

THE ROUGH GUIDE **to**

Arabic Lounge

Evoking the feeling of being transported somewhere other than where you actually are, lounge music by its very nature functions to propel the construction of a pleasant fantasy. While you are reclining with a drink in your hand, the music will take you effortlessly to a breezy tropical beach, to a hammock hanging at a jungle outpost, or maybe even to outer space.

The term 'lounge music' is actually a retrospective description of music that began to be popular in the 1950s and 1960s, constructed as mood music that evoked exotic elsewhere. The music was most often derived from jazz and borrowed elements from various folk and world music traditions fused into exotica, easy light instrumentals, and space-age pop genres. In the late 1980s this music enjoyed a comeback, and the term 'Lounge' was coined by nostalgic younger fans whose parents enjoyed this kind of music in earlier decades. By the early 1990s the resurgence was in full swing.

From colourful bazaars to sensual scarf-draped bellydancers gyrating to the beat of the *darbukka* and the Arabic orchestra, the fantasy constructed of things oriental has long inspired the imagination of travellers and couch potatoes alike. Music travels as fast as mankind, and these fantasies have also found their way into European art-music, from Haydn's classical impressions of Turkish janissaries to Debussy's arabesques. What would be deemed 'exotica' to local ears has also travelled from the West eastwards. As early

as the 1920s, Middle Eastern artists adopted European art-music orchestral techniques and instrumentation. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, like their Western contemporaries, they began experimenting with jazz idioms and Latin genres. These mixtures were inspired by colonial encounters and by the burgeoning global film and recording industries.

The post-colonial, postmodern world of the past several decades has been characterized by unparalleled travel, migrations, urban diversity and hyper-connectivity. It is a world in which fantasizing continues to be inspired by sound bites and images alongside real physical proximity to people of far-away cultures and brick-and-mortar imitations of foreign charms, such as the hookah lounges modelled after the cafés of the Middle East in New York's East Village and Paris's Rive Gauche. Whether based in London or in Beirut, Middle Eastern artists have also been experimenting with Lounge's later incarnations, fusing neoclassical instrumentals, electronica, Nu-jazz, bossa nova and downtempo moods with Arabic grooves and instruments.

The range and diversity of the selections on *The Rough Guide To Arabic Lounge* reflects a host of such experimentations, from early examples such as Iraqi Munir Bachir's bolero adaptation of 'Johnny Guitar' on the *oud*, to the contemporary Arabic-bossa of Lebanese composer Ghazi Abdel Baki, Djamel Laroussi's Afro-Kabylean rumba, Charbel Rouhana's

neoclassicism and Azzeddine's Moroccan electro-*melhoun*. Beyond the Arabic language and musical idioms, what unites these tracks is the actual depth of the music. If lounge music sometimes connotes kitschy, watered-down imitations of the authentic, the tracks selected for this compilation can be listened to on more than one level. You can let the groove simply transport you elsewhere, or you can stay put, travel inwards and listen deeply to the music's complex textures, sophisticated rhythms and emotional content. In doing so, you may achieve *tarab* (the state of transcendence) – the ultimate goal Arabic music seeks to inspire.

Parce qu'elle propulse ailleurs celui qui l'écoute, la musique lounge porte par essence au plaisir et au rêve. Confortablement assis, un verre à la main, vous vous laissez sans effort transporter par cette musique vers une plage tropicale ombragée, un hamac en pleine jungle voire dans l'espace intersidéral.

En réalité, le terme 'musique lounge' décrit rétrospectivement une musique d'ambiance dont le succès débuta dans les années 50 et 60. Ces sons, évoquant un ailleurs exotique, provenaient la plupart du temps du jazz et empruntaient des éléments à différentes traditions de musiques folk et de musiques du monde, fusionnées dans les genres exotica ou pop space age et les compositions de type easy light. A la fin des années 80, cette musique connut un regain d'intérêt et le terme Lounge

fut créé par de jeunes fans nostalgiques dont les parents avaient goûté ce type de musique dans les décennies précédentes. Au début des années 90, l'intérêt pour cette musique battait son plein.

Avec ses souks multicolores, ses danseuses du ventre sensuellement drapées, tournant au rythme de la *darbukka* et de l'orchestre arabe, le rêve oriental a longtemps pétri l'imagination des voyageurs comme des amateurs de soirées divan. La musique voyageant aussi vite que l'homme, ces rêves ont également pénétré la musique savante européenne, comme l'attestent l'évocation par Haydn des janissaires ottomans ou les Arabesques de Debussy. Mais ces sonorités qualifiées d' 'exotiques' ont également voyagé d'ouest en est. Dès les années 1920, des artistes du Moyen-Orient adoptèrent les techniques orchestrales et l'instrumentation européennes. Au début des années 50 et 60, comme leurs contemporains occidentaux, ils commencèrent à expérimenter le mélange d'éléments de jazz et de musique latine. Ces fusions étaient inspirées par les rencontres faites dans les colonies et par l'essor des industries cinématographique et musicale.

Voyages et migrations sans précédent, diversité urbaine et hyper connectivité caractérisent le monde post colonial et post moderne des dernières décennies. Des éléments sonores et des images continuent d'y alimenter le rêve, alors que des représentants de ces cultures lointaines vivent à proximité et que

des imitations de ces lieux de plaisir étrangers ont été créés, tels les bars à narguilé inspirés du Moyen-Orient qui s'implantent dans le quartier de East Village à New York ou sur la Rive Gauche de Paris. Qu'ils soient basés à Londres ou à Beyrouth, les artistes du Moyen Orient ont aussi fait l'expérience des nouvelles formes de la musique lounge, en mélangeant des compositions néo-classiques, l'électronica, le nu-jazz, la bossa nova, et des atmosphères musicales au tempo lent, avec des grooves et des instruments arabes.

La diversité des morceaux retenus par *The Rough Guide To Arabic Lounge* reflète l'étendue de ces expérimentations, depuis l'adaptation ancienne par l'Irakien Munir Bachir de 'Johnny Guitar' en *bolero* sur son *oud*, jusqu'aux compositions contemporaines arabo-bossa du compositeur libanais Ghazi Abdel Baki, en passant par la *rumba* afro-kabyle de Djamel Laroussi, le néoclassicisme de Charbel Rouhana et l'électro-*melhoun* marocain d'Azzddine. Au-delà de la langue et des styles musicaux arabes, ces morceaux trouvent leur unité dans la réelle profondeur de leur musique. Alors que la musique lounge évoque parfois kitsch et perte d'authenticité, les pistes de cette compilation peuvent être écoutées à plus d'un niveau. Vous pouvez laisser le groove vous transporter ailleurs ou rester là, voyager en votre for intérieur et écouter pleinement les textures complexes de la musique, ses rythmes sophistiqués et son contenu plein d'émotions. Par là, vous atteindrez peut-être l'état de

tarab (trascendencia), le but ultime visé par la musique arabe.

Evocando el sentimiento de ser transportado an algún lugar diferente al que actualmente se encuentra, la música Lounge por su naturaleza cumple la función de impulsar la construcción de placenteras fantasías. Mientras usted esta reclinado con una bebida en su mano la música lo llevará sin esfuerzo a una playa tropical donde la brisa lo acaricia, o a una hamaca colgante en la selva o quizás al espacio exterior.

El término Música Lounge es actualmente una retrospectiva descripción de la música que comenzó a ser popular en los 1950s y 1960s, constituida como un carácter musical que evocaba destinos exóticos. La música se derivaba principalmente del jazz y toma prestado elementos de varias tradiciones folklóricas y música de diferentes partes del mundo fusionándose en un género exótico con una instrumentación ligera y un tipo de pop especial. A finales de los 1980s esta música disfrutó de un regreso y el término Lounge, fue acuñado por aquellos fanáticos jóvenes cuyos padres disfrutaron de esta clase de música en décadas anteriores. Para principios de los 1990s el resurgimiento estaba en todo su furor.

Desde los coloridos bazares hasta las sensuales bailarinas del vientre girando al compás del *darbukka* y la Orquesta Árábica, la fantasía

construida de cosas orientales ha inspirado por largo tiempo tanto la imaginación de los viajeros con de aquellos que no se despegan de sus sofás. La música viaja tan rápido como el hombre y estas fantasías han encontrado también su camino hacia la música Europea. Desde Haydn con sus Impresiones clásicas de Jannaris Turcas, hasta los Arabescos de Debussy. Lo que hubiera sido considerado exótico para los oídos locales ha viajado también desde el Oeste y hacia el este. Al principio de los 1920s los Artistas del Medio Oriente adoptaron técnicas orquestales e instrumentales Europeas. Comenzando los 1950s y 1960s al igual que sus contemporáneos Occidentales comenzaron a experimentar con jazz y géneros latinos. Estas mezclas estuvieron inspiradas por los encuentros coloniales y el florecimiento global del cine y la industria musical y los discos.

El mundo Post colonial, post moderno de muchas décadas se ha caracterizado por una inmigración sin paralelos, diversidad urbana e hipermega-conectividad. Es un mundo en la cual la fantasía se inspira por los sonidos las imágenes y por la proximidad real con personas de diversas culturas quienes tratan de imitar el encanto foráneo en sitios tales como Los Lounge Hookas modelados con base a los cafés del Medio Oriente pero localizados en East Village in NY or Rive Gauche en Paris. Localizados en Londres o Beirut los artistas del Medio Oriente has también experimentado con mezclas hechas especialmente para Lounge fusionando Instrumentaciones neoclásicas,

electrónicas, Bosanova y movimientos más lentos con Sonidos e Instrumentos Arabes.

El rango y diversidad de la selección hecha para *The Rough Guide To Arabic Lounge* refleja en gran medida tales experimentos desde épocas tempranas tales como el Iraqui Munir Bachir y su *bolero* adaptación de 'Johnny Guitar' o el *oud*, El compositor de Bossa Nova Arabe el Libanés r Ghazi Abdel Baki, Djamel Laroussi's Afro-Kabylan con *rumba*, el neoclasismo de Charbel Rouhana's neoclasicismo y el electro-*melhoun* del Marroquí Azzddine. Más Allah del Arabe y los sonidos de la música, lo que une estas canciones es la profundidad de la music. Si el lounge algunas veces se denota como algo Kitsch y como una imitación pobre de lo autentico, los cortes seleccionados para este álbum pueden escucharse a muchos diferentes niveles. Usted puede simplemente dejar que el ritmo lo transporte a algún lugar, o puede llevarlo en un viaje interno, escuchando las complejas texturas musicales, los sofisticados ritmos y contenido emocional. Al hacerlo usted podrá alcanzar el *tarab* (Estado de trascendencia) – El logro máximo que la música Arabe busca inspirar.

GHAZI ABDEL BAKI – Ghazi Abdel Baki is a musician, composer and producer who began his career as a drummer. After many years of participating in various bands in the USA, he returned to his native Lebanon, where in 2003 he founded Forward Music, for which he

produced numerous albums, including Ghada Shbeir's *Al Muwashahat*, which won the BBC World Music Award in 2007. 'Al Guineyna' is taken from *Communiqué #2*, a trilogy in the making that gives musical treatment to the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and the Sufi Al Hallaj. www.forwardmusic.net

NATACHA ATLAS – Anglo-Egyptian singer Natacha Atlas has spent more than a decade fusing electronic beats with Arabic music, linking together a variety of genres, sonic experiences and collaborators – including Sinéad O'Connor and Sarah Brightman – from around the world. Capable of delivering straight-ahead pop with the same agility as Middle Eastern microtones and *mawaals*, in her latest release *Ana Hina*, from which 'Hayati Inta' is taken, she delivers contemporary tribute to the golden age of Arabic classicism of the 1950s and 1960s. Natacha was born in Belgium, grew up in a Moroccan suburb of Brussels, and heard everything from Oum Kalsoum to Led Zeppelin at home. Along the way, she mastered French, English, Arabic and Spanish, along with the body language of bellydance. Her big break came through her collaborations with Jah Wobble and Transglobal Underground, following which she embarked on a solo career. www.myspace.com/natachaatlasofficial

RIM BANNA – Palestinian singer-songwriter Rim Banna was born and raised in Nazareth, Galilee. She began performing as a child at national Palestinian festivities. While studying

voice and choir conducting at the Moscow's High Institute for Music, she produced two live recordings. Today Rim lives with her Ukrainian husband Leonid, also a composer, in Nazareth. The two have participated in many Arabic and International festivals. 'The Hymn Of The Sea' is taken from her second international release, *Seasons Of Violet*. www.rimbanna.com

CHARBEL ROUHANA – Charbel Rouhana, one of the finest oud players in Lebanon, graduated with an MA in Musicology in 1987 and has been teaching at the National Conservatory of Music in Lebanon since 1986. For Rouhana, the *oud* reflects the oriental ambience of his homeland, and he has spent years establishing a new methodology for mastering the instrument, which has been adopted by the Conservatory of Music. Rouhana is a veteran of Marcel Khalife's Al Mayadine ensemble, and has toured the international circuit extensively. His compositions, rooted in traditional classical Arabic music, transform the *oud* into an instrument that also communicates with other cultures and musical styles. 'Ladyfingers' is taken from his 2008 release *Hand Made*, his ninth international release to date. www.forwardmusic.net

SOU MAYA BAALBAKI – Born and raised in Beirut, Soumaya Baalbaki graduated from the Lebanese National Conservatory, where she currently teaches oriental vocal technique. Her focus is on *tarab* – the art of enticing the listener to transcendence through music and poetry.

She participates regularly in oriental music festivals and has toured in Japan and other Arab countries, and holds the Golden Microphone Award from Cairo's 1994 competition. *Arabtango*, her latest release, is an adaptation of nine remakes of classical Arabic repertoire from the 1950 to the 1970s, a time in which musicians in Cairo and Beirut began experimenting with Latin rhythms and genres. www.forwardmusic.net

EMAD ASHOUR – Emad Ashour is a famous conductor and cello player, who teaches at the Arabic Music Institute of Cairo. His knowledge in Arabic and Western classical music and expressivity has rendered him a highly sought-after soloist and recording artist. The *taqsim* is a traditional form of Arabic musical instrumental improvisation, usually performed solo or to percussive accompaniment. This cello *taqsim* is taken from *Egyptian Taqasim*, a 2006 release on the Nesma label. www.nesma.es

ISHTAR – Currently based in France, Ishtar is an Israeli singer of Moroccan and Egyptian extraction also known for her projects with the band Alabina. Blending a variety of Mediterranean strains into her own style of oriental pop, she has made her mark both sides of the Atlantic as a million-copy seller. She began performing professionally at the age of 14, but her career took off after she met French producer Charles Ibgui, who introduced her to the Gypsy ensemble Los Niños de Sara, a union that gave birth to Alabina. 'Lamouni (Ligharou Meni)' is a distinctly Ishtar cover of

a traditional Tunisian song. www.alabina.info/index.php

AMIR ELSAFFAR – Iraqi-American trumpeter Amir ElSaffar combines his dual heritage into a powerful fusion of the Iraqi maqam (modes) system and jazz improvisation. In 2002, Amir put his New York jazz career on hold and travelled to Iraq, as well as various countries of the Middle East and Europe in quest for masters who could impart to him the centuries-old *maqam* traditions. During his time abroad he also learned to play the *santoor* (dulcimer). He also created new trumpet techniques that enable the incorporation of microtones, found in Arabic music, into the instrument's reach. *Two Rivers*, his 2007 release from which 'Khosh Reng' is taken, is a suite that invokes Iraqi traditions but frames them in a jazz setting. www.amirelsaffar.com

SMADAR LEVI – Smadar Levi's musical and life journey began in Sderot, Israel, a small town in the south that has produced many notable talents whose music combines oriental roots traditions with updated worldly mixes. Born to a Moroccan immigrant family, she began singing and dancing in many a family *hafla* to the pulse of the *darbukka*. Smadar has since grown to construct an original pan-Mediterranean style that includes original and creative renditions of traditional tunes in Hebrew, Arabic and Ladino. 'Voice Of Spirit' is taken from her upcoming second release *Lumaraz*, to be released in 2010. www.smadarlevi.com

MOHAMED SAWWAH – Mohamed Sawwah was born and raised in Cairo, and studied trumpet at the Cairo Conservatory. Singing came to him through the suggestion of his father, who noticed his vocal abilities. Mohamed has played with both Western classical and Arabic music ensembles. 'Mathadish El Gadar' is taken from his 2007 release 'Egyptian Mawal,' a tribute to the art of vocal Arabic improvisation, featuring his own compositions.

HANINEYSONCUBANO – The crossover track 'El Huerfanito (Ya Habibi Ta'ala)' from *Arabo-Cuban*, features Lebanese singer Hanine in a project dreamed up by the Greco-Lebanese producer Michel Elefteriades after he heard this classic of Arabic singer Asmahan in Cuba, as a Spanish song titled 'El Huerfanito' (The Orphan). Tickled by serendipity, Elefteriades spent two years searching for the right Arabic singer and Cuban musicians to execute a unique experiment that marries both traditions. After auditioning more than 100 singers, he met Hanine, who was studying *oud* and vocals at the Beirut Conservatory. The album, released in 2002, remained a bestselling album in Lebanon for over a year. <http://elefteriades.com/hanine.asp?id=4>

DJAMEL LAROUSSE – Algerian-born, French-based Djamel Laroussi draws his inspiration from a limitless pool that combines his Kabyle roots, Maghreb poetry, African funk inspirations, bellydance, *gnawa* and Latin rhythms into a Berber rock-rumba fusion. His second release, *Étoile Filante* (2003), from which

'N'Kodo' is taken, was on the Algerian charts for many months. He plays guitar, keyboards and percussion instruments, topped by a rootsy vocal delivery that belies standard demarcations between folk, pop and world music. www.djamellaroussi.com

MUNIR BASHIR – Iraqi *oud* player Munir Bashir was born in 1930 to a long-established family of musicians. He studied for six years at the Baghdad Music Institute and received his doctorate of musicology at the University of Budapest. Struggling to establish the *oud* as a solo recital instrument, and to balance his creative impulses with authentic classical Arabic music performance, Munir introduced the *oud* and the classical Arabic *maqamat* system to audiences all over the world. Munir died in 1997, and is considered by many to be one of the most outstanding lute players of the twentieth century.

DOZAN – Dozan features a line-up of musicians and singers based in Jordan who are offering a fresh approach to Middle Eastern folk music. Founder Shireen Abu-Khader, who also directs the Arabic choral preservation arts establishment Dozan wa Awtar, collected a group of talented musicians to reinvent traditional Christian and Muslim hymns found in Jordan and transpose them to a choral-plus-strings setting. 'Ya Mo' is taken from *Introducing Dozan*, a 2008 release on World Music Network's Introducing label. www.worldmusic.net

MOHAMED Houssein – Singer and *buzuk* player Mohamed Houssein was born in Aleppo, Syria. He began his professional career at the age of 17 singing and playing at weddings and private parties. Known as one of the finest *buzuk* players in the Middle East, he has been nicknamed the 'Sultan of the Buzuk'. Mohamed has composed many original songs and has released four Arabic-language albums and five Kurdish albums, following which he has become a favourite at Kurdish events. He has toured many countries around the world, including Greece, Lebanon, Germany, France, Russia, England, Canada, and the United States, where he now resides.

AZZDINE WITH BILL LASWELL – When a noisy, almost unlistenable tape, recorded live in Rabat, Morocco, by the blind *oud* player Azzdine Ouhine arrived at Barraka El Farnatshi productions, its distinguishable beauty and dynamism convinced the label producers that this music had to be given a quality chance. Twenty-four-track tapes were taken to Rabat to record Azzdine's fifteen-piece orchestra. After various recording and mixing permutations, Bill Laswell was asked to add a couple basslines to replace the synth bass on the original recordings. Laswell responded speedily, convincing those on the Moroccan side of a powerful spiritual connection that inspired such deft and subtle understanding of the music. The resultant fusions were *Cha'abi-Melhoune* tracks crossing over into lounge and chill-out, propelling Moroccan song into the next generation. www.maroc.net/barraka

Nili Belkind
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Nili Belkind specializes in world music and is based in New York City. She has spent many years producing, marketing and developing artists, and is currently pursuing a PhD in ethnomusicology.

- 01 **GHAZI ABDEL BAKI**
Al Guineyna
from the album COMMUNIQUÉ #2 (FWD010)
(Midhat Assim, Ghazi Abdel Bakii) pub Forward Music.
Licensed from Forward Music
- 02 **NATACHA ATLAS** Hayati Inta Reprise
(Hayatak Ana)
from the album ANA HINA (450005)
(Natacha Atlas/Marc Eagleton/Harvey Brough) pub Annie
Reed Music. Licensed from RedOz Music Ltd
- 03 **RIM BANNA** The Hymn Of The Sea
from the album SEASONS OF VIOLET (FXCD 317)
(words Zuhaira Sabbagh, music Rim Banna/Leonid
Alexeienko, arr Rim Banna/Leonid Alexeienko/Gjermund
Silset/Rune Arnesen) pub Kirkelig Kulturverksted.
Licensed from Kirkelig Kulturverksted
- 04 **CHARBEL ROUHANA** Ladyfingers
from the album HAND MADE (FWD014)
(Charbel Rouhana, Charbel Rouhana) pub Forward Music.
Licensed from Forward Music
- 05 **SOUMAYA BAALBAKI**
Dakhalti Marra Fi Guineyna
from the album ARABTANGO (FWD015)
(Midhat Assim, Ghazi Abdel Bakii) pub Forward Music.
Licensed from Forward Music
- 06 **EMAD ASHOUR** Taksim Cello I
from the album EGYPTIAN TAQASIM VOL. 1 (ND0702)
(trad) pub Copyright Control. Licensed from Nesma, 2007
- 07 **ISHTAR ALABINA** Lamouni (Ligharou Meni)
from the album THE BEST OF ISHTAR ALABINA 2009
(H. Jouini, arr. Ronny Glod) pub DR. Licensed from Fifty
Five/Ascot Music
- 08 **AMIR ELSAFFAR** Khosh Reng (Maqam Awj)
from the album TWO RIVERS (PI24)
(Amir ElSaffar) pub ElSaffar Music (BMI).
Licensed from Pi Recordings
- 09 **SMADAR LEVI** Voice Of Spirit
from the album LUMARAZ
(Smadar Levi) Copyright Control. Licensed from World
Sound Traveller
- 10 **MOHAMED SAWWAH** Mathadish El Gadar
from the album EGYPTIAN MAWAL (DJCD104)
(words Taher abo Bakr, music Mohamed Ahmed Moustafa)
pub DJ Recording. Licensed from DJ Recording
- 11 **HANINE Y SON CUBANO**
El Huerfanito (Ya Habibi Ta'ala)
from the album ARABO-CUBAN
(written Fathy Koura, composed Farid Al-Atrash, arr Michel
Eleferiades) pub Elef Records. Licensed from Elef Records
- 12 **DJAMEL LAROUSSE** N'Kodo
from the album ÉTOILE FILANTE (DAD001)
(Djamel Laroussi) Copyright Control. Licensed from
Dadoua Records
- 13 **MUNIR BASHIR** Johnny Guitar
from the album OUD AROUND THE ARAB WORLD
(VDLCD 567)
(V. Young & P.Lee, arr. Munir Bashir) pub 1993 Voix de
l'Orient/A. Chahine & Fils, Beirut. Licensed from Voix de
l'Orient/A. Chahine & Fils, Beirut
- 14 **DOZAN** Ya Mo
from the album INTRODUCING DOZAN (INTRO112CD)
(trad, arr Shireen Abu-Khader) pub Riverboat UK Music
(MCPS). Courtesy of Introducing/World Music Network
- 15 **MOHAMED Houssein** Taksim Bouzouk
from the album LEYLET OUNS (HMC 1378)
(Mohamed Hussein) pub Kousan Music Publishing.
Licensed from Hollywood Music Center
- 16 **AZZDINE WITH BILL LASWELL** Droub Al Lil
from the album MASSAFAT (Barbarity 023)
(Azzdine Uhnine & Pat Jabbar) Copyright Control.
Licensed from Barraka El Farnatshi Prod

Ghazi Abdel Baki



Natacha Atlas



Soumaya Baalbaki



Smadar Levi



Mohamed Sawwah



Hanine Y Son Cubano



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