

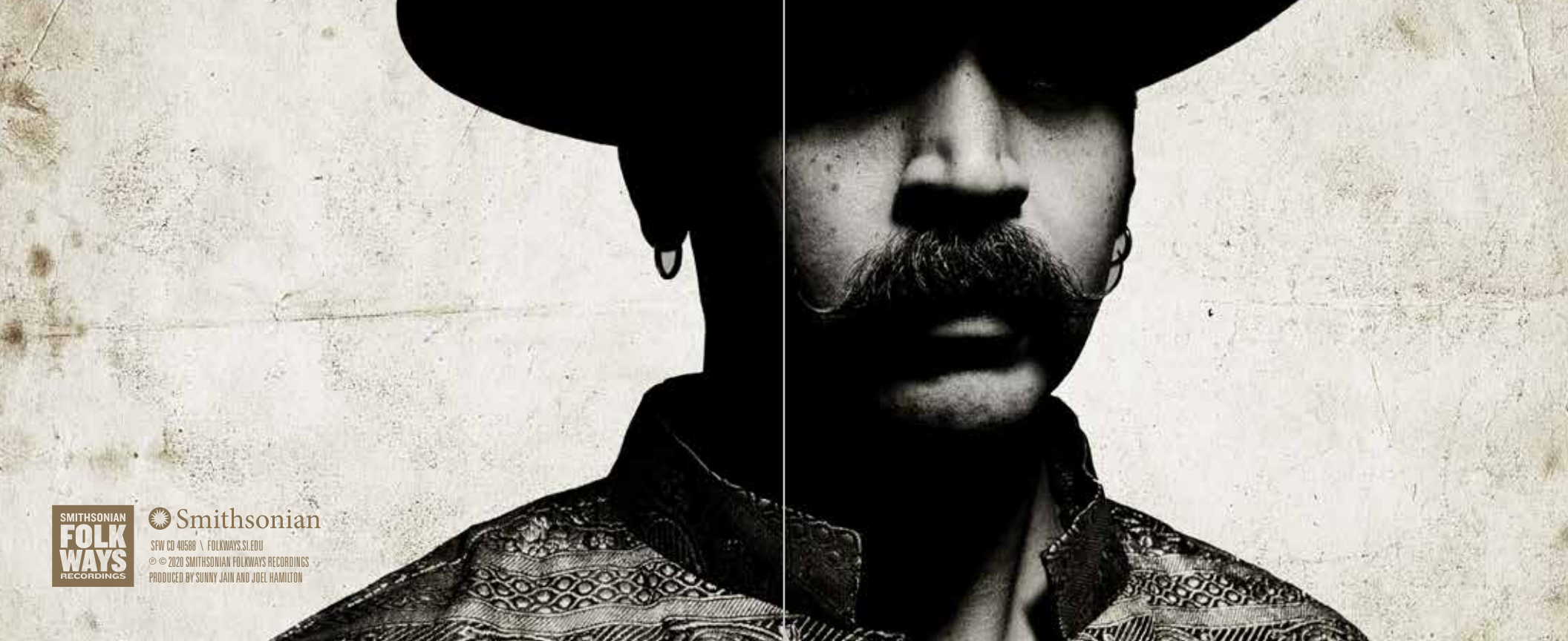


 Smithsonian

SFW CD 40588 \ FOLKWAYS.SI.EDU

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PRODUCED BY SUNNY JAIN AND JOEL HAMILTON



1 - IMMIGRANT WARRIOR 5:47

(SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O
SAPANA MUSIC, BMI)

**2 - WILD WILD EAST
(FEAT. GANVYA) 4:54**

(SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O
SAPANA MUSIC, BMI)

3 - OSIAN 6:32

(SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O
SAPANA MUSIC, BMI)

**4 - RED, BROWN, BLACK
(FEAT. HASEEB) 4:12**

(MUSIC: SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O
SAPANA MUSIC, BMI - LYRICS: HASEEB SHOAIB PATAIL, ASCAP)

**5 - AYE MERE DIL KAHIN
AUR CHAL (REMEMBRANCE) 0:34**

(SHANKAR JAIKISHAN/UNIVERSAL-POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL
PUBLISHING INC. 0/B/O UNIVERSAL MUSIC INDIA LTD., ASCAP)

**6 - AYE MERE DIL KAHIN
AUR CHAL (FULL VERSION) 3:15**

(SHANKAR JAIKISHAN/UNIVERSAL-POLYGRAM INTERNATIONAL
PUBLISHING INC. 0/B/O UNIVERSAL MUSIC INDIA LTD., ASCAP)

**7 - BAAGHI
(FEAT. ADITYA PRAKASH) 4:16**

(MUSIC: SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O SAPANA
MUSIC, BMI LYRICS: ALI MIR- KARTAR SINGH SARABHA)

**8 - BLACKWELL
(FEAT. ALAM KHAN) 4:05**

(SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O
SAPANA MUSIC, BMI)

**9 - HAI APNA DIL TO AAWARA
(FEAT. GANVYA) 1:55**

(S.D. BURMAN/TENYOR MUSIC 0/B/O SAREGAMA
MUSIC UNITED STATES, BMI)

10 - TUMSE LAGI LAGAN 4:31

(ARRANGED BY SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM
DEFEND 0/B/O SAPANA MUSIC, BMI)

**11 - MAITRI BHAVANU
(FEAT. GANVYA) 6:13**

(MUSIC: KALYANJI V. SHAH-ANANDJI V. SHAH - LYRICS:
GURUDEV CHITRABHANUJI/TENYOR MUSIC 0/B/O
SAREGAMA MUSIC UNITED STATES, BMI)

12 - BROOKLYN DHAMAL 3:40

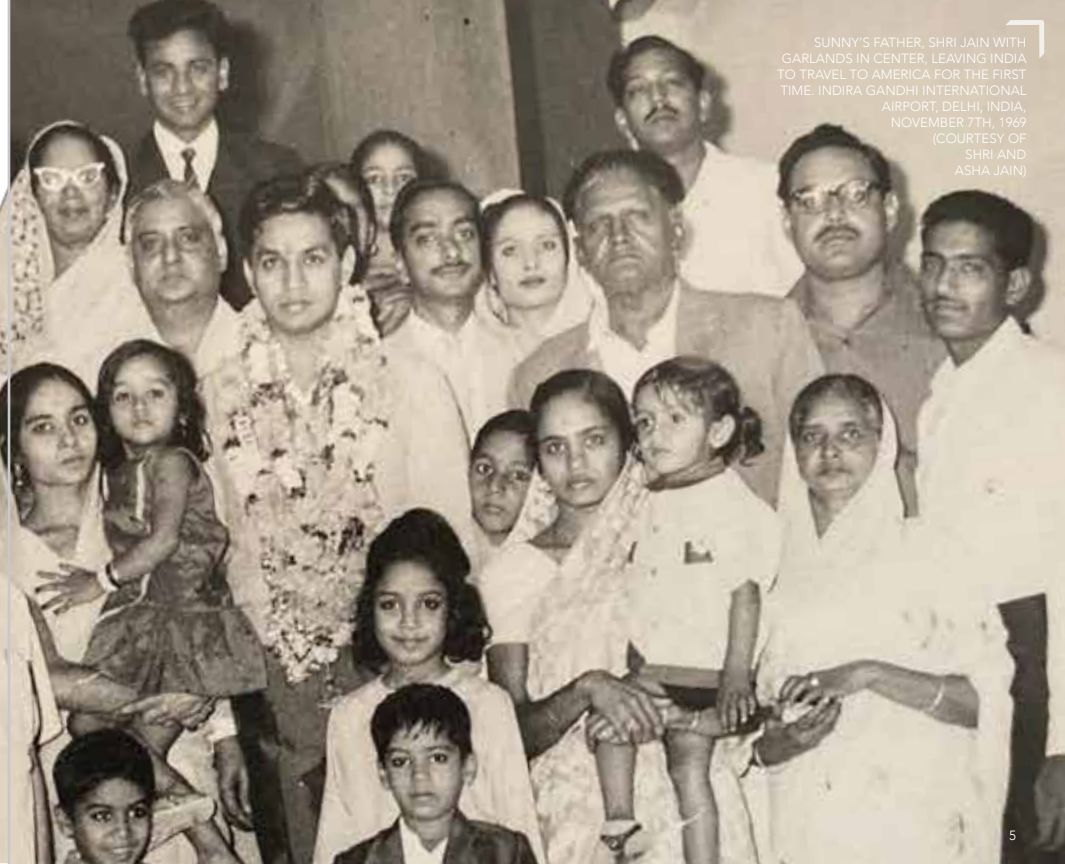
(SUNNY JAIN/SONGS FROM DEFEND 0/B/O
SAPANA MUSIC, BMI)

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PRODUCED BY SUNNY JAIN AND JOEL HAMILTON




INTRODUCTION

== Sunny Jain ==



SUNNY'S FATHER, SHRI JAIN WITH
GARLANDS IN CENTER, LEAVING INDIA
TO TRAVEL TO AMERICA FOR THE FIRST
TIME. INDIRA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT, DELHI, INDIA,
NOVEMBER 7TH, 1969
(COURTESY OF
SHRI AND
ASHA JAIN)



I was five years old as I exited the plane onto the tarmac in New Delhi, India, the heat, humidity—the atmosphere—immediately subsuming me. The scent that was so palpable that I still only detect it in and identify it with India. This is my earliest recollection of being in the Motherland. I spent that summer visiting family in Delhi, Rajasthan, and Punjab before returning to my home in Rochester, New York. I

experienced the music on the streets, from the cacophony of a brass band to temple music to Bollywood music on a short trip in an auto rickshaw. These sounds migrated to America, as my father loved playing his reel-to-reel player and records, and my mother immersed me in Jain *bhajans* (devotional songs) with her cassette tapes. (Jainism is one of the oldest religions in India, historically dating back to 3000 BC and teaching nonviolence as one of its main doctrines.) At the same time, my older siblings were serving me up a healthy dose of Casey Kasem's *American Top 40*, along with an eclectic mix of Rush, Ice-T, and guitar "gods." When I was ten, my drum teacher, Rich Thompson, blew my mind open with jazz music. My musical threads were being woven together.

My family lineage, or *gotra*, is Manani. We come from an ancient town located in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan called Osian. In the 12th century many people were ousted from the area because of an invasion by Muhammad of Ghor. The family migrated to Sialkot in Western Punjab, as there were vast, open plains that happened to be excellent for agriculture.

The Mananis adopted the last name Jain, to identify themselves as part of the faith, while they absorbed Punjabi culture. My family was displaced again during the 1947 partition of India and fled to Eastern Punjab in what became one of the largest mass migrations in history, my Mom's side eventually settling in Delhi and my Dad's side in Bhawanimandi, Rajasthan. Fast forward—my parents emigrated to Rochester, New York, in 1970. A job is what drew my father here, no other connection to anyone or anything else. The plan was to make enough money within three to four years and then return to India to help his own father's business. That never happened for a variety of reasons. I was born in Rochester, and so my experience of America comes through this lens: a first-generation child of immigrant parents.

As an adolescent in the States, I would often get asked, "What tribe are you from?" The

MAHAVIRA JAIN TEMPLE (BUILT IN
783 AD), OSIAN, JODHPUR,
RAJASTHAN, 1897.





historical mislabeling of people—starting from Columbus thinking he landed in India in 1492—created great confusion for me. These labels amongst my peers ended up grouping me, along with another South Asian and a Native person, as “Indian” and part of some tribe. No further distinction. Which begged the question to myself, “What is an ‘Indian’?” And begs the question to us all, “Why in America do we still call indigenous people and/or Native people ‘Indian’?”

There's a strong American identity through cowboys, starting from *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* [Show], that personified the white male as a gun-toting, hat-wearing tough guy. This identity also pushed the “us versus them” narrative: cowboys and Indians. To a large degree, the romanticized idea of the cowboy exploring the frontier in search of freedom and a new life is a myth that has propagated the American destiny. Around the close of the westward expansion in American history, Ellis Island opened as an immigration station. People largely came there from Southern and Eastern Europe escaping famine and persecution, and with great hope in the New World. Perhaps the immigrant is what the romanticized cowboy has always professed to be, yet somehow, the narrative has kept them as polar opposites.

The cowboy story further morphed into this badass American renegade as the film industry gave us John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. And let's

THE AMERICAS REPRESENTED BY AN OPEN STANCE
COWBOY IN GLOBAL VILLAGE, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB
EMIRATES. (COURTESY OF SUNNY JAIN)

“WHO AND WHAT IS A COWBOY, AN INDIAN, AN IMMIGRANT?”

certainly not forget the politicking as far back as I can remember, since the '80s and still in the present day: in order to demonstrate that one is truly American, just adorn a cowboy hat (Ronald Reagan, Roy Moore).

In 2017, I performed at the Global Village in Dubai, which is almost like the Epcot Center of the Middle East. There are microcosms of various countries that one can experience, from Yemen to Turkey, France to Egypt, and India to the United States. Every country's façade is an iconic structure or architecture from that land. America, however, was literally the only country that was represented by a human being—a white male with gun holster and cowboy hat, the entrance through his open-legs stance.

Who and what is a cowboy, an Indian, an immigrant? Who creates this narrative? Do we know the history of *vaqueros*? What about black cowboys and cowgirls?

This album *Wild Wild East* carries multiple identities, as we all do. It's a reflection of my family's migration from Rajasthan to Punjab, going through the 1947 partition of India, then moving to America. It's also referring to the

NAT "DEADWOOD DICK" LOVE,
1854. IN COWBOY ATTIRE HOLDING
ROPE. (COURTESY OF PRINTS AND
PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS).

socio-political climate of the past couple of years, as East and West are really relative to one's location; the lawlessness of politicians in Washington, DC, is our "wild wild east," while we find the progressive hope in San Francisco and New York City, among other places.

I believe the immigrants are our current-day cowboy and cowgirl: a diverse cast of human beings from all corners of the world in search of freedom, a new way, a new life from what they knew before, courageous and by all accounts teaching and inspiring us all.



ON THE POSSIBILITIES OF DISLOCATION

== Vivek Bald ==

MULBERRY STREET IN NEW YORK CITY IN
1900. FOREIGN-BORN IMMIGRANTS
CONSTITUTED 36% OF THE CITY'S
POPULATION AT THAT TIME. (THE DETROIT
PUBLISHING COMPANY, COURTESY OF
PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION,
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



INDIAN REFUGEES PILING ONTO TRAINS. THE CREATION OF TWO INDEPENDENT STATES, INDIA AND PAKISTAN, RESULTED IN ONE OF THE LARGEST TRANSFERS OF POPULATION IN HISTORY, AUGUST 1947. (BETTMANN COLLECTION, GETTY IMAGES)



In *Wild Wild East*, the journeys of two generations entwine and intermingle, in all their complexities, in all their irresolution. The album is deeply informed by Sunny Jain's reflections on the life of his immigrant parents. As a boy in 1940s Punjab, Jain's father had seen friends and family killed in the violence that followed the end of colonial rule on the Subcontinent, when India and Pakistan were split by Partition. In 1970, he came to the United States as a post-doctoral fellow to do research in crystallography at the University of Rochester. Like so many others he intended to return to India, but, finding greater opportunities here, he stayed. Jain's mother followed shortly thereafter carrying her 4 year-old daughter, and began to raise the family on new terrain. His mother instilled a strong religious practice through regular ceremonial rituals, playing *bhajans* on her cassette deck and maintaining a strict vegetarian diet as followed by the Jain faith.

Jain's parents' story echoes those of thousands of other Indians who came to the United States from South Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, drawn by the idea of the United States as a land of opportunity, a place where anyone can succeed through hard work and perseverance. In the 1980s and 1990s, others came from South Asia to escape poverty, religious and ethnic violence, and war; they were

SUNNY JAIN'S MOTHER, ASHA JAIN, AND SISTER, NEELU JAIN, WALKING ON DAYTONA BEACH AFTER VISITING WALT DISNEY WORLD, 1971. (COURTESY OF SHRI AND ASHA JAIN)



drawn by the idea of the United States as a sanctuary, a place of safety, tolerance, and possibility that opened its doors to the world's political and economic refugees.

Many of us in the second generation find a more complex and troubling reality beneath the image that America projects outward about itself. On the one hand, we build friendships that cross more borders than our parents ever have; we craft cultural identities that draw from sources more multiple and varied than they could have imagined—from R&B to punk rock; Marvel to manga; William Faulkner to Toni Morrison; or in the case of Jain's 1980s youth, Mötley Crüe to John Coltrane. On the other hand, we are bullied in our schools, called "raghead," "Gandhi," "terrorist"; told we "smell like curry," told to "go back to your own country." Some experiences we simply take in our stride, without thinking, but they quietly sink in and become part of our growing consciousness of our difference.

In Rochester, New York, Jain's childhood friends were themselves a "motley crew": Italian American, black, Latino, white. In this setting, he didn't think there was anything particularly "different" about his Indian family. So when someone spray-painted graffiti on Jain's suburban home, when neighborhood kids greeted his elderly grandfather with chants of "pajama man," Jain didn't question his parents' interpretation of the events: these were simply "pranks"—kids being kids.

Such experiences have become more widespread, commonplace, and severe over the past 20 years. They are the kinds of experiences that accumulate throughout our lives in this country, whose meaning and significance weigh on us as we grow to adulthood. They lead some in the second generation to double down on their parents' dreams, to achieve "success" in clearly recognizable ways, prove their worth, prove that they, that we, belong.



SIKH IMMIGRANTS IN CALIFORNIA POSING FOR A GROUP
 PORTRAIT IN 1910. (COURTESY OF THE CALIFORNIA HISTORY
 ROOM, CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY, SACRAMENTO,
 CALIFORNIA)

For some of us, however, the response is different: we begin to see how our experiences resonate with those of other marginalized groups, other racial, ethnic, and immigrant communities who are here alongside us and whose parents and ancestors were here long before.

This in turn propels our own, second-generation journey. We often have to learn for ourselves the histories and legacies of slavery, of the Indian wars, the forced removals, the “settling” of the West—and the struggles for civil rights and self-determination here that paralleled the struggles of our own grandparents and great-grandparents in South Asia, who fought for independence from British colonial rule.

On this path we may also discover something surprising: that people from the South Asian subcontinent have been here in the United States for far longer than we imagined. In the 1700s, Indian seamen moved in and out of New Bedford and Salem, Massachusetts, accompanying goods such as spices and tea. In the 1890s, Bengali silk peddlers plied the streets of New Orleans, Charleston, Galveston, and Atlantic City. In the early 20th century, East Indian dancers shared the stage with Native American horsemen in *Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Great Far East* [Show] (the former presented as exotic specimens, the latter made to reenact their defeat in the Plains Native American wars). In 1906–1907, Punjabi Sikh and



Muslim men worked in the lumber mills and canneries of Washington and Oregon, and were targeted and driven out by violent anti-immigrant mobs. In the 1910s, Indian farmers, political exiles, and students up and down the West Coast mounted a campaign for Indian independence and were arrested and imprisoned by US authorities. During the First World War, Muslim steamship workers from present-day Bangladesh joined the industrial workforce in Detroit, Michigan; Columbus, Ohio; and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; and then were rounded up in immigration raids in the 1920s. In the 1920s–1930s, leaders of the Indian independence movement made common cause with leaders of the struggle for African American civil rights, in alliances that nurtured the nonviolent tactics of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s.

I was six years old when I first felt the dislocation that comes from being a US-born child of an immigrant from India. The end of November was approaching, and in my first-grade class, we learned about the mythic “first Thanksgiving,” when the Pilgrims, after their first successful harvest in 1621, broke bread with the Indians whom they had “discovered” in America, and who had helped them survive a brutal winter. We were placed into this scene from the vantage point of the Pilgrims. There seemed to be an unbroken line

◀ VALENTINA ALVAREZ AND RULLIA SINGH POSING FOR THEIR WEDDING PHOTO, 1917. THEY ARE AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF PUNJABI-MEXICAN COUPLES WHICH SPROUTED UP ACROSS THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES IN LIEU OF ANTI-IMMIGRATION LAWS. (COURTESY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES)

“
WHAT DOES IT
MEAN WHEN THAT
GALLOP IN A
SPAGHETTI WESTERN
IS NOT A HORSE, BUT
THE SOUND OF
A PUNJABI
FOLK DRUM.”

that ran from these “first Americans” to us American children, 350 years later, in the 1970s. I was confused. My family had just arrived here. And, from what I knew, I was an Indian. Was I *this* kind of Indian? Wasn’t this a different kind of Indian? Yes. But still, it seemed like theirs was the side I would be on. In this banquet, that’s the group I was part of. Not the Pilgrims. Right?

It has been a half-century since that moment. But in some ways, these are still the kinds of dislocations I grapple with as a second-generation Indian American, still the questions that trouble and unsettle my life as the first person in my family born here, on this soil. And the journey from there to here—from 6 years old to 26, 36, and onward toward 56—is as complicated and fraught as that other journey from there to here, our parents’ journey from the South Asian subcontinent to the “New World.”

What do we do with all this? This is a question that so many of us live with, for years. It can create a low hum of discomfort and lead to conflicts with others in our families and communities, but it can also prompt exploration, movement, creativity, action. We live in a productive state of disjuncture.

Jain himself was drawn into this second-generation journey through music—most particularly through jazz, as his Rochester drum teacher

Rich Thompson introduced him over several years first to Max Roach, then to Philly Joe Jones, and ultimately to John Coltrane via Elvin Jones’ complex, commanding, and thunderous opening in *A Love Supreme*. It is now, again, through music that Jain and his collaborators take us with them toward a complicated, heterodox, unsettled, and evolving sense of “South Asian American-ness.”

In *Wild Wild East*, this happens through a recurring theme of the Western “frontier.” If some of us had to wrestle every fall with the question of where we fit in the story of the “First Thanksgiving,” we also had to contend week after week with the question of which side we were on in the ubiquitous American childhood game of “Cowboys and Indians.” Jain plays with the double meaning of “Indians” in this phrase.

Bollywood films and Spaghetti Westerns have, of course, met before, most notably in G. P. Sippy’s blockbuster film, *Sholay* (1975). But there is

something different going on here. Unlike *Sholay*, this is not the Western transposed onto Indian terrain. It is the Indian transposed onto Western terrain. In track after track, Jain pushes “Cowboys and Indians” toward “Cowboys and Immigrants”; the songs force apart the two meanings of “Indian” so that we, as listeners, must grapple with a new triad: Cowboys, Indians, and Indian Immigrants. Which side are we on? Are Indian immigrants to be simply another wave of cowboys, following in the footsteps of those who “settled” the United States before them? The songs in *Wild Wild East* suggest a more complicated relationship to the past, present, and future. What does it mean when that gallop in a Spaghetti Western is not a horse, but the sound of a Punjabi folk drum played by the son of an Indian immigrant? What happens when lament is embedded, in Urdu, in a Western prairie song?



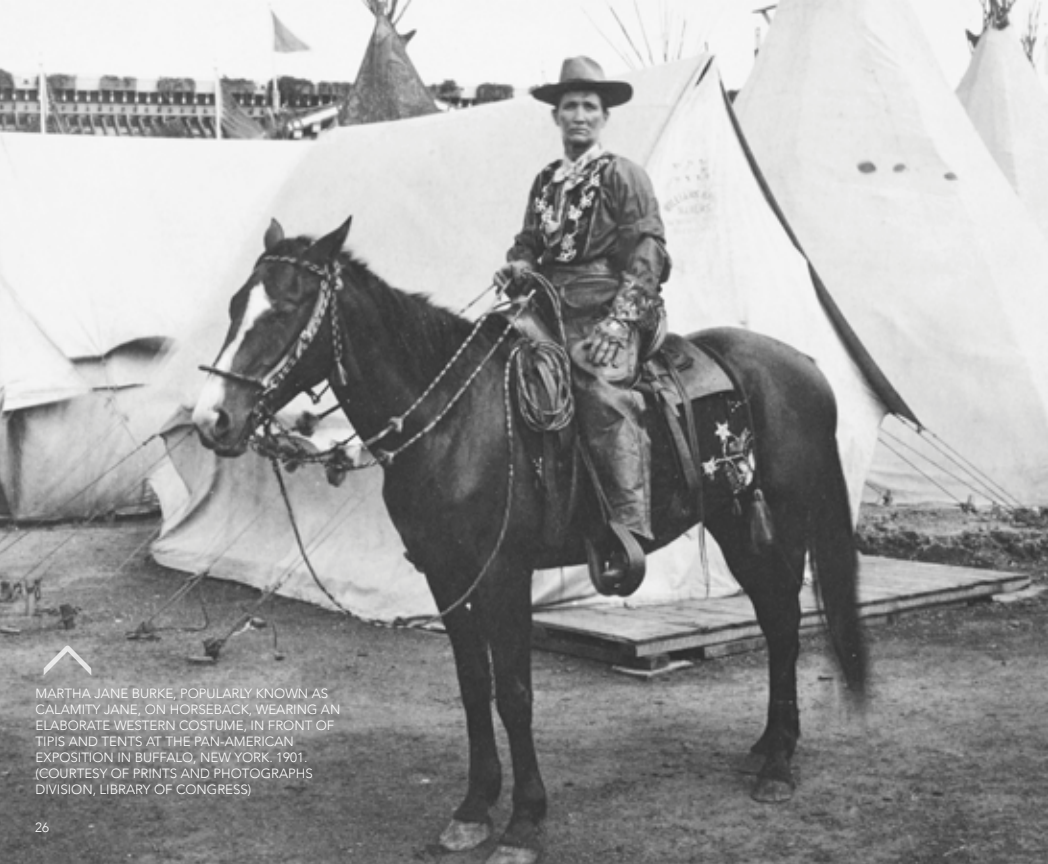
1

IMMIGRANT WARRIOR

PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE; GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR;
KENNY BENTLEY, SOUSAPHONE; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET, PERCUSSION

"Immigrant Warrior" names the internal strength that Jain imagines his father—and so many South Asian parents of his generation—had to draw upon to survive the multiple dislocations of Partition and overseas emigration. The rhythm of the trap drums, the power of brass, and the melancholy strains of electric guitar carry us forward, head down and determined, into an unknown and unsure future. There are sonic disruptions and realignments here. In a minute-long segment that bisects "Immigrant Warrior," the saxophone of Pawan Benjamin seems to beckon Coltrane into the room, in a kind of call-and-response to the jazz giant's late-career excursions into South Asian music and spirituality.

SUNNY JAIN'S FATHER, SHRI JAIN, VISITING
THE WHITE HOUSE IN DC FOR THE FIRST
TIME, 1971. (COURTESY OF SHRI AND ASHA
JAIN)



MARTHA JANE BURKE, POPULARLY KNOWN AS CALAMITY JANE, ON HORSEBACK, WEARING AN ELABORATE WESTERN COSTUME, IN FRONT OF TIPIS AND TENTS AT THE PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION IN BUFFALO, NEW YORK, 1901. (COURTESY OF PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

== 2 ==

'WILD 'WILD 'EAST (FEATURING GANAVYA)

GANAVYA, VOCALS; PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE; DAVE SMOOTA SMITH, TROMBONE; GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR; KENNY BENTLEY, SOUSAPHONE; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET, DHOL/EFFECTS

In the album's title track, "Wild Wild East," Jain and New York-born, India- and Florida-raised vocalist Ganavya destabilize the "cowboys and Indians" trope. Jain's drumming again drives us relentlessly forward, this time with trap drums that sound like a train on the Transcontinental Railroad—"Empire's Tracks," as they've been dubbed by the historian Manu Karuka. But if there are hints here of another Morricone-style Spaghetti Western song, that song is torn asunder by Ganavya's soaring voice, whose power suggests an immigrant's alignment with the indigenous, a recognition of the very real violence masked by the childhood "game" we've been invited to play.

= 3 =

OSIAN

PAWAN BENJAMIN, SHEHNAI; GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR; KENNY BENTLEY, SOUSAPHONE; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET, CHIMTA

In "Osian," named for Jain's family's ancestral village in Jodhpur, Jain's drumming is, as always, sharp and precise. But on this track, it moves back and forth from downbeat to offbeat, shifting between jazz and Rajasthani folk rhythms. Meanwhile, the sounds of the North Indian *shehnai* rise above a wash of electric guitar, their melodic distortion playing the role of a traditional drone instrument while simultaneously evoking the epic post-punk noise of Sonic Youth.



4

RED, BROWN, BLACK (FEATURING HASEEB)

HASEEB, RAP VOCALS; PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE; GREY McMURRAY, GUITAR; KENNY BENTLEY, SOUSAPHONE; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET, DHOL/EFFECTS, PERCUSSION

"Red, Brown, Black" is clearly a response to the question, "Whose side are you on?" New York-born, South Asian descended, Muslim rapper,

Haseeb makes his own alignments unequivocal: "Child of an immigrant in West World," he raps, in a tight first bar, "I was a brown boy raised on the West Coast ... Embarrassed by my culture from the getgo / Hip hop raised me with the best flows / Black culture taught me how to say it with my chest though." For Haseeb, the question has already been answered by a post-9/11 America that treats him like an enemy, the child of a Muslim immigrant "invasion." He finds himself in a long historical chain that connects him, connects us, to those who have been colonized and racialized here before us: "Click, click, see the past from a photo flash / Genocide, genocide, burn to ash... What's an Indian? What's a native? Same to a cowboy who really hate us... we came here to work, they the true invaders."

◀ PIONEER HISPANIC VAQUEROS, WICKENBURG, ARIZONA, 1890S (FROM LEFT): JESUS OLEA, FRANCISCO MACIAS, JUAN GRIJALVA, CLEMENTE MACIAS.

5

AYE MERE DIL KAHIN AUR CHAL (REMEMBRANCE)

GREY MCMURRAY, BULBUL TARANG

"Remembrance"—a brief, 30-second solo on the Punjabi folk instrument, the *bulbul tarang*—seems simply to be an introduction to the full-fledged rendition of "Aye Mere Dil" that follows on track 6. But it is much more than this. The *bulbul tarang* that McMurray plays here belonged to Jain's father and migrated with him to the United States. It is this instrument that came out informally at the Jains' home throughout the 1970s and '80s. Each time, Jain's father would awkwardly find first the notes and then the melody of "Aye Mere Dil." At the time, Jain and his siblings greeted each rendition with a typical second-generation response of "here we go again...." But something about this song, and Jain's father's persistence in re-creating it, sunk deeply into Jain's own spirit as the son of an immigrant and a musician-to-be.

6

AYE MERE DIL KAHIN AUR CHAL (FULL VERSION)

PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE; GREY MCMURRAY,
GUITAR; SUNNY JAIN, DHOL/EFFECTS

In "Aye Mere Dil Kahin Aur Chal," we hear in its entirety this 1952 Hindi film song that traveled with Jain's father to the United States, and which helped sustain his connection to his past as he built a new life in Rochester, NY. The song (from the film *Daag*) captures the mood of young South Asians in the years immediately following Independence and Partition. In the original, vocalists Talat Mahmood and Lata Mangeshkar (the former Muslim, the latter Hindu) sang of both the loss and suffering of the past and of a restlessness to move forward in search of a new home and future. "Aye Mere Dil Kahin Aur Chal" is performed here as if it were an Ennio Morricone soundtrack, but propelled by the rhythm of a Punjabi *dhol*.

7

BAAGHI (FEATURING ADITYA PRAKASH)

ADITYA PRAKASH, VOCALS; PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE;
DAVE SMOOTA SMITH, TROMBONE; GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR; KENNY BENTLEY,
SOUSAPHONE; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET, DHOL, PERCUSSION

"Baaghi," which means rebel, is an ode to South Asian American freedom dreams of the early 20th century. It puts to song a set of Urdu verses penned by the Indian American poet Ali Mir in 2013 to mark the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Ghadar Party in San Francisco. "Baaghi" is a tribute to the anti-colonial revolutionary Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was just 16 when he came to the United States to study at the University of California, Berkeley; 17 when he helped form the Ghadar Party; and 19 when he was hanged by the British in 1915 for leading the party's first attempt to spark a rebellion in India. "Baaghi" begins with two lines taken from Sarabha's own poetry: "If they ask you who you are / Tell them your name is Rebel"; then proceeds to Mir's "Kartar Kahte" (Kartar Would Have Said): "Never sell your lives, never be intimidated ... And understand that this is our only tradition: The tyrants lose, and we win ... Come, let us nurture roses in these flames / Come, let us together create *ghadar* / Creating *ghadar* is our task." "Baaghi" sits at the center of *Wild Wild East*, quietly asking us to respond in the 21st century, after more than 100 years of continuous immigration from the Subcontinent to the United States—of farmers, restaurant and factory workers, nurses, scientists, engineers, exiles and refugees—asking us to respond to what "Kartar would have said."



= 8 =

BLACKWELL

(FEATURING ALAM KHAN)

ALAM KHAN, SAROD; PAWAN BENJAMIN, BANSURI;
GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET

"Blackwell" provides a contemplative interlude. Khan's sarod, McMurray's guitar, and Benjamin's *bansuri* flute circle around one another, gently interweaving in an ostinato for much of the track, before Jain enters on drums. Jain's rhythm is steady, with the feel of an equally gentle skip, as he drops beats here and there at the end of a phrase.

The track is an ode to Jain's childhood in Rochester. Here, from the age of 3 to 18, he grew up on Blackwell Lane, a street that led to the former residence of Elizabeth Blackwell, a 19th-century feminist social reformer who was the first woman to receive a medical degree in the United States. The references here, however, are 20th century. It was on Blackwell Lane that Jain first listened to the 1972 double album, *In Concert*, a recording of three great figures of Indian classical music: Ravi Shankar on sitar, Ali Akbar Khan on *sarod*, and Alla Rakha on tabla. Memories of this album led Jain to invite Ali Akbar Khan's son, Alam, to collaborate. Other hints of Jain's early musical influences flow in and out of the track: unexpected echoes of Rush's "Losing It" and The Police's "Every Breath You Take."

< SUNNY JAIN SITTING ON CHAIR WITH
PAGRI FOR HIS MUNDAN CEREMONY
(FIRST HAIRCUT), 1979. (COURTESY OF
SHRI AND ASHA JAIN)



9

HAI APNA DIL TO AAWARA (FEATURING GANAVYA)

GANAVYA, VOCALS; GREY MCMURRAY, GUITARS; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET

In "Hai Apna Dil to Aawara," we hear another of the 1950s Hindi film songs that Jain's father held close to him in Rochester. The Urdu poet Majrooh Sultanpuri wrote the lyrics for the film *Solva Saal* (1958), where they are first sung by a dashing Hemant Kumar to a woman he finds on a train in the midst of eloping, somewhat ambivalently, with her beau. "My heart is a vagabond," Kumar sings to a young Waheeda Rehman. "He is a madman. He is a shooting star. Who knows upon whom he will land." According to Jain, this was one of the songs (like "Aye Mere Dil Kahin Aur Chal") which his father sang in their Rochester home, accompanying himself on harmonium or his *bulbul tarang*. Week after week, he addressed this song to Jain's mother, in an apparent acknowledgement of what she had given up to accompany him and in an attempt, perhaps, to soothe her own longing for what she had left behind.

VARIOUS FAMILY PICTURES
FROM SUNNY JAIN


10

TUMSE LAGI LAGAN

PAWAN BENJAMIN, BANSURI; GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET

"Tumse Lagi Lagan" is another song that made the journey to upstate New York. It is a *bhajan*, or religious song, sung by members of the Jain faith—an Indian religion rooted in the first millennium BC with some four to five million followers today. The song is presented here as an instrumental, the *bansuri* flute of Pawan Benjamin carrying its soft, whispering melody. The song provides listeners with a moment of respite and reflection, even as it quietly marks Jain's parents' years-long efforts to build community in their new home.




 SUNNY JAIN'S MOTHER, ASHA JAIN, IN FRONT OF
 THE FAMILY'S FIRST CAR IN AMERICA, 1971.
 (COURTESY OF SHRI AND ASHA JAIN)

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MAITRI BHAVANU (FEATURING GANAVYA)

GANAVYA, VOCALS; PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE;
 GREY MCMURRAY, GUITAR; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET

With "Maitri Bhavanu," we shift once again. This is perhaps closest to Jain's own answer to Ali Mir's provocation, and not surprisingly it returns to his parents; it ties together their journey and his. "Maitri Bhavanu" draws from a Jain prayer of this name, but the drummer/composer/immigrant son has purposefully chosen verses that transcend his family's or anyone's single religion, that transcend nations and their varied claims, to find instead an ethics of being here, on this soil, in this world—an ethics based in radical empathy and interconnection. "May my heart bleed," begins one verse, "at the sight of wretchedness, cruelty, and poverty." Yet this is not the final track of *Wild Wild East*. Jain seems to want to offer its message to us, but still leave us unsettled.



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BROOKLYN DHAMAL

PAWAN BENJAMIN, TENOR SAXOPHONE; GREY MCMURRAY,
GUITAR; SUNNY JAIN, DRUMSET, VARIOUS METAL

Accordingly, we end instead with "Brooklyn Dhamal," a track that begins in an angular, cyclical rhythm, then veers between Spaghetti Western and surf guitar before taking us into another post-punk wall of sound, a peak of loud, wailing distortion, and then out again. We are left with a frenzy of every narrative and historical thread, every musical and cultural influence upon which the album has thus far drawn. This is not an effort to neatly tie them up, but rather to conjure them into something and ask us to figure out how to step in.

ELLIS ISLAND REGISTRY ROOM (OR GREAT HALL). THESE PEOPLE HAVE PASSED THE FIRST MENTAL INSPECTION, CA 1902-1913. (THE MIRIAM AND IRA D. WALLACH DIVISION OF ART, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS: PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION, COURTESY OF NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY)

CREDITS

Produced by Sunny Jain and Joel Hamilton

Recorded and mixed by Joel Hamilton at
Studio G, Brooklyn, NY, in May and June 2019

Assistant engineer: Francisco Botero

Mastered by Pete Reiniger

Annotated by Vivek Bald and Sunny Jain

Cover photo, back and inside of package, cover of booklet by Ebru Yildiz

Executive producers: Huib Schippers and John Smith

Production manager: Mary Monseur

Production assistant: Kate Harrington

Editorial assistance by Carla Borden and James Deutsch

Art direction, design, and layout by Louis F. Cuffari

I dedicate this album to my parents, Shri and Asha Jain, for the love and courage they've always shown me. I'm grateful for my teachers: Rich Thompson, Roger Eckers, Bobby Thomas, Akira Tana, Michael Carvin, Paramjyoti Kocherlakota, Samir Chatterjee, Kenny Barron, Ted Dunbar, Ralph Bowen, and Catherine Moore. Big love to the amazing Smithsonian team that made this album possible, and to the artistry of the musicians that brought this music alive. Giant love to my amazing partner, Sapana Shah, and my biggest little fans, Monami and Kaiden.

– Sunny Jain



In loving memory of Shri Chand Jain

August 7, 1940 – November 14, 2019

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