Iranian Underground Music: Conference and Concert

Featuring

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In Iran today there is a unique artistic movement underway called Underground Music or Musiqi zir-zamini. Playing on the double meaning of the word zirzamin in Persian -- underground and basement -- this movement comprises the production of musical genres such as rock, rap, heavy metal, and electronica, and their dissemination through word of mouth and the internet. This movement has three main characteristics: It is an alternative to mainstream music produced both inside and outside Iran; it is non-commercial; and it is rebellious in its modes of production and dissemination.

Kiosk is a Persian Blues/Rock/Jazz band established in Isfahan and Tehran. The band’s first album “Adame Mamooli” (Ordinary Man) was released outside of Iran by Bamahang Productions, and was lauded as one of the first successful album releases of Iran’s burgeoning underground music scene.

Over the past several years, the original band members, including the lyricist and lead singer, Arash Sobhani, left Iran for North America. Their second album “Eshg-e Sorat” (Amor de la velocidad), released in May 2007, was conceived of and recorded in the United States. What distinguishes “Kiosk” is their biting lyrics set to a musical style that is new to Iranian pop music, such as the social commentary song “My Bad” off the first album, or the popular song and video “Love of Speed” off the second album (which has passed a quarter million hits on You Tube).

Translated Song Lyrics:
• Green Minibus
  مینیبوس سبز
• Bent Rules Blues
  قانون خم شده بلوز
• My Bad
  تقصیر من بود
• Love of Speed
  عشق سرعت
• Bad Company, Good Friends
  زغال خوب
Green Minibus

Everything is in its place
No room for complaints

Some are robbing
and some are policing

One steals, one loots
What’s it got to do with us?

“Brother, turn around, this is none of your business”

It’s a holiday tomorrow, call Vahik or Masis
In everyone’s pockets there are eye drops
In their hands a bag of salami and yoghurt and chips

At the drugstore and pharmacy
Lined up for Ethanol and cough syrup,
and painkillers with codeine
Thank God no one is sick

Loitering in the mall, harassing everyone in sight

The town square is going to be full of cops tonight

This city is in the control of thugs, drug addicts and bribe takers
One is riding a scooter, one a 1000 cc motorbike

Recycled people in brand new packaging
Every butcher becomes a doctor with a white apron

With money you can easily buy anything from human lives, to powders pills and acid

Beautiful words, ugly deeds
Making everyone’s lives Hell, to get themselves into Heaven

Who was writing these words on the walls?
Everyone complaining about the hands of fate

Excuse me where is Azadi Cinema?
We don’t have either but your trip starts right here

There is a green minibus waiting for the likes of you
Forces you to get on the bus, destination is Vozara

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1. Freedom
Bent Rules Blues

No stopping allowed gotta move on
Lights are red, can't go on
All these city streets
Are either one-way or lead to dead ends

I'm a second class citizen
With a third class life and full of debt
How did this happen in the first place?
Was it by choice or accident?
Choice or accident?

My house is walls all around
They didn't build any windows for me
Locked all the doors on me
Won't tell me where they have hid the key
Where have they hid this friggin key?

Everywhere is closed on Fridays
Even the mountains and the sea
Our week has seven days
But each day is a Friday

No stopping under any circumstances
The officer is sleeping, don't honk
You can wait if you want
But these lights have been red for a hundred years
Lights have been red for a hundred years

Driving under the speed limit
Is said to be ok
But for the common good
Only 0 speed is allowed
Only 0 speed is allowed

Some break the law
Their fine is very high
But some know how to do it
Then the law bends for them
Doesn't break, just bends a bit for them

My Bad

If a war started somewhere
or someone became poor
It was my bad

If there was a shortage of water
Emigration was just a mirage
It was my bad

If winters were cold and summers were
warm
It was my bad

If the roads are narrow
and the streets are dark
It was my bad
It was my bad

If there was an unemployment crisis
Poverty and homelessness
It was my bad

The Arab - Israeli war
And the Tamil Tigers conflict
It was my bad

Identity crisis
The death of spirituality
It was my bad

The Deconstruction of civilization
It was my bad

It was my bad (This is a confession)
It was my bad (I really apologize)
Politics plagued by populism
Love of Speed

The power of love or love of power
Modernism versus tradition forever

Living in the evil axis
Speed freaks in jalopy taxis

Why feel any pain and suffer
When pills and powders are all on offer

Nothing for lunch or dinner to make
Then let them eat Yellow Cake

Multiple choice elections left to chance
Holy matrimony by loan and finance

Scraped up the very last dime
Sent it straight to Palestine

Guaranteed success or money back
Underground music or cultural attack

No need for cardiologists
Just facelifts by cosmetologists

Immoral zealots, fanatic factions
Chinese-style economic expansions

Religious democratic droppings
Pizza with Ghormeh Sabzi\(^1\) toppings

Barefoot children on the street
Chelo Kebab\(^2\) all you can eat

Smuggling women to Dubai
Our noble men turning a blind eye

Blood transfusion with an H.I.V flavor
Bird Flu virus or the new life saver

Cholera hits and one takes a bow
Another man dies from Mad Cow

Foreign currencies are reserved
Border movements all observed

Tried everything in our ability
Still no financial credibility

Defeated diplomacy
It was my bad

National soccer teams elimination
Due to playing with emotion
It was my bad

If Bin Laden managed to get away
and Oil prices shot up to the sky
It was my bad
If you got bored with all these promises
It was my bad

It was my bad (Ladies and Gentlemen, I apologize)
It was my bad (I’m very embarrassed)
It was my bad

If the plaintiffs are in jail
but the criminals are out on bail
It was my bad
If these are all secrets that everyone
knows about
It was my bad

If God unwilling, one day I am not
among you
What will happen then?

Or will it always be my bad even if I’m
not there?
There is no other way

It was my bad
It was my bad (Traffic) (Environmental
pollutions) (passenger airlines crash)
(inflation rate)

I’m really sorry I don’t know who to
apologize to
Oil dependent economy is hooked
Incentive vacations overbooked
Philosophical cinema in fusion
Cross-over musical confusion

Clandestine lovers and attractions
Chinese-style economic expansions

Religious democratic droppings
Pizza with Ghormeh Sabzi toppings

Meat stew served in posh cafes over artistic rants
Meditation classes just to get into each others pants

Break your fast, charity food served up Zereshk Polo with ketchup

Life in virtual reality
Amusement park University

Our national soccer heroes
Can’t kick their over-inflated egos

Counterfeit medication
Addiction as a recreation

A nation dressed up in fashion
Artificial industrial passion

Long distance system of education
Sell questions of entrance examination

Interest rates or finance charge
By choice or force but by and large Immoral zealots, fanatic factions
Chinese-style economic expansions

Religious democratic droppings
Pizza with Ghormeh Sabzi toppings

Sheykh Fazlolah Bridge passes over Satarkhan Avenue

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1. *Ghormeh sabzi* is one of the Iranian national dishes. This stew is made with a mixture of sautéed herbs, including leek, parsley, spinach and coriander. This mixture is cooked with kidney beans, green onions, chives, dried limes, and lamb or beef meat and served with Basmati rice.

2. *Chelow kabab* is a national dish of Iran. The meal is simple, consisting of steamed, saffron basmati rice (chelow) and kebab, of which there are several distinct Persian varieties. This dish is served throughout Iran today, but traditionally was most closely associated with the northern part of the country.

3. *Zereshk* is the Persian name for the dried barberry fruit, which is widely cultivated in Iran. Polow is an Iranian rice dish flavored with barberries and served with chicken.

4. *Sheikh Fazlolah Noori* was a prominent Shiite Muslim cleric in Iran during the late 19th and early 20th century. He is known in Iranian history as a critic of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Sattar Khan was also a prominent figure in the Constitutional Revolution. He was a nationalist from Tabriz who protested the abolishment of the constitution by the Shah. Both figures, while on opposite sides of the constitutionalist debate, have been honored by the Islamic Republic with public works named after them.
Bad Company, Good Friends

We were young and had a thousand dreams
Long hair and buffed up self-esteem

Chasing rainbows, we set out to roam
Said goodbye and never made it back home

Pledging liberty and justice for all
Civilized discourse beyond the wall

Love and peace, and a new brotherhood,
Utopia, a care-free lovers’ world

One lost himself among the crowd
Another one had to get off the cloud

One concocted snake oil and love potions
Another sold his soul, to stock options

Joy got depressed and flew over the Cuckoo’s nest
Blossom withered, and was put to rest

Liberty talked too much, was sent to jail
Hope was buried, to no avail

Faith became doubtful and turned agnostic
Achilles healed, his blood is still toxic
Oath denied everything and ran away
Desire hasn’t been heard of to this day

Why did we have such a fruitless fate?
Why did the Sun burn us with hate?

Into this abyss all of us were tossed
Bad company we kept, good friends we lost

Bad company we kept, good friends we lost
Contact

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Translated lyrics provided by Kiosk