

BARMER BOYS



CONTEMPORARY GYPSY / SUFI / BEAT-BOXING

Rajasthan (India)

BARMER BOYS are the next generation of performers that carry forward the centuries-old musical traditions of the Manganiyars. 'Global ambassadors of contemporary Rajasthani folk and Sufi music', the band's versatility of styles and bubbling energy infuses each performance - from soulful Sufi kalaams to uplifting wedding and celebratory songs, songs of love and remembrance, to boisterous jams with beat-boxing and live DJ sets.

The group formed in 2011 at the Amarrass Desert Music Festival in New Delhi, and have been wooing audiences at festivals, clubs, on TV, at weddings and private events across India, and in North America, Europe and Asia. Their international debut was at Roskilde Festival in 2014 (playing before The Rolling Stones!), have starred on MTV CokeStudio Season 3, opened the Jaipur Lit Fest. and featured on the BBC and NPR.

The trio's new album 'Kesariya Balm' (digital/vinyl) debuted on the Transglobal World Music Charts Top 40 this summer, features the hit song 'Bole to Mitho Lage' (with over 1.3 million views on YouTube!), and is the first Indian folk album to be released on vinyl in India this century!

The trio have played over 200 concerts including major festivals in Europe, North America and Asia including Roskilde (2014), Wassermusik (2015, 2017), Winnipeg Folk Festival (2015), Distortion (2015), Ziro Festival of Music (2015, 2017), Music Meeting (2015), Feito A Man (2015), Clockenflap Hong Kong (2015) and many more.

Group Size / Artists / Instruments:

3 Artists + 1 Road Manager / Sound

- Manga - vocals / harmonium
- Rais Khan - khartaal / morchang / bhapang / beatboxing
- Rajak Khan - dholak

+ optional DJ SpynCycle

Booking:

EUROPE / AFRICA:

Marisa - +45-25 61 82 82 - m@secondtotheleft.com



NEW DELHI

MADISON WISCONSIN

MAKING MUSIC
SUSTAINABLE

STREAMING: barmerboys.bandcamp.com/album/at-home

DISCOGRAPHY:



KESARIYA BALM

2017, AMARRASS RECORDS



AT HOME

2012, AMARRASS RECORDS

"Incandescent Sufi voices that incite
ecstasy" - *Songlines* ★★★★★



**LIVE AT THE AMARRASS
DESERT MUSIC FESTIVAL**

BARMER BOYS

TESTIMONIALS

““Incandescent Sufi voices that incite ecstasy” – **** ”
- Simon Broughton, Songlines Magazine”

““Latitudes: The Global Music You Must Hear In June” ”” - NPR Music, June 30, 2015

“Creating a maximum groove with minimal means”
- “MixedWorldMusic.com, May 2015”

“Barmer Boys steal the show.. with their unique folk tunes, truly stood out at the festival”
- IBNLive at NH7 - Weekender Festival, Nov 2014

“Mangey Khan’s voice needs to be heard to be believed”
- Hindustan Times, Feb 2012 ”

“The music rose above the repetitive tunes we hear in today’s clamorous folk market and was like a whiff of fresh air” - Indian Express, Nov 2012

“Definitely near the top of my list of personal all-time favorite radio sessions”
- Robert Weisberg, Transpacific Sound Paradise, WFMU 91.1FM

PLAYED AT

Among others at:

ROSKILDE FESTIVAL, Denmark (2014) - European Debut

RESPECT FESTIVAL - Prague, Czech Republic (2018)

OFFest, Skopje, Macedonia (2018)

TODO MUNDO FESTIVAL - Belgrade, Serbia (2018)

POSTEN - Odense, Denmark (2018)

GODSET - Kolding, Denmark (2018)

STARS - Vordingborg, Denmark (2018)

WASSERMUSIK - Berlin, Germany (2017)

STOCKHOLM CULTURAL FESTIVAL - Sweden (2017)

GOTHEBORG CULTURAL FESTIVAL - Sweden (2017)

MALMÖ SOMMERSCENE - Sweden (2017)

HONEYLAND FESTIVAL, Bornholm - Denmark (2017)

GLOBAL COPENHAGEN, Denmark (2017)

FESTIVAL FRIGILIANA 3 CULTURAS, Spain (2017)

SO FAR SOUNDS ODENSE, Denmark (2017)

MOMENTUM, Odense, Denmark

HIDE & SEEK FESTIVAL, Brussels (Belgium - 2016)

TIVOLI, Copenhagen (Denmark - 2016)

IN 2 WILD, UK, 2016

RICHMIX, London (2016)

MOTHER INDIA FESTIVAL, Berlin, Germany (2015)

WINNIPEG FOLK FESTIVAL, Canada (2015)

DISTORTION FESTIVAL, Copenhagen, Denmark (2015)

NH7 WEEKENDER, Delhi, India (2014)

ZIRO FESTIVAL OF MUSIC, Ziro, India (2015)

MTV COKE STUDIO - eason 3

MUSIC MEETING, Nijmegen, The Netherlands (2015)

BORNEO WORLD MUSIC EXPO, Kuching, Malaysia (2014)

CLOCKENFLAP MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL, Hong Kong (2015)

AMARRASS DESERT MUSIC FESTIVAL, New Delhi, India (2011)

VIDEO

LIVE AT ROSKILDE

Excerpts from the Barmer Boys performance at Roskilde Festival 2014.. Gloria Stage on July 3, 2014 at Roskilde, Denmark. Barmer Boys are led by Manga ‘Mangey’ Khan (vocals, harmonium), Rais Khan (khartaal, morchang, bhapang, beatboxing) and Magada Khan (dholak).

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIFLLZqMTjU> >

MAST QALANDAR AT FEITO A MAN FESTIVAL

Barmer Boys sing Mast Qalandar at the Feito A Man Festival in Santiago de Compostela on August 5, 2015

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD2t9s7v71I> >

RAICHAND

From their debut album “At Home: Barmer Boys” released December 2012 on Amarrass Records.

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCouhmgNEAg> >

HUM BHI JAANEY (live)

Hum Bhi Jaaney, performed by Barmer Boys on day two of the Amarrass Desert Music Festival on December 2, 2012 in New Delhi, India.

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCouhmgNEAg> >

BOLE TO MITHO LAGE

Bole to Mitho Lage (loosely translates to when you speak, it is sweet...) - Barmer Boys. Folk with attitude. 21st Century folk! Featuring Mangey Khan on vocals and harmonium, Rais Khan on bhapang, Bhungar Khan on khartaal, and Barkat Khan on dholak

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXHXHq3cwNg> >

RAIS BHUNGAR AND MANGU KHAN AT THE AMARRASS DESERT MUSIC FESTIVAL

BARMER BOYS Rais Khan (morchang), Bhungar Khan (khartal) and Mangu Khan (dholak) at the Amarrass Desert Music Festival

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAF-P-ILWk8> >

KURJA - BARMER BOYS + DJ SPINCYLE

Kurja (bird) - Barmer Boys and DJ Spincycle at the terrace sessions with Amarrass Records, March 2014. www.amarrass.com Kurja is the name for a migratory bird (crane) found in the region. Barmer Boys are Manga ‘Mangey’ Khan (vocals, harmonium), Raisk Khan (khartaal), Magada Khan (dholak); DJ Spincycle is Ankur Malhotra (turntables, digital sampler, electronics)

< https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=-AHabozp4x4 >

MORE VIDEOS ON:

< www.secondtotheleft.com/barmer-boys.html#videos >

DISCOGRAPHY



KESARIYA BALM
(2017, AMARRASS RECORDS)

Limited edition hand-cut vinyl, made in India! Features custom album artwork, with each LP individually hand-cut and etched!



AT HOME - (2012, AMARRASS RECORDS)

“Incandescent Sufi voices that incite ecstasy” - Songlines ★★★★★

Single take recordings at home in Ramsar, Rajasthan --- Featured on Season 3 of Coke Studio on MTV India, Barmer Boys represent the next generation of folk from India. Folk with attitude. 21st Century folk.



LIVE
AT THE AMARRASS DESERT MUSIC FESTIVAL
(2012, AMARRASS RECORDS)

FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/BarmerBoys>

PRESS PICTURES

Photos - Bio - Press - Riders

<https://app.box.com/s/oxjeokff4lap5zh0c68w>

alk
NEWS

The Indian EXPRESS

www.indianexpress.com

Rajasthan at Roskilde

Rajasthan-based Manganiyar group Barmer Boys will perform at the prestigious Roskilde Festival in Denmark

SUANSHU KHURANA

AS HOT winds lash through the Thar desert, the metallic twangs of a moorchang merge with the wooden clapping of a khartal in a tender melody *Bole toh meetho laoge*. In Ramsar village, Barmer, Rais Khan, Maange Khan and Magada Khan — the Barmer Boys — are at rehearsals. “The rehearsals are for a concert in June. I have been told that some famous musicians will also be there,” says Rais. On July 3, the Barmer Boys will be performing a set at the Roskilde Music Festival in Denmark, hours before The Rolling Stones take another stage in the same venue. But what’s endearing is that the three are oblivious to the import nor do they care.

“We hope it’s a good performance and we can entertain people who will come to see us,” says Rais, about the Danish festival that will be dominated by a slew of head-bangers, rock lovers and EDM enthusiasts. So a couple of hours before the world’s greatest rock ‘n’ roll band — Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Charlie Watts and Ronnie Wood — takes the Orange stage to give those present some of their illustrious aural snapshots, Gloria stage will echo with *Kesar ulak la-*



(L-R) Barmer Boys — Rais Khan, Maange Khan, Magada Khan

gaavo, vaari jaan.

“We are still explaining the idea of a band to them and how to go about performing like one. They are used to unstructured performances and are always sort of jamming on stage, which is okay, but as of now we are putting things into a structure,” says Ashutosh Sharma, co-founder of Amarrass Records, who got in touch with the organisers of the festival and is helping the musicians perform there.

The Roskilde Festival has been around since 1971 is one of the largest European music festivals in the world. It has seen bands such as German electronic outfit Kraftwerk, psychedelic legends Animal Collective and pop diva Rihanna as headliners in the past.

As for the Barmer Boys, they know of The Rolling Stones frontman Jagger. A patron of the Jodhpur Rajasthan International Folk Festival, he attended the festival last year. “So Mick ji is Rolling Stones? *Ye toh pata hi nahi tha. Ab thoda dar lag raha hai*. I hope Allah is around when we perform,” says Rais. We can promise him the presence of the gods of rock ‘n’ roll.

Printed From



FUSION FROM BARMER

Friday, 04 December 2015 | Nishant Singh

Rate : 0/5 Like : 1



'We are hoping for more platforms like the Coke Studio where artistes like us have the freedom to create music without losing their identity,' Rais Khan of Barmer boys tells Nishant Singh

The world is full of music and lyrics and it is the different flavours of music which make it something to be appreciated and cherished. It’s the roots which keep the essence alive like a narrow passage to heaven in the midst of chaos. The folk fusion band Barmer Boys, who have their roots in Rajasthan, are the epitome of this different kind of music.

The Barmer Boys is a collective of Rajasthani folk musicians, who were brought together by the Delhi-based recording label Amarrass Records in 2011. In their short career as a 'band', they have performed with internationally acclaimed artistes like Malian singer and guitarist Vieux Farka Toure and Bombino from Niger.

Taking forward the legacy of Manganiyars, a community who used to sing in exchange for alms as the name suggests, they use a wide variety of instruments like the rounded *Kamancha*; the *sarangi*; *Algoza* or double flute; the tiny, but potent *morchang* - held delicately in performer's mouth, its taut reed is plucked to produce twangs that talk; then there is *khartal* - just two pieces of wood, held in each hand, that are made to converse in the intricate language of claps by gravity and the magic in the palms that hold them.

From different villages in Barmer district of Rajasthan, the Barmer Boys have been musicians for almost their entire lives. Yet, it is a new experience for them to be part of a 'band'. As Ashutosh Sharma of Amarrass Records says, “It is probably the first time that traditional Rajasthani instruments such as the *morchang*, *khartaal* and *bhapang* are being mixed with beat-boxing and DJ sets.

The percussionist of the band, Rais Khan, is quite satisfied with the thought of learning new things like beat boxing and to learn playing different instruments. For him, touring and collaborations with different artistes is the main source of learning. He wants to teach whatever is possible to share through his traditional music.

“When we go abroad, the people always look at us with respect and they enjoy our music and this is the biggest reward for any artiste that his art is being appreciated and reaching to every corner of the world,” says Rais, who just came back from a gig in Hong Kong with the band.

Platforms like Coke Studio are playing a vital role in promoting their art and to expand their reach to the masses. Folk artistes from different parts of India are getting known for their talent and social media sites like YouTube and Facebook are also doing wonders in terms of providing them an audience which is fond of such kind of music.

“We have got a huge fan base through our song on YouTube, which we created with music director Clinton for Coke Studio season-8. We hope for more such platforms where artistes like us have the freedom to create music without losing our identity,” shares Rais Khan, who was recently in Delhi with his band for a performance at the Groghead Café. The Barmer Boys are open to all sorts of musical collaborations, including music for Bollywood. However, they are quite clear that if approached for film-music, they will only perform folk music that they create themselves.

Get to Know The Folk

Two Delhi-based entrepreneurs are travelling across India to build an archive of folk music



(Clockwise from left) Ankur Malhotra (in front) and Ashutosh Sharma with a team member; Rais Khan gestures as he performs with a morchang, a percussion instrument that is played with the mouth; (from left) musicians Firoze Khan, Ghewar Khan, Sakar Khan and Darra Khan



SUANSHU KHURANA

ALMOST 20 kms away from the din of traffic and tourists in Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, is the sleepy village of Hamira, where 80-year-old Sakar Khan lives with his family. Here, the wind from the desert sands is mixed with the tender melodies of the kamancha, a type of folk fiddle played by Khan, and the complicated rhythm sets of the khartaal, a percussion instrument comprising wooden blocks. For the people of this village, Khan's performance with legendary American violinist Yehudi Menuhin, or a concert with the famous Beatle George Harrison is "just another performance abroad".

A few months ago, as Khan played in his tiny house — with a picture of him receiving the Padma Shri in the background, and with neighbourhood children peeking through the windows — it was for Delhi-based entrepreneurs Ankur Malhotra and Ashutosh Sharma. The duo hunkered down beside their microphones, mixers and basic recording equipment, making analogue recordings of Khan's music.

The recording comprises several interesting tunes on an ancient instrument, but the music is interspersed with sounds of the surroundings — the piercing note of a train whistle, an occasional wah from a local fan, a cry of "chai lenge oap" from

the background, and the shriek of a pressure cooker somewhere close. Yet, far from distracting, the sounds serve to root Khan's music in his milieu. This recording and others made with Sakar Khan will be released as an album titled *At Home with Sakar Khan* (Amarrass Records) later this month.

Malhotra and Sharma, both 37, have been undertaking many bumpy rides across the country — often without the aid of maps or signboards — catching up with folk musicians and archiving their music.

This is similar to the endeavours by musician, historian and archivist Alan Lomax in the last century, who had travelled thousands of miles, collecting American and British folk songs and interviews. His recordings are said to have helped in the revival of American and British folk music from the '40s to the '60s.

Malhotra and Sharma tested waters last year by releasing the first volume of *Field Recordings from the Indian Desert*, and the response was encouraging enough for them to continue their journey. Apart from being released as albums, the recordings can also be downloaded from amarrass.com.

"For us, the trigger was that these musicians are world-class performers and we spotted them at gigs in big cities and at places such as Lincoln Center in the US. The performance would end and they would go back to their native villages. We wanted to

uncover the real story of these musicians," says Malhotra.

Among the places they have visited are Raneri in Rajasthan to record Lakha Khan, who plays the Sindhi Sarangi, and to Barmer, also in Rajasthan, to record the Barmer Boys — Mangey Khan, Bagga Jhan and Meisa Ram. Sharma says that there is a unique level of comfort when folk artistes perform at home, in their houses and for their own people. "It is music that is performed with the community and for the *jajmaan* (benefactor). It can't happen in an air-conditioned studios," says Malhotra.

The project will also introduce a host of tribal musicians from various parts of the country to music lovers. Among these are the Sidis — Indians of African descent who live primarily in Gujarat — who play a mix of calypso and Indian music. "The trance-inducing percussion of their music was what we found interesting," says Malhotra.

Sharma adds that he and Malhotra have made a conscious effort to not clean up these albums. "The whole idea is to have field recordings, we want the music to reach the audience as it is," says Sharma.

The artistes are paid a stipend during recording and 50 per cent of the royalty from the album sale. "Everything is done in the folk artiste's environment, so he cracks jokes with us, shares *beedis* and makes some brilliant music," says Sharma.

A spiritual connect

এক আধ্যাত্মিক সংযোগ

Sufi music in its diverse forms connects us all eventually with the God

ভিন্ন ভিন্ন ধারার মাধ্যমে সুফি সঙ্গীত একসময় আমাদের সবাইকে স্রষ্টার সঙ্গে একাত্ম করে

By Sanjeev Bhar



Mangey Khan was rehearsing for an upcoming musical evening. The moment he started his folk rendition, the range and pitch speared through me. The sheer vibration of his vocal chords could be felt from a distance. As he was going through the song, I felt a vacuum; a feeling hard to put in words. A sense of being lost and yet very much in love. It was energetic and magical. "But wait, is it really a Sufi song," I questioned myself. Creating a disconnect with the immediate surrounding and connecting with the only one up there is probably the power of Sufi music. And yes, the song did achieve so in connecting me with my God.

As he completed the song, I interacted with him. According to him, music is what he is meant for. In fact, as a Merasi, his community is known for music. They are traditionally known as Manganiyars, who rely on music for their livelihood belonging to the northwest part of Rajasthan, India. He says, "We sing Sufi and folk songs." It came to me as a surprise as he probably had no inkling of exact craft Sufi music is known for. He only knows the fact that he sings from his heart and it connects him with Him.

মায়ে খান আসন্ন এক সাক্ষাৎ অনুষ্ঠানের জন্য রিহার্সাল করছিলেন। তিনি তার বিখ্যাত লোকগান গাওয়া শুরু করা মাত্রই তার শক্তিশালী কণ্ঠের তাকবাজ আমার হৃদয় স্পর্শ করল। তার কণ্ঠের ভাষায় অনেক দূর থেকেই স্পষ্ট অনুভব করা যায়। তার গান চলতে থাকে আর আমি নিজের মধ্যে এক অনির্বচনীয় শূন্যতা অনুভব করতে থাকি। এই অনুভূতি একই সঙ্গে হারিয়ে যাবার আবার গভীর প্রেমের। এই গান অত্যন্ত প্রাণময় আর সম্বোধনী। আমি নিজেকে প্রশ্ন করলাম, "কিন্তু এটি কি আসলেই সুফি গান?" পারিপার্শ্বিকতার সঙ্গে তাত্ত্বিকভাবে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে সেই পরম শক্তির সঙ্গে নিজেকে যুক্ত করতে পারাটাকেই বোধ হয় সুফি সঙ্গীতের আসল শক্তি নিহিত। আর হ্যাঁ, গানটি আমাকে আমার স্রষ্টার সঙ্গে খুব সহজেই যুক্ত করতে পেরেছে।

গানটি শেষ করার পর আমি তার সঙ্গে আলোচনা বললাম। তার নিজের মতে, তার অনুভূতি হয়েছে সঙ্গীতের জন্য। বঙ্কত তার মিরাসি সম্প্রদায় সঙ্গীত চর্চায় অন্যতম বিখ্যাত। ঐতিহ্যপূর্ণভাবে এরা মাঙ্গনিয়ার নামেই পরিচিত, ভারতের রাজস্থান রাজ্যের উত্তরপশ্চিম অঞ্চলের সম্প্রদায়টির জীবনধারা আর জীবিকার ভিত্তিই হচ্ছে সঙ্গীত। তিনি বললেন, "আমরা সুফি সঙ্গীত আর লোকগান গেয়ে থাকি।" আমি জেনে বিস্মিত হলাম যে সুফি সঙ্গীতের সার বিঘড়টি সম্পর্কে সম্ভবত তার সেরকম কোন ধারণা নেই। তিনি শুধু জানেন তিনি তার হৃদয় থেকে গান গাইছেন আর তা তাকে স্রষ্টার সঙ্গে যুক্ত করে।



ESSENCE

For folk artistes, Sufi song rendition is not approached with restriction. There is no boundary for them; they choose to sing it in their own style



Vital facets
• Qawwali is probably one of the most popular forms of Sufi music
• Various types of instruments are used for Sufi music ranging from Dholak, Harmonium, Tabla, Khartal, Kamanchas, Chimta, Ektara, etc.
• Clapping, other than in Qawwali, still remains one important element in rendering Sufi songs though in a restrictive manner.

Regional Sufi folk

On second thought, I wanted to know how Sufi stream of music is being treated by folk artistes and whether it is revered as authentic. Ravneet Kler, Director, Amarrass Records India who had invited me to have a chat session with him and to listen to Khan explained to me something that surprised me. He says, a Merasi never learns music traditionally or methodically. Therefore, Sufi music to them may not be something that has to have a boundary of a particular style or classical form. I felt because of this reason, authenticity cannot be debated. Merasis have their own perspective and a style

Immersed in Sufi music one can sense being lost and yet very much in love with the Almighty God

which is still Sufi to them, going by the fact that Sufi music is the devotional music of the Sufis. Kler says, "He is probably too naive to understand the nuances of words he sings. For almost 40 generations, music has been passed on as a legacy in this community and we want to revive that." Thanks to Amarrass Records that discovered Khan from Ramsar village, Barmer, Rajasthan, he is now being recognised for his quality singing. It has earned him respect and popularity.

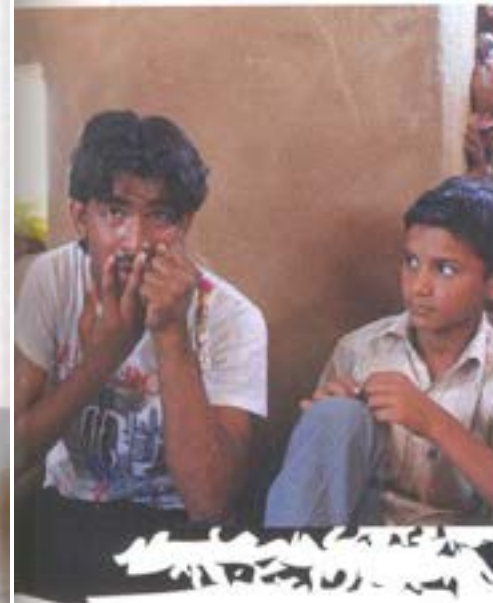
আঞ্চলিক সুফি ও লোক সঙ্গীত

সঙ্গীত উপভোগের পাশাপাশি আমি বরাবর জানতে চেয়ে এসেছি লোকসঙ্গীত শিল্পীরা সুফি ধারার সঙ্গীতকে কিভাবে গ্রহণ করেছেন এবং একে তারা মৌলিক ধারা বলে মনে করে কিনা। আমারা রেকর্ডস অব ইন্ডিয়া পরিচালক রবনীত ক্লের আমায় সঙ্গে তার একটি সাক্ষাতের আর তার কথা শোনার ব্যবস্থা করে দিয়েছিলেন, খান তার নিজের সম্পর্কে যা বলেন তা আমাকে চমকিত করেছিল। তিনি বলেন, একজন মেরাসি কখনও গ্রন্থাগার বা নিয়মতান্ত্রিকভাবে গান শেখে না। সুতরাং, তাদের কাছে সুফি সঙ্গীতের অর্থ হয়তো এমন যে তা নির্দিষ্ট বা প্রচলিত কোন ধারার বেড়াগুলো আবদ্ধ থাকে না। আমি একটি ধারণা পেলাম যে এই কারণেই এই ধারা খাঁটি কী নয় তা নিয়ে বিতর্কের অবকাশ নেই। মেরাসিদের নিজস্ব সৃষ্টিভঙ্গি

আর স্বকীয় ধারা আছে যা তাদের কাছে সুফিবাদ। তারা জানে সুফি সঙ্গীত হল সুফিদের ভক্তিমূলক গানের ধারা। ক্লের বলেন, "তিনি সম্ভবত এতেটাই সরল যে তার গানের শব্দের অন্তর্নিহিত অর্থই জানেন না। প্রায় ৪০ প্রজন্ম ধরে উত্তরাধিকার হিসেবে এই সম্প্রদায়ের মাঝে সঙ্গীত চর্চা চলে আসছে এবং আমরা একে পুনরুজ্জীবিত করতে চাই।" আমারা রেকর্ডসই রাজস্থান রাজ্যের বারমের এলাকার রামসার গ্রামে খানকে আবিষ্কার করেছিল, তাঁর মানের গান শাইবার জন্য এখন তিনি ব্যাপকভাবে পরিচিত। এই কারণেই তিনি ব্যাপক জনপ্রিয়তা আর সম্মান লাভ করেছেন।



Folk artistes like Manogey Khan are too naive to understand the nuances of Sufi words that they sing. For almost 40 generations, music has been passed on as a legacy in their community. Amarrass Records is handpicking artistes to revive this style of singing which is getting lost.



Simple thoughts

Recently, Khan's popularity as a folk Sufi singer increased among the ardent followers of music as he was featured in the TV programme Coke Studio in India. He is now playing an instrumental role in promoting the folk music. He renders sufi songs with a simple approach that it should connect us to Almighty God. This is completely true to what this music has always been approached as. Music apart, the lyrical dimension of Sufism adds to the feeling of high energy that I drowned myself into while listening to Khan.

সরল ভাবনা

সম্প্রতি কোক স্টুডিও অব ইন্ডিয়া নামের টিভি অনুষ্ঠানে সঙ্গীত পরিবেশন করার পর মনোযোগী শ্রোতাদের কাছে লোক-সঙ্গীতশিল্পী হিসেবে খানের জনপ্রিয়তা বিপুল হারে বেড়েছে। বর্তমানে তিনি লোকসঙ্গীতের প্রচারে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করছেন। তিনি এমন সরল ভঙ্গিতে সুফি সঙ্গীত পরিবেশন করে থাকেন যে তা খুব সহজেই আমাদের সর্বশক্তিমান শ্রুতির সঙ্গে যুক্ত করে। এই ধারার সঙ্গীত যেভাবে চর্চা করা হয়ে থাকে তার সঙ্গে এই ভাবটি পুরোপুরি সামঞ্জস্যতাপূর্ণ। শুধু খানের সঙ্গীতের কথা বিবেচনা করলে, গানের গ্রাম্যমর্যতার সঙ্গে সুফিবাদি যে মাত্রা যোগ হয়েছে তাতে আমি অতি-সহজেই নিজেকে সেই অসীমে হারিয়ে ফেলি।

BARMER BOYS in Hindustan Times
(New Delhi's largest daily newspaper)
- Nov 2012



hindustan times

MUSIC FOR THE SOUL

12 bands,
4 continents &
14 hours of music

Catch the Amarraas Desert Music Festival on Dec 1-2

Venue: Zorba, 166 MG Road, Subarpur Metro Station

Invites also at Fabindia, Nur (Santashri Complex), Sadhana Triquet (Narain Place), Chungwa (BK-11), Heritage (South Ex), The Music Shoppe (DLF Phase II)

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Partners/Sponsors: Sadhana, Anjoos, Man Theatre Works

BARMER BOYS in
THE INDIAN EXPRESS
- November 11, 2011



Members of Barmer Boys

Blend it like Barmer Boys

From *Pir Murshid* to *Chhalla*, Barmer Boys took their Delhi performance to a new level

SUANSHU KHURANA

THE metallic twangs of moorchang and the loaded beats of khartaal merged with earthy strains of harmonium and Mangey Khan's soaring vocals greeted those present at Lodi - The Garden Restaurant on Friday evening. The men are called Barmer Boys, a three-year-old band formed from the existing Manganiars from Rajasthan, by Amarraas Records directors Ankur Malhotra and Ashutosh Sharma.

As the seasoned performers began with a mellow qalam *Pir Murshid* — an ode to their saint, the music rose above the repetitive tunes we hear in today's clamorous folk market and was like a whiff of fresh air as Rais Khan on moorchang, bhang and beatboxing, Mangey Khan on vocals and harmonium, Mangi Khan on dholak, and Bhungra Khan on khartaal upped the ante with their wistful vocals, layered with the interesting alaaps.

After their ode to *Pir Murshid*, the band sang *Thodo pio, thodo chod geyo re* — a high-energy track that the band members are not allowed to sing in Barmer, or even Rajasthan. "There can be some traditional people present in the gatherings and we can't sing a fun alcohol song. But since we are in Delhi and nobody would really mind a song like that here, we wanted to entertain the audience with it," said Rais.

While Rais and Bhungra showcased their skills on an instrumental track through a jugalbandi, Mangey went on to sing *Hum bhi teri basti mein* — a beautiful track that was a mix of an arresting melody and traditional vocals. This was the time when the audience put down alcohol glasses and heard the band in rapt attention to greet the musicians with a hearty applause at regular intervals. This was followed by tracks such as *Raichand* and *Chhalla* — a sharp and dense change from the delicate beginning, as the band ended the concert with a furious climax of vocals and drumming.

During the interesting gig, the band was missing the peculiar drone of the *kamancha* — a folk fiddle made and played by the Manganiars — and their trademark colourful turbans. We missed those two things as well. Hopefully, at the Amarraas Music Festival that's slated to happen on December 1-2, the band will make these additions.



BARMER BOYS



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HIGH RESOLUTION PRESS PICTURES ON:

<https://app.box.com/s/oxjeokff4lap5zh0c68w>
.....



DJ SPYNCYCLE

DEEP, DARK, DUBBY TECHNO, HOUSE, AND FUNK

Listen to on:
www.amarrass.com/dj-spincycle/artists/dj-spincycle

DJ SPYNCYCLE, is label co-founder, music producer, recording engineer and radio jockey Ankur Malhotra. An avid musicologist, he explores, engages, and connects with musical traditions from around the world. Decades of crate-digging esoteric records from around the world meld with a love for global grooves and the club sounds of Detroit, Chicago, Berlin and beyond infusing his DJ sets with deep, dark, dubby techno, house, and funk. Always vinyl, always groovy! Featuring two turntables and a mixer, delicious wax and layers of sound - music to make you dance.

Ankur's first forays behind the decks began in the early 2000's, also when he adopted the moniker 'DJ Spincycle' for his popular New Year's Eve parties. DJ Spincycle has since performed at various clubs, street parties and festivals around the US Midwest and in India including Techno Tuesdays@The Frequency, Fela Kuti launch/afrobeat party at High Noon Saloon, DJ residencies at The Fountain and Dobhan, La Fete de Marquette 2011, Middleton block party, and Spaight St. Rib Fest in Madison; and at Lodi, The Toddy Shop, TCs, Manajsa and Escape Festival in New Delhi.

The evolution in sound continues with his latest project, featuring a live collaboration with the folk-roots trio Barmer Boys. The 'Barmer Boys + DJ Spincycle' dub-meets-roots project fuses Barmer Boys' folk percussion instruments such as the morchang (Jewsharp), bhapang (plucked single string drum), dholak (double headed hand drum) and vocals with turntables, digital effects and filters to create a contemporary, cutting-edge dance-floor sound. Watch out for DJ SPYNCYCLE with BARMER BOYS on their first Canadian tour in July 2015 when they perform at the Winnipeg Folk Festival!

An active member of Madison's eclectic and vibrant arts community, Ankur is an ardent promoter of music events in the neighborhood. He founded Madison Music Review in 2007 to promote the local music scene, and in 2011 established two of Madison's eclectic street music festivals – Musique Electronique @La Fete de Marquette and Willy St. Beats @Willy Street Fair. 2015 marks the fifth year for these all-inclusive, multi-cultural events that have featured artists such as Kid Koala, Derrick Carter, Mark Farina, Charanjit Singh, John Acquaviva, Paul Johnson, Luke Solomon, Poirier and MC Zulu and more. Ankur also DJ's on the weekly radio show - 'The Friday Buzz' on WORT 89.9FM, and frequently guest DJ's on the station's 'Pan Africa Show' and 'Global Revolutions' programs. He spends his time between the US and India discovering and producing music, DJ'ing and touring with artists from around the globe.

Available for festivals, club nights, special events and private parties/weddings: Typical bookings have featured 3 hour+ vinyl sets themed around genres, special events, birthdays including Blues Nights, Jazz and Rare Groove, Funk/Soul Jams and Classic Bollywood!!

VIDEO: Allah Hoo - Barmer Boys + DJ SPYNCYCLE - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh3SHOXCzVQ>

QUICKFIRE

Behind the people behind the music

Dom Flemons

The American songster who is teaming up with English guitarist Martin Simpson



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

Some New Orleans jazz – Kid Thomas, Percy Humphrey, George Lewis. Amazing stuff! I am also really going nuts for Wilmoth Houdini, a calypso singer from the late 20s.

YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

Texas Worried Blues by Henry 'Ragtime Texas' Thomas. That record changed my whole way of understanding old-time American music. If it doesn't move me, it goes in the garbage. There is too much music out there to get bogged down by something that doesn't move you.

MUSICIAN YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Musicians who are grounded in what they do and do it with a passion. When I listen to someone like Lightnin' Hopkins, I am fully convinced that he has the situation under control and knows what he is doing.

FAVOURITE NEW ARTIST(S)?

Pokey LaFarge, Jeron 'Blind Boy' Paxton, Stone Mountain Wobblers, Eli 'Paperboy' Reed, Danny 'Slapjazz' Barber and Boo Hanks.

FIRST ALBUM YOU EVER BOUGHT?

Dookie by Green Day. I saw the group on MTV when I was kid and 'Basket Case' made my head explode – I haven't been the same since.

YOUR CLAIM TO FAME?

I play an instrument called the quills, which are like the panpipes. I learned to play from Mike Seeger but with Mike's passing, I am the only living African-American quills player in the country that I know of.

✦ **DATES** Flemons teams up with Martin Simpson for several shows and will perform at WOMAD. See Gig Guide

Ankur Malhotra

The founder of the Indian folk music label, Amarrass Records



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

Grant Lee Buffalo's Fuzzy; Painted Caves' self-titled release; The Sea and Cakes The Fawn; John Lee Hooker's Blues on Fire; Indian Ocean's A Musical Voyage With No Frontiers, and Cornershop's The Hot for May Sound.

YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

Neil Young's On the Beach; JJ Cale's Troubadour and Yo La Tengo's And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out. The music is transcendental and evokes all sorts of emotions from melancholy, longing, darkness, and wanderlust to a sense of space and place.

MUSICIAN YOU MOST ADMIRE?

David Byrne with his group Talking Heads. The attention to detail, wit and intellect, and his experimentation with found sounds and music from various regions of the globe, to create music for the sheer joy and fun of it!

FAVOURITE NEW ARTIST(S)?

I have been digging the sound of Peter Cat Recording Co, based out of New Delhi. The group have a trippy, psychedelic sound that's been described as a mix of orchestral folk-rock, Gypsy jazz, swing and cabaret music influenced by Bollywood funk from the 60s and 70s and 50s American film music.

FIRST ALBUM YOU EVER BOUGHT?

In the mid-80s on a family vacation I begged my parents to let me buy Boney M's Greatest Hits – a bootleg, dubbed cassette tape.

YOUR HIDDEN TALENT?

Photography – mostly live, but also abstract urban environments, nature and travel.

✦ **ALBUMS** Amarrass Records' At Home releases are reviewed in this issue, p74

Anna Phoebe

London-based violinist making her debut Songlines Encounters appearance



WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

Tinariwen's Emmaar. When I listen to this I could either be on the highway driving through Arizona or driving in Jordan from Amman down to the Dead Sea.

YOUR ALL-TIME FAVOURITE ALBUMS?

Paul Simon's Graceland and The Pogues' If I Should Fall from Grace with God – both remind me of my childhood. More recently, Catrin Finch & Seckou Keita's Clychau Diben, which has a special place in my heart.

MUSICIAN YOU MOST ADMIRE?

Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull, who has become a mentor. His attention to detail, dedication to his craft and his inventiveness are second to none. The late Jon Lord (of Deep Purple). I feel lucky to have known and toured with him. His musicianship and soul have had a profound effect on me.

FIRST ALBUM YOU EVER BOUGHT?

This is embarrassing and I really should lie: it was MC Hammer's Too Legit to Quit.

YOUR HIDDEN TALENT?

I won a sumo-wrestling contest in Newquay when I was 21. It was in a pub and we had to wear fat suits. I like to think it was the fierce combination of Irish/Greek/German blood that saw me win. Lesson is: never underestimate the skinny girl.

IF YOU WEREN'T A MUSICIAN, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

A politician. I studied social policy at the LSE and wanted to work in Westminster.

✦ **ALBUM** Anna Phoebe's new album, Between the Shadow and the Soul, will be released in September



Sakar Khan

Indian label Amarrass
puts folk virtuosos in
the spotlight

The late Sakar Khan was one of India's most revered and respected folk musicians. A member of western Rajasthan's Manganiyar community of hereditary musicians, he was the greatest living master of one of the world's oldest bowed instruments, the kamaicha or kamancha, a 17-string violin-like instrument with a body carved from solid mango wood. Khan died in 2013, having been decorated with numerous awards in his lifetime, including the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honours, and having performed across the globe, alongside the likes of Yehudi Menuhin and George Harrison. In addition he appeared on many recordings – his kamaicha can be heard on Ooraa's *Rajasthan: Musicians Of The Desert* and Tangent's *Music In The World Of Islam* series, among others – and he was also recorded for the Smithsonian Institute. Before 2012, however, when the Delhi based label Amarrass Records visited his home village of Hamira in western Rajasthan, he had never made or released an album under his own name. On record, Khan's musicianship had always been presented as an example of a local tradition, not the work of an individual artist.

Taking Sakar Khan as a classic example of an imbalance that the label is dedicated to correcting, Ankur Malhotra, one of the four codirectors of Amarrass, reflects on how Indian folk traditions have often been consigned to the important but marginal category of ethnomusicological recordings. "Indian classical music has enjoyed a global presence," he says, "but the same hasn't happened for the folk musicians."

Inspired by an appreciation for the work of Alan Lomax and Cecil Sharp, Malhotra and his label partner Azshutosh Sharma had begun to wonder why the great folk musicians of India had been so seldom recognised as solo recording artists. "Ashutosh and I are longtime blues fans," Malhotra explains, namechecking Son House and Mississippi John Hurt among others. "When we started thinking who are the great blues musicians of India we couldn't come up with names. For a music lover, that was a sad thing."

Founded in 2009, the label's first release was *The Manganiyar Seduction*, a companion record to the globally acclaimed musical theatre production of the same name, built around an orchestra sized contingent of Manganiyar musicians. Seeing the production was a lightbulb moment, recalls Malhotra. Along with his interest in blues field recordings, it prompted Amarrass's first trips into the villages of Rajasthan's Thar Desert.

"We saw the [Manganiyar] musicians on stage, performing a 70 minute theatrical piece, and realised that these are master musicians here," he continues. "Within their community they've got centuries of this tradition imbibed in them. Ashutosh and I decided, let's pick up some gear, whatever gear... A friend lent us his cassette recorder, we bought some nice microphones and went into the desert."

Malhotra and Sharma's first foray immediately prompted further expeditions that laid the foundations of the label's *At Home* series, dedicated to recording specific individual masters such as Sakar Khan. The extraordinary music captured on their journeys is presented in a manner that marks Amarrass's attitude

to field recording as a departure from the conventions of ethnomusicological compilations. Rather than subsuming musicians and styles under the category headings of location and tradition – the Manganiyar music of Rajasthan approach – Amarrass has opted instead to package the releases as individualised, commercially oriented projects. "In the Western world, for example, or even in Bollywood, the artists are known by their names," says Malhotra. "That wasn't the case here. There was a cultural homogenisation going on, the artists had become tourist emblems. It was important to change that."

The label's business side is approached with a fair trade ethos, with musicians receiving 50 per cent of net profits. Amarrass has also jumpstarted the flagging local production of traditional instruments in the area by commissioning and buying new kamaichas and morchangis (the Rajasthani mouth harp, played on their releases by Rais Khan) from local craftspeople, and allowing them to find new buyers through the label's website. To benefit musicians in the long term, Amarrass also has to keep an eye on the future.

"This is an oral tradition that has been passed on for centuries," says Malhotra, "but there is also a lot of change happening. How do you keep this musical tradition relevant for the next generation? It needs to be sustainable, to bring in money, and it also needs to bring in respect – and to have an artist's photograph on the cover of an album speaks immensely, versus having sand dunes on the cover." □ Amarrass

Records are distributed in the UK by Harmonia Mundi.
amarrass.com
Francis Gooding

Soundcheck A-Z

New CDs, vinyl, downloads, streams, etc

Gilles Aubry

The Amplification Of Souls

ADOC5 Vinyl CD+EP

As speaker hum and empty plosives congeal into a stuttered mic check for Jesus, a slight squeal suggests the looming threat of feedback. Because so many of the churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's capital Kinshasa are open air affairs, the rumble of motorcycles and automobiles accompanies the ambience of a group slowly tuning up as worshippers gather. Preachers punch through the din with bursts of noise louder than anything else, the flat lines of distortion making palpable the power of their authority. Handmade PA's hit their limits as microphones bear witness to the possession of souls and of space. And then, sudden quiet save for the faint buzz of the sound system. Speaker towers of Babel from the Heart of Darkness, respectfully recorded and remixed for headphones and museums thousands of miles away.

The jump cuts are jarring, reminding anyone listening that this is no straightforward documentary. The voice of the sound artist Gilles Aubry resounds here too. *The Amplification Of Souls* is, according to its careful and copious framing, Aubry's audio essay on Kinshasa's religious soundscape. Congolese charismatic churches are a laudable focus given the immensity of the phenomenon and the general indifference to it in the wider world, perhaps because mega churches and prosperity gospel seem more essentially US than African. Attempting what the artist contends is "a material-based form of cultural interpretation", the work stands as a studious, self-aware approach to sonic ethnography. Aubry's project is so steeped in reflexivity and rigorous attention to the sounds and their contexts and meanings, it clearly seeks to pre-empt perfunctory charges of appropriation. "He doesn't even understand what we're saying," says a churchgoer quoted in the sleeve notes. "Then, the whites, they record anything."

What constitutes understanding here is a crucial vexing point. A dozen minutes in, the tongues begin. The glossolalia is striking in itself. Alien and arresting, it has an undistorted sonic clarity in contrast to the punchy preachers. It also seems to mirror the varied textures of the audio essay itself, composed of multiple sound sources generated by different people with different objectives: church services and evangelical street campaigns, radio and video, cooking and football. At one point, a burst of traditional music, full of clapping and ululation, points more toward continuities than contrasts, while the appearance of local rap and meandering Hawaiian guitar suggest other Others to be heard. All the while, Aubry's artistic voice emerges in the layering of samples, their stereo spatialisation and the inevitable narrative arc that emerges from his rearrangement of such disparate sonic documents.

Banko Ghodo

The Amplification Of Souls

Amarrass CD

Presented as academic sound art, *The Amplification Of Souls* comes with an 80 page booklet including an interview with Aubry that contains the phrase "neo-colonial representation" in its subtitle. It also boasts an essay on "The Sonic Materialities Of Belief" by a musicologist and cultural anthropologist which notes, among other things, that Congolese charismatic movements themselves "appropriated" the patina, and hence the power, of noise and distortion from Pentecostal missionaries. Presented first as a sound installation and later as an ongoing set of public performances, Aubry's remixed recordings at once stand as an impressionistic refraction of Kinshasa's soundscape and as the material embodiment of sounds that he would like to let speak for themselves. In one passage, he pairs his collage with a 34 minute excerpt of a spiritual deliverance service. That excerpt provides a great deal more context and less composure initiative, though the artist's act of framing remains. In another show of transparency, Aubry's original recordings of the service in full have been archived online.

Even so, what makes this anything other than churchy Congotronics? Why choose Kinshasa instead of Kansas City? Or, for that matter, Berlin? Not only does the city that Aubry calls home play host to numerous charismatic churches, some are even Congolese. Obviously, the specific site of these recordings is crucial to their circulation as art in Europe and the US, but it's deeply ironic that, against the coolness of Kinshasa trance traditionalists like Konono No 1, Aubry must seek out possessed Christians to locate the hot exoticism Western audiences expect. How would Kinshasa's charismatic communities receive this project? Would it sound like understanding? Should that guide the way audiences elsewhere experience it? The emphasis on sound as material culture suggests that we're not meant to attend to the content so much as the deracinated affects of the audio. Perhaps glossolalia itself offers an answer. Does the lexical register matter when all that we're waiting for is the outbreak of the unintelligible? Wayne Marshall

Banko Ghodo

Various

Amarrass CD

Mitha Bol

Various

Amarrass CD

Madou Sidiki Diabaté

Live in India

Amarrass CD

Live At Amarrass Desert Music Festival 2011

Various

Amarrass CD

New Delhi based Amarrass Records is committed to doing for Indian folk music

what Alan Lomax did for American folk and blues in the 20th century, by visiting artists at home and recording them in performance. The compilations *Mitha Bol* and *Banko Ghodo* are the first two volumes in what the label calls its field recordings series, with both collecting music from the arid Thar desert region of the northwestern state of Rajasthan. It's clear that the desert is home to a wealth of astonishing virtuosity largely unknown to the wider world, from young Sawal Khan's rapidfire twanging on the morchang (a kind of jew's harp), to the ethereal, glancing microtones of Lakha Khan, the foremost living exponent of the bowed sarangi. There's a raw immediacy about these performances not often heard in Indian classical music – many of the recordings are extremely intimate and informal; you can hear Haakam Khan warming up his voice with coughs and croaks before hitting a high note that opens a channel of pure energy.

The sense of drama in performances like Haakam Khan's points to the reality that, for inhabitants of the Thar desert, songs still serve a communal role. You can watch the performances of many of the recordings collected here on the Amarrass YouTube channel, with the musicians in informal settings and bystanders coming and going. The secular bhajan sung by Bagga Khan and Meera Ram is accompanied by strummed tanbura, litting hand-drums and metallic percussion that echoes the click-clack of Touareg music, from another desert on another continent.

That connection is deliberately explored on *Live At Amarrass Desert Music Festival 2011*, which documents an event that brought together musicians from Rajasthan and Mali, West Africa, on the same stage. One theory suggests that the music of the Thar desert migrated west, through the Middle East, giving birth to flamenco in Spain, and Mali's Saharan blues, which in turn was exported to US via the slave trade, and sowed the seeds of Delta blues. As it happens, the one pancultural jam included on this live disc falls a little flat, with Rajasthan's Barmer Boys singing (and even briefly beatboxing) over a formless groove of Indian hand drums and Malian guitar. It works much better when you're left to draw your own conclusion – and, certainly, it's possible to hear traces of tanbura trance in Vieux Farka Touré's rolling Saharan guitar, even if Touré's crisp, amplified tone sits a little too close to the brightly sanitised Western conception of world music. By contrast, Madou Sidiki Diabaté – a kora player and brother of Grammy-winning koraist Toumani Diabaté, and apparently one of the 71st generation of players in his family – sounds not of this world at all. His rippling, harp-like arpeggies and dizzyingly complex interlocking melodies seem to descend on warm wings from a yearning heaven of billowing, fragrant heat. Daniel Spicer

Laura Cannell

Quick Sparrows Over The Black Earth

Bravi CD

Laura Cannell's debut album feels familiar, ancestral, deeply affecting yet disconcertingly strange – at times like a more visceral take on Henry Purcell's *Fantasies For Viola*. Which is not surprising as it turns out, for these are improvisations or fantasias around fragments of melody from the fourth to 14th century.

It is a brilliantly realised vision where ancient and modern meet. Many of these solo performances are played on overbowed fiddle, where the bow is stretched over the instrument, allowing her to play all the strings simultaneously, creating a rich, churning drone effect with overtones, that on a piece like "Black Crowed Night", are akin to a hurdy gurdy. She plays as if her feet are planted firmly on terra firma, but some of her more ecstatic dancing lines point heavenwards, as on "Daglan & Duske", an exquisite, song-like composition. On a couple of pieces she plays simultaneous counterpoint melodies on double recorders.

Quick Sparrows Over The Black Earth was recorded at Raveningham Church in southern Norfolk and the building's acoustic is perfect for this kind of solo instrumental recital. The church is situated on the edge of marshes, which can be particularly bleak at the beginning of the year, when this was recorded. It's hard to imagine that the atmosphere didn't permeate the music, especially the haunting "Marsh Land Lullaby".

Mike Barnes

Einstürzende Neubauten

Lament

BRG/Vaults CODE/2+LP

Based around a live performance and installation commissioned by the Flemish city of Diksmuide to commemorate the centenary of what was originally referred to as the Great War, *Lament* is a concept album predicated on the notion of war as a permanent presence in our lives. This argument, like the aesthetic choices through which it has been presented, possesses the overwritten and slightly overwrought thrust of a cliché. Rather predictably, it starts with banging, crashing and scraping on "Kriegsmaschinenle" – a title that translates as "War Machinery" – giving some indication of *Lament*'s approach to its subject.

The best material has been supplied from archival research, which has thrown up cabaret performances about the Great War, poems from the period, plus a couple of rollicking war songs from a marching band known as the Harlem Hellfighters, who led the first African-American regiment into battle. However, such songs – most notably "All Of No Man's Land Is Ours" – are delivered with all the swaggering sentimentality normally associated with an amateur dramatic society's production

4.11

Music for livelihoods

Music-making is an integral part of the everyday South Asian experience. Religious rituals, harvest ceremonies, the change of seasons, rites of passage – birth, marriage, celebrations, death, festivals – all provide ceremonial occasions for musical expression. Rapid socio-economic change has brought both erosion, as well as new patterns of negotiation with patron, client and market, where traditional relations find newer locations of belonging and new markets open up. In this context, a few odd routes off the beaten track have begun to claim attention, just as new ambitions have been articulated for mainstream record labels.

Ashutosh Sharma, one of the co-founders of [the innovative Amarrass Records label](#), thinks that Indian folk music “is like the black music scene was in the 1950s and early 1960s in the United States, where artists had to earn their name in Europe before being acclaimed at home.” Amarrass, unlike

Banglanatak, does not rely on state funds but engages with the market to salvage powerful yet neglected musical forms by pushing music through fair trade arrangements (50-50 splitting of income with artists); archiving and recording folk music; and creating awareness, building capacity and marketing opportunities. New cross-over, local experiences are beginning to find resonance. Amarrass “At Home” sessions include single-take unplugged-like gigs with artists, whose feel is impossible to capture in studios in urban locales or in festivals abroad. In its Desert Music Festival of 2011, performing side by side with traditional Manganiyar musicians were the acclaimed Vieux Farka Toure and Madou Sidiki Diabate. In 2012, it was Bombino and Baba Zula with the newly created “Barmer Boys” and the Siddhis from Gujarat who created unique trans-local musical experiences. The “Manganiyar Seductions” (a musical and visual experience) drew rave reviews wherever it performed in India and abroad and sold more than 1,500 copies for Amarrass. Sakar Khan, now 76, who plays the spike fiddle (*kamancha*), was recently decorated by the Government of India. Shankara Suthar, “the best Kamancha maker in India” according to Ashutosh, now responds to online demands for *kamanchas* “instead of having to make furniture in Pune for a living”, a little like Banglanatak’s own Golam Fakir, who earlier used to earn his living by carrying dead bodies from the police station to the morgue and is now a well-known folk performer. The Bant Singh Project was another unique collaboration between the radical Dalit Sikh protest folk singer Bant Singh and three electronic musicians who came to record sessions at his village of Burj Jhabbar in the Punjab Mansa District.

Such heart-warming stories apart, the market is still only an emergent one. Unlike Bollywood or Indian classical music, folk music has yet to find a sustainable niche in the market. If it were left to the market alone, perhaps these, too, would be dying traditions. On the other hand, the state seems to be unable to incentivize quality folk music and state-run performances that do not reach out to wider mass-based platforms. So when Mame Khan, a Manganiyar, performs at the upmarket Turquoise Cottage in Delhi, jamming with guitarists providing newer riffs and keeping up with his solo journeys, it is not just a spine-tingling musical experience but also an uncannily cultural and economic one. Manganiyars (a name derived from *mangna*, “to beg”) are hereditary dependent castes that perform music services at rites for their patrons, in return for gifts of clothes or money or, sometimes, a share in the harvest. Their art is one of those delicately poised cultural forms whose inheritors are either the torch bearers of newer forms of articulation or the pall-bearers of an entire way of being in a world that is changing faster than their needs and where newer idioms and motifs find popular attention.

