

genre has yet to develop its own “scene,” although Safar says that “pockets” of fan support continue to emerge. The festival seeks to boost that enthusiasm while also exposing new listeners to the style. Several thousand music enthusiasts have attended festival concerts in recent years, and Safar estimates that 1,000 will turn out for the biggest show planned for the 2009 event.

That concert, interestingly, will be headlined not by a Sephardi performer but by Matisyahu, the hassidic reggae star who became one of the decade’s more unlikely pop breakthroughs with his Top 40 hit “King Without a Crown.”

The December 14 show, scheduled at the Lower East Side’s Webster Hall, will match the former yeshiva student with Diwon, who will add Sephardi elements to the performance through his dance-friendly remixes. For listeners drawn to the concert because of Matisyahu, the Sephardi music might prove a small revelation of its own – or so it is hoped.

With one evening devoted strictly to Ladino music, the festival will also offer an academic look at Jewish music through its Sephardic Scholar Series.

The joint performance and discussion, another highlight of the festival, will showcase Ladino/flamenco duo Aviva and Dan, ethnomusicologist Samuel R. Thomas and filmmaker Lisa Katzman. ●

*The Sephardi-flavored genre has yet to develop its own ‘scene,’ although Safar says that ‘pockets’ of fan support continue to emerge*



...and the Sarah Aroeste Band (above).

RAISING AWARENESS. Erez Safar, a k a Diwon. (Photos: Shemspeed)

