



Beijing

Space exploration

In the Chinese capital's tough-as-boots music scene, two new venues are thriving as vital community hubs

VENUES

It's not easy running a music venue in a place like Beijing. Rent is skyrocketing, cops apply pressure due to crowd issues or supposedly "immoral" performers and venues are being closed due to a "clean-up" campaign by local authorities. Still, Fruityspace and Yue Space have managed to establish themselves in this difficult environment as the loud-thumping twin heartbeat of the city's music scene. Realizing that they have to be more than just concert venues to survive financially in a city where space comes at a premium, they've opened their doors beyond gig hours. And in doing so, they have become meeting places for art- and music-minded types in a city that sorely needs them.

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Fruityspace

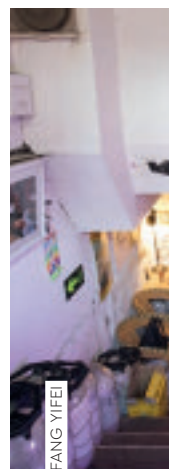
Fruityspace, a small underground bunker of a venue in Beijing's Dongsu area, opened in 2016 and is now the capital's home of esoteric electronic music. Walking through its unmarked door and down its rickety stairs reveals a den of life and creativity – a tiny exhibition space shows off work by up-and-coming local artists, customers thumb through vinyl record racks and a lone barman flicks the caps off Asahi bottles.

A screen hung over the performance space often shows arty Chinese films, while local bands like The Molds, Tow or The Dice



Audio aficionados who want a change from the loud, colorful and garish wireless speakers that saturate the market can now pre-order the UTOPIA, a sleek high-end speaker that's handcrafted in Budapest, Hungary.

Made of a special concrete material that's 10 times stronger than average cement-based concrete, the speaker's low-resonance enclosure promises crystal-clear high notes and tight bass sounds – and it's pretty easy on the eyes, too.
utopia-audio.com



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take the stage each weekend, in addition to a few shows held throughout the week. "It's a tolerant, diverse space not limited to music," says the venue's founder Zhai Ruixin. Spurred on by the community that has grown around the venue, Zhai has launched a Fruityspace publishing wing, with a record label also on the way.

Fruityspace also hosts a "garbage market" – a music-fueled biannual pop-up flea market held in May and October each year where people can buy and sell anything from vintage clothing and retro cameras to quirky household contraptions from past decades.

Zhai says that the unique, inclusive atmosphere at these bashes has earned Fruityspace unlikely new followers – from film buffs who attend screenings to electro music lovers who stop by for gigs – while showing that venues that dare to be different can have a bright future. "At the last garbage market, a friend called a phone repair guy to come and fix his phone," he says. "He showed up with his repair tools, then ended hanging out at Fruityspace the whole afternoon." **13 Meishuguan Dong Jie**

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Yue Space

North of Fruityspace, in the Beixinqiao area, is Yue Space, which opened in September 2016. It's far larger than Fruityspace – with a gig capacity of 500 – and has similarly become a multi-arts hub in the city.

The layout is reminiscent of London's flagship Rough Trade East record store, featuring a bar, a record shop section and stacks of music magazines. Photos of classic rock bands – the owners seem to really like Led Zeppelin – adorn the walls, with chairs dotted around the light brown wooden furnishings to create a relaxed, friendly atmosphere in the daytime. During the evenings, things get more high-octane – recent gigs by Beijing rockers PK14 and Snapline have packed the place out.

The venue also organizes various events such as the "hip-hop market" which sells clothes to the thumping beats and bars of a rap soundtrack, morphing into a party in the evening. "It's like cooking – we have to incorporate lots of different ingredients to maintain flavor," says Guo Xiaohan, Yue Space's manager. **7 Banqiaonanxiang Dongcheng District**

THREE TO ROCK AT

Other Beijing music venues worth paying a visit

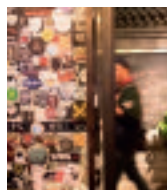


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School Live Bar

Beijing's ultimate sweatbox venue, this gathering place for the city's underground rock royalty channels the spirit of New York's CBGB. It hosts affordable, often free shows and has a lively bar area. fb.com/schoollivebar



Dusk Dawn Club

Set in a stunning glass-roofed hutong courtyard, this is one of the city's coolest bars and a stellar venue known for heavy rock shows. It also hosts events like beer festivals and film screenings. fb.com/duskdawnclub



Yugong Yishan

Larger than School Live Bar and Dusk Dawn Club but in the same Gulou area, this is a local hotspot for quality music. Beijing indie types Penicillin and British psych-rockers Toy have taken to the stage. yugongyishan.com



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