirely created using AI tools are not eligible for registration with any of the individual societies. [Click here to read the full release](#).

Effectively in North America, songs that are partially AI created will now be able to register at ASCAP, BMI and SOCAN. Full AI creations are excluded from registration at this time. This is all the information we have at this time and we will update as more information on possible royalties and such as it becomes available.

For those in the music industry this a moment of change if not a historic moment, so we are noting and archiving this moment to the relevant organizations we are associated with.

More news as it becomes available.

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FOF Entertainment Inc. Becomes a Film Distributing Company!

Maurice Ali, President - FOF Entertainment Inc.



FOF ENTERTAINMENT™

TORONTO, CANADA

- LONDON, ENGLAND

ENTER

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Canada | India | Estonia | Hong Kong | USA | Japan | England

The FOF Entertainment corporation will become a film distributing company! Fortress of Freedom Inc. will transfer its distribution stake of movies, TV programs, music videos and shorts to FOF Entertainment Inc. so as to enable the new film company with a legacy of titles to expand upon. This change to take place effective and executed on this date August 8, 2025.

The reason for this new mission statement is to provide access to independent filmmakers who have gradually seen their options diminish for access to platforms to show their films. FOF Entertainment aims to help these filmmakers get their creativity seen and also make some money.

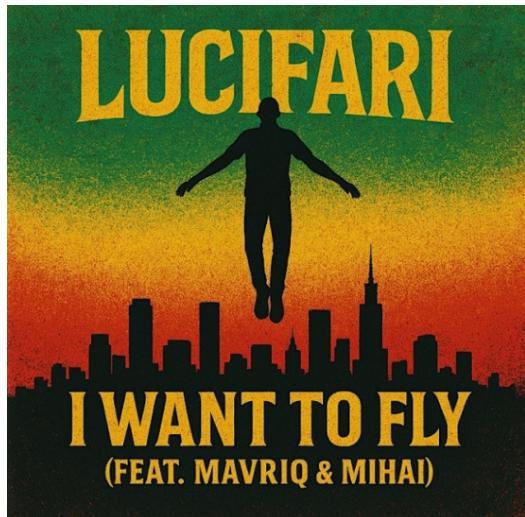
More news as it becomes available.

Please visit: <https://fofentertainment.com>

FOF ENTERTAINMENT: A GLOBAL AUDIENCE FOR YOUR ARTISTIC VISION!

Lucifari's New Single: I Want to Fly Released!

By Shane Murphy (July 25 2025), Fortress of Freedom Inc. / FOF Records Inc.



The Fortress of Freedom Corporation, FOFSTOCK and FOF Records Inc. have officially released Luciferi's latest rock/reggae single: I Want to Fly! What follows are some of the digital and social platforms you will soon be able to buy or stream the songs:



You can buy the song from iTunes or stream it on all the popular streaming sites like Apple Music and Spotify or Tidal or Deezer. There is a large number of stores here and some may take a few more days to show up but they will!

So all of us at FOF congratulate Luciferi for a great new single and wish the band continued success as their music gets out there!

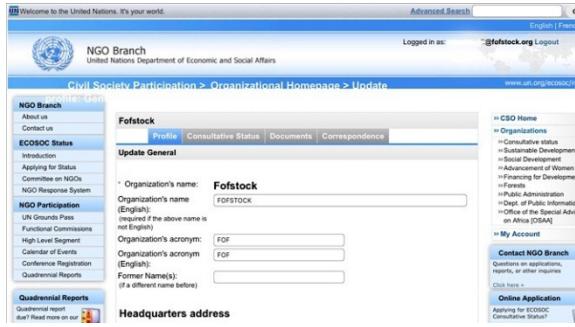
<https://lucifari.com>

<https://fofrecords.com>

FOF RECORDS: CUTTING EDGE MUSIC!

FOFSTOCK Submits Application for Consultative Status at the United Nations!

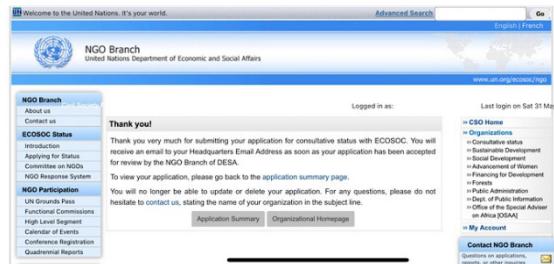
By Samantha Blackwell (June 2 2025), FOFSTOCK



The screenshot shows the 'Update General' profile page for FOFSTOCK. The organization's name is listed as 'FOFSTOCK' in both the English and French fields. The acronym is listed as 'FOF' in both fields. The headquarters address is listed as 'FOFSTOCK'. The sidebar includes links to CSD Home, Organizations, Consultative status, Sustainable Development, Social Development, Empowerment of Women, Financing for Development, Public Administration, Dept. of Public Information, and Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA). There is also a link to 'My Account'.

Getting that organizational profile!

On May 31 (2025), FOFSTOCK submitted its application for Consultative Status with the United Nations. This all started with an organizational profile at the United Nations on January 14, 2025. This process can sometimes take years and the application won't be considered until early 2026, but the process has now begun.



The screenshot shows the 'Application Summary' page after the application was submitted. It displays a 'Thank you!' message and a summary of the application details. The message states: 'Thank you very much for submitting your application for consultative status with ECOSOC. You will receive an email to your Headquarters Email Address as soon as your application has been accepted for review by the NGO Branch of DESA.' It also says: 'To view your application, please go back to the application summary page.' The sidebar includes links to CSD Home, Organizations, Consultative status, Sustainable Development, Social Development, Empowerment of Women, Financing for Development, Public Administration, Dept. of Public Information, and Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA). There is also a link to 'My Account'.

The application is finally sent in!

More news when it becomes available.

<https://fofstock.org>

FOFSTOCK: THE MUSIC ORGANIZATION FOR MUSICIANS!

FOFSTOCK Attends AI Conference In-Person at UN Headquarters in New York!

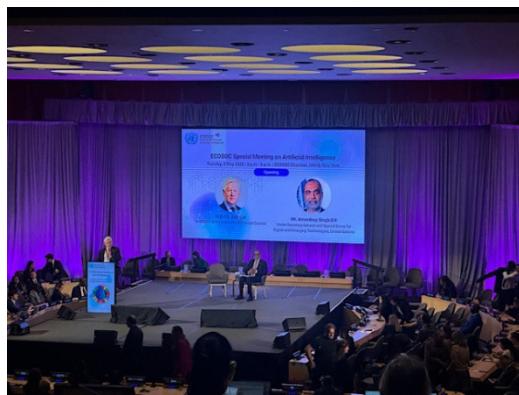
By Samantha Blackwell (May 12 2025), FOFSTOCK



FOFSTOCK attended the ECOSOC Special Meeting on Artificial Intelligence in-person at United Nations Headquarters in New York on May 6 (2025). Maurice Ali (CEO - FOFSTOCK) was our designated representative and had this to say about the event:

“It was an honor for FOFSTOCK to participate at this important event focused on AI. FOFSTOCK represented the music community well focusing on AI and its effect on cultures around the world, particularly through music. We met many colleagues at this event along with input from member nations at the United Nations and enjoyed the event!”

FOFSTOCK thanks the United Nations and its co-facilitators such as Bob Rae (President of ECOSOC) for making this important event a reality, along important information on the global AI situation along with the many successful outcomes from this event!.



Bob Rae speaks at the event!



FOFSTOCK had a speech prepared in case we got to speak!

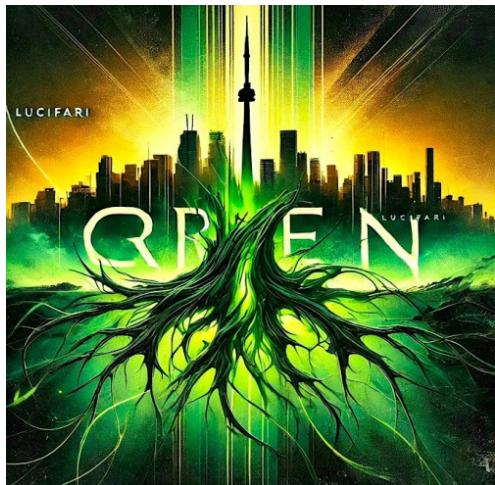
Here is the invitation letter to FOFSTOCK to the events at the United Nations:
https://fofstock.org/FOFSTOCK_AI_STI_UN_Letter.pdf

Please visit us at: <https://fofstock.org>

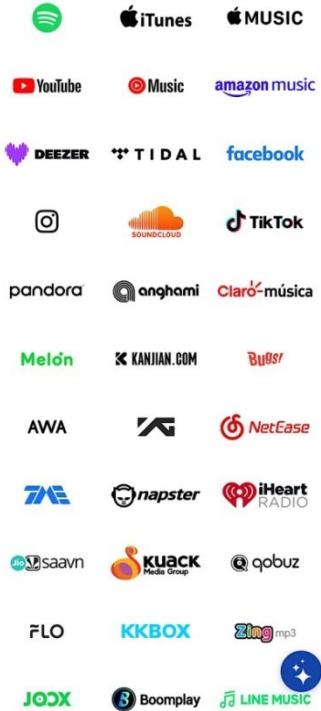
FOFSTOCK: THE MUSIC ORGANIZATION FOR MUSICIANS!

Lucifari's New EP Gren Released!

By Shane Murphy (Feb 2 2025), Fortress of Freedom Inc. / FOF Records Inc.



The Fortress of Freedom Corporation and FOF Records Inc. have officially released Luciferi's latest rock/reggae EP: Gren! What follows are some of the digital and social platforms you will soon be able to buy or stream the songs:



You can buy the song from iTunes or stream it on all the popular streaming sites like Spotify or Tidal or Apple Music. There is a large number of stores here and some may take a few more days to show up but they will!

So all of us at FOF congratulate Luciferi for a great new EP and wish the band continued success as their music gets out there!

<https://lucifari.com>

<https://fofreco...>

FOF RECORDS: CUTTING EDGE MUSIC!

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT FOF & IAIJ

A New Director at FOFSTOCK!

By Samantha Blackwell (March 11 2025), FOFSTOCK



Sue at FOFSTOCK!

Susan (Sue) Earps becomes the fifth director at FOFSTOCK!

At the last AGM for FOFSTOCK it was decided to make Sue Earps one of the directors at FOFSTOCK adding the UK to Canada and the United States of America with a strong presence of our organization. Sue is no stranger to the music industry starting with the beginnings of Punk in London to her work with FOF Records and at the last FOFSTOCK music festival.

So from all of us at FOFSTOCK, we wish Sue all the best in her new position!

<https://fofstock.org>

FOFSTOCK: THE MUSIC ORGANIZATION FOR MUSICIANS!

A POSITIVE MANDATE FOR HUMANITY TV SERIES

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS:



Episode 1: Beginning a Positive Mandate for Humanity



Episode 2: The Making of
AAVRY KNAPP DAZE
IN MY LIFE



Episode 3:
FREE WITH PURCHASE



Episode 4: REAL LIFE:



Episode 5:
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
DONALD "BOOTS" BRASSEUR



Episode 6: FOFSTOCK



Episode 7: The Free Press



Episode 8: Epilogue



The Lost Episode:
The Fortress Variety Show

The TV series which spans almost thirteen years is a "tour de force" of freedom of expression in the new digital age! The series spans the music industry to the press, book publishing and television entertainment, in other words the complete span of media. You may also want to check out The Fortress Experiment which is the movie the series was based on as well as the short Real Life: Real Lives. All videos can be watched on imdb.com and youtube.com.

Filmed on location in Toronto and at Fortress Of Freedom Studios.

Produced by Fortress Of Freedom Inc.

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FOF RECORDS: BUY OR STREAM OUR MUSIC!

WWW.FOFRECORDS.COM



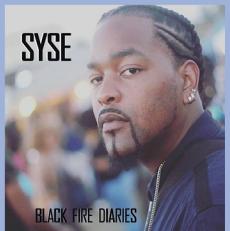
TABITHA
LIES
TABITHABLAIR.COM



TWENTY6HUNDRED
ELECTRIC FOR ALL
TWENTY6HUNDRED.COM



TWENTY6HUNDRED
UNTIL THE END
TWENTY6HUNDRED.COM



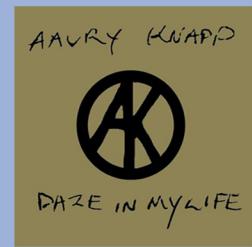
SYSE
BLACK FIRE DIARIES
SYSE.CA



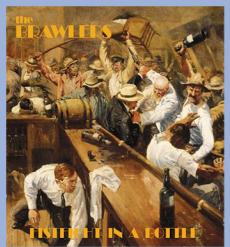
SHANE
REAL LIFE



SHAUN KELLY
HYPERVENTILATION



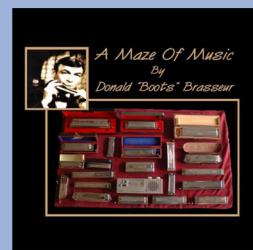
AAVRY KNAPP
DAZE IN MY LIFE



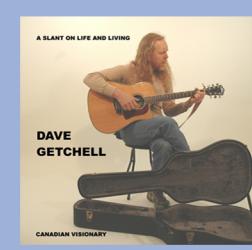
THE BRAWLERS
FISTFIGHT IN A BOTTLE



COREY JOHNSON
SPEECHLESS



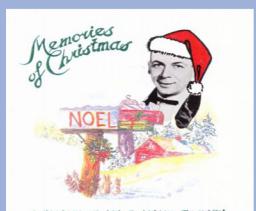
DONALD "BOOTS" BRASSEUR
A MAZE OF MUSIC



DAVE
GETCHELL
A SLANT ON LIFE AND LIVING



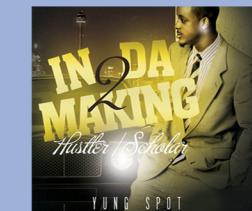
ZX81
BACK TO BASICS



DONALD "BOOTS" BRASSEUR
MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS



DROPS HOLIDAY
CANADIAN CURRENCY 2



YUNG SPOT
IN DA MAKING



LUCIFARI
ANARCHOLOGY



AAVRY KNAPP
AAVRY KNAPP GREATEST HITS



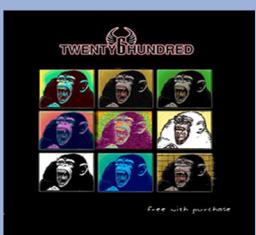
GRITZ
FLOW WITH ME



DROPS HOLIDAY
EASTSIDE ERRRLY



LUCIFARI
LEAVE ME ON THE MOON



TWENTY6HUNDRED
FREE WITH PURCHASE



BUTTONZ
TOMORROW



TYUNG SOPT
ABOVE AVERAGE



SQUASHED SQUIRREL
MISS INFORMATION

FOF RECORDS: CUTTING EDGE MUSIC!