

Ladies spinning (the turn tables)... - Women in Indian Electronic music.

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Asian Underground...

In the chronological process with reference to the beginning of Indian electronic music in 1996-1997 let us first pay reference to the lady without whom one could hardly imagine the beginning of the "Asian Underground". The premiere show in January mentioned **Sweety Kapoor** who had operated the night club Anokha in London as music promoter together with the Tabla player *Talvin Singh*.



ElJay A. live "onair"...

The first CD release of Talvin Singh "Anokha – Soundz of the Asian Underground" was in the year 1997 and the result of this collaboration with the "Queen of Asian Underground".

Ethno Techno...

Beside Sweety Kapoor a dazzling figure is **Natasha Atlas**. This artist with Moroccan origin and a distinctive individual profile was born in 1964 in Belgium. Natasha identifies herself with the Sufism, a mystic spiritual form of the Islam. The Sufi tradition brought up outstanding artists in North India and Pakistan like the Qawwalian (Qawwali singer) Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Natasha met the British formation **Transglobal Underground** (TGU) in 1991, one year after its foundation. Natasha Atlas became the lead vocalist of TGU. She had her debut with TGU's CD release "dream of 100" in 1993/94.

Transglobal Underground fuses Western, Eastern and African elements. Friends of labelling in categories assign TGU to 'Ethno Techno'. The Dhol player Johnny Kalsi, a member of TGU was presented in IE-m's February show with the topic "The relevance of Banghra for Indian Electronic Music".

Later TGU was joined by the Sitar player **Sheema Mukherjee** together with the percussionist Gurjit Sihra. You can listen to both on the album "Yes boss Food Corner" TGU published in 2001. Sheema is trained in Indian classical music. She began her studies under the guidance of the Indian vocalist Amir Khan at the tender age of five. The training was completed by her uncle, the famous Sitar maestro Pandit Nikhil Banerjee of North Indian Classics. After the unexpected death of Nikhil Sheema Mukherjee continued her studies with the Sarod maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.

(Rec.: If you like to employ yourself with these shining figures of Indian classical music find some shows in the archive of IMC – India meets Classic which is broadcasted since March 2006 as annual programme (monthly): www.imcradio.net/archives.)

Trance Electronica

After presenting the Sitar player Sheema Mukherjee and vocalist Natasha Atlas, both members of Transglobal Underground (TGU) we cannot withdraw ourselves yet completely from the Arab influence.

The Iranian musician and singer Azam Aliaferad, simply **Azam Ali** grew up in the Indian Federal State Maharashtra after birth in Teheran and emigration to India at the age of four. As teenager Azam Ali moved with her mother to the U.S.A. shortly after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

First Azam Ali was addicted to the Santoor, a dulcimer of Persian origin. We find this instrument also in North Indian Classics. The interests for singing came later. After eight years instructed by Ustad Sadeghi Azam she switched to become a singer. Azam Ali was encouraged by Sadeghi because of her vocal qualities.

Together with the percussion player Greg Ellis the formation **Vas** was created by Azam Ali in 1996, which existence till 2004. Indian, Persian and Western music were substantial components of the typical VAS sound.

Already one year later in 2005 the CD **Niyaz** was published. The music trio of same name are Azam Ali, the DJ and producer Carmen Rizzo and the Iranian guitarist Loga Ramin Torkian, who is same flute player and composer.

Niyaz means "craving" and makes a musical link between the Iranian and Indian culture. For Azam Ali the Sufism and Urdu, language of Pakistan play a relevant role. On the last CD 'Nine Heavens', Volume 1 and 2 (2008) the poetry of Amir Khosrau Delavi is interpreted by her. Khosrau is a Persian poet of the 13th century, who grew up in India just as well as Azam Ali on her own.

Niyaz pursues the artistic mission with its electrical acoustic compositions to address the human soul and to create a higher consciousness particularly for the listeners of the Western music, especially in the club scene. Azam Ali titles her music 'Trance Electronica'.

Asian fusion

Before we turn to the recent generation of musicians let's present the last Grand lady of Indian descent. **Sheila Chandra** was born in April 1965 in London. With the initial members Steve Coe on the piano and Martin Smith on guitar Sheila had setup the formation Monsoon in spring 1981.

Monsoon was affected strongly by the psychedelic era of the 60' s and represents a fusion between Synth Pop from the West and a kind of Indian Pop.

After various albums in the 80th and a vocal experimental phase Sheila Chandra published in the 90th three albums with the Real World label of Peter Gabriel. From 1994 to 2007 Sheila Chandra had disappeared from the stages for health reasons. Still in 2002 she recorded with Howard Shore "Breath of Life" as soundtrack for "Lord of the Ring: The Two Towers". In 2009 returned Shilea Chandra back onto the stage with an European tour.

Sheila Chandra discovered on her musical forays similarities between the structure of Indian Ragas and the English Folk music. As '**Asian fusion**' Sheila connects traditionally British and Irish songs with singing techniques from other categories of world music.

(North) Indian Classics...

Following the minimalistic sound of Sheila Chandra we turn to the generation of the 80th. Here a very well-known name crosses our path: the Sitar player **Anoushka Shankar**. She was born in June 1981 in London as the daughter of the probably most famous Sitar maestro of North Indian Classics – *Ravi Shankar*. His daughter grew up on three continents: in London, California and Delhi. 1998 at the age of 17 years Anoushka published her first solo LP.

The year 2005 may be seen as distinctive corner stone in the development of Anoushka Shankar. After many years she had played the Raga compositions of her father Anoushka dared with the 4th album, the CD "Rise" to take her own road and to realise own compositions and arrangements. In the following years she toured with the *Anoushka Shankar Project*.

In 2007 Anoushka worked together for the CD "Breathing under Water" with the Indian-American multi-instrumentalist *Karsh Kale* (Marathi: Kursh Kah-lay).

Karsh Kale is like *Talvin Singh* or *Nitin Sawhney* a typical representative of the electronic club and Techno music and Drum & Base. Karsh Kale on his own was involved in the outstanding fusion project *Tabla Beat Science*, a formation around *Zakir Hussain* on the *Tabla*. Also *Trilok Gurtu*, a percussionist from Mumbai played with *Tabla Beat Science*. The author welcomed Trilok as guest in the Hamburg studio in December 2008 for an interesting StudioTalk "The Purity of Music" broadcasted as a 58 minutes radio show in May 2009.

Karsh Kale played even with further representatives of Indian electronic music like *Cheb I Sabbah* and *Midival Punditz*.

Also Anoushka Shankar participated in projects of electronic music like with the DJ duo *Thievery Corporation* for the track *Mandala* on the CD "Radio Retaliation" in 2008. *Thievery Corporation* are *Rob Garza* and *Eric Hilton* with residence in Washington DC. *Thievery Corporation* was founded in 1995. *Radio Retaliation* is the

5th studio album and was nominated for the Grammy Award. By its music Thievery Corporation took a critical position against the George W. Bush politics and Iraq war equally against the world food program of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Banghra...

To the same age as Anoushka Shankar belongs **Veronica Metha**. In the Hip Hop and R'n'B scene of London she is simply known as Veronica or "Miss V" as expressed by the title of the recent CD project. It was announced in 2009 by *Rishi Rich Productions* (known from our last show in February) and it looks like "Miss V" will be released concretely in 2010.

We find Veronica in the surrounding of Indian electronic music which is closely connected with the Banghra scene. Artist such as Juggy D and Jay Sean who are musicians with Indian family background got the chance from the Rishi Rich Project to develop and established internationally. Read in addition the article of the author "The relevance of Banghra for Indian Electronic Music".

Veronica published her debut album "*Then*" in the year 2005. She also tried as composer for film music. With the soundtrack "*Hum Tum*" (Hindi: You and I) Veronica steered successfully into Bollywood film industries. The movie "You and I" was produced by *Aditya Chopra* and *Yash Chopra* with two mega stars from Mumbai: *Rani Mukerji* and *Saif Ali Khan*.

Shaa'IR + Funk...

From Veronica let's move another further step to one representative of the Desi generation, young, experimental and of extremes. We travel mentally to the film metropolis of India, to Mumbai, the former Bombay.

In 2005 the singer **Monica Dogra** from New York (USA) and the guitar player **Randolph Correia** from Mumbai came together. As "*Shaa'IR & Funk*" both are rather tough on the run... on the basis of a fundamental artistic education.

The Nirali magazine with target group Americans of South Asian origin entitled: "Shaair and Funk, that are a Melange from poetry, Funk, R&B, electronic music and the healthy side of Jazz. Shaair and Funk guarantee the unexpected."

Shaaira & Funk already published after two years co-operation in the year 2007 their debut album: "*New Day - The Love album*". One year later followed "*Light Tribe*". Some of the performances and particularly the singing of Shaaira brings the sound of the Icelandic artist Björn to mind.

One might be guaranteed: with the enormous voice of Monica Dogra's aka Shaaira, the poet as the word means in Urdu language... and the funky guitarist Randolph Correia by their freak-out on stage we can expect still some exiting times. The international Festival scene caught their attention already.

Conclusion

If we look at the world-wide music scene of Indian electronic music it is noticeable that we can count the number of music artists straight at two hands since beginning to mid of the 90' s. The contingent of women in this music category has substantially development potentials. The influence onto Indian electronic music may not be diminished nevertheless because of the Arabean-Persian influence particularly as it is reflected in the sound by individual biographies of some artists being named here.

(Source: 2010-2013 | Indian E-music - <http://e-music.india-meets-classic.net/archive/>)

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