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## jazzahead! 2024: A forward-looking finish

This Sunday 14 April saw the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of jazzahead! trade fair and festival in Bremen come to a close. With 2,985 registered professional participants from 66 nations and a total of 14,490 visitors attending the jazzahead! festival, the expectations set by the organizer Messe Bremen were more than met.

“We were tempted to put not just our normal one exclamation mark after this year’s jazzahead! but rather two,” says Sybille Kornitschky who runs jazzahead!, alluding to the fact that this year’s edition embraced two major themes. In addition to partner country the Netherlands, which showed its best side both at the trade fair and in the musical programme, Jazz from Africa was also in focus this year.

The crowning musical conclusion to this successful 18<sup>th</sup> jazzahead! was an emotional and captivating performance by Senegalese singer/bassist Alune Wade. With his sextet, he thrilled a young audience who were on their feet from the very start of the concert and danced and cheered right up until the final moments of this last showcase, late on Saturday evening. At the sold-out gala concert earlier on the same evening, trumpeter Maite Hontelé and the Dutch National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NJJO) had let off a display of mambo fireworks. They moved the audience... and set them in motion too.

“A whole host of enthusiastic reactions demonstrate to us that this jazzahead! was a complete success,” says Artistic Advisor Götz Bühler. “Especially in these difficult times, we as an international Jazz family demonstrated unity and celebrated all the things we have in common.” The musical spectrum of the forty showcases selected by top-class juries ranged from contemplative moments - for example the very different performances by the saxophonist Kika Sprangers with her Large Ensemble or by Matt Carmichael - by way of emotional outbursts and powerful interplay, for example with the Xavi Torres Trio, DZ’OB, Yonglee & The Doltang, or Raw Fish, to the infectious energy and elegance of Finnish bassist Kaisa Mäensivu and her New York “Machine”, the North African-Dutch “Marmoucha Orchestra” and the Lebanese-German formation MASAA. There are also very encouraging signs of a noticeably younger audience – a new generation! – who greeted these performances with loud and palpable enthusiasm.

The trade fair is well established as the most important marketplace and networking hub for the international jazz scene. This year’s edition had significantly more co-exhibitors. Not only was the partner country the Netherlands represented with a large stand and an extensive delegation, but also Spain, Italy, Sweden and the Baltics with a buzzy and welcoming joint stand from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, for instance. For the first time after a long absence, the UK’s wide variety of scenes were truly back this year. From overseas and for the second time, Chile presented itself to the international scene with a stand and a large number of delegates.

Panels and discussions on extremely topical subjects such as “Women in Jazz” or “The Future of Jazz on (public) radio” encouraged professional participants to converse and debate. A meeting of representatives of the European radio organization EBU ensured increased broadcasting activity, notably making use of the Radio Bremen radio booth which is located in the large exhibition hall.

Mark van Schaick sent his thanks on behalf of Buma Cultuur, Performing Arts Fund NL, and all Dutch partners: “We welcomed many, many friends and colleagues, made new acquaintances, connected people across borders, genres and age groups and, yes, served a lot of coffee at our Dutch inJazz stand.” What is particularly remarkable, says van Schaick, is the fact that it was possible to take a largely professional audience on a musical journey within a showcase of half an hour. “This is not an easy task, but the Dutch artists did it, from their first performance on Thursday afternoon to their last on Saturday evening.”

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The enthusiastic reactions of the spectators, who happily accepted these new horizons (the motto of jazzahead! 2024), speak for themselves. Many praised the contemporary and at the same time forward-looking nature of the event. Sebastian Scotney, editor of UK Jazz News, summed up his thoughts as follows: "I was particularly struck this year by jazzahead!'s unique spirit of informality, openness, and by the welcoming and positive spirit of everyone I met on all three days." Jazz stands for innovation and creativity in a way that no other musical art-form can truly match; the global jazz community is always eagerly awaiting the innovations of the future. Which means that expectations for jazzahead! 2025 - which will take place in Bremen from April 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> - are already high.

More information at [jazzahead.de](https://jazzahead.de).

(4.751 characters incl. spaces)

**You can download images from the following links:**

**Image 1:** [Gala Concert and Mambo with Maite Hontelé, Ramón Valle & Ronald Snijders](#) © M3B GmbH/Jan Rathke

**Caption:** At the gala concert, trumpeter Maite Hontelé and the NJJO, the national youth orchestra of the Netherlands, set off a firework display of mambo music.

**Image 2:** [Alune Wade](#) © M3B GmbH/Jens Schlenker

**Caption:** Soldier of love: The Senegalese singer and bassist Alune Wade got a predominantly young audience dancing at the final concert in the Schlachthof.

**Image 3:** [Marmoucha Orchestra](#) © M3B GmbH/Jens Schlenker

**Caption:** Good Guembri-Vibrations: Gnawa musicians from the Dutch-North African "Marmoucha Orchestra" provided a grand finale in Hall 7.1.

**Image 4:** [Tineke Postma Aria Group \(NL\)](#) © M3B GmbH/Jan Rathke

**Caption:** Dutch saxophonist Tineke Postma presented her opera-inspired programme "Aria" at the Schlachthof.

**Image 5:** [Exhibition stand Dutch.inJazz](#) © M3B GmbH/Jan Rathke

**Caption:** At the Dutch stand, artists (here Kika Sprangers laughing in the centre of the picture) and trade participants met in front of a miniature replica of BIMHUIS, Amsterdam's most famous jazz club.

**Image 6:** [Exhibition stand „Jazz from Africa“](#) © M3B GmbH/Jan Rathke

**Caption:** Larger than life: Bright Gain, the bandleader and bassist of the Afro4Band from Nigeria in conversation with the German-Dutch drummer Felix Schlarmann at the "Jazz from Africa" stand.

**Image 7:** [Festival outdoor area](#) © M3B GmbH/Jan Rathke

**Caption:** Successful premiere: the new outdoor area between the trade fair centre and the slaughterhouse was not only well received in culinary terms, but also because of an additional outdoor stage and the broadcast of the showcases.

**Further information and photos are available for download under the following link:**

Login: <https://cloud.m3b-bremen.de/s/CrLAFpcXNcATMm>

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