



Kiran Ahluwalia explores new ground on CD

By Bob Clark, Calgary Herald January 26, 2011



Kiran Ahluwalia is moving in new directions on her new CD.

Canadian singer and composer Kiran Ahluwalia's new CD, *Aam Zameen: Common Ground*, marks the furthest point yet in the rich musical territory that Ahluwalia has staked out and explored with such authority and consummate skill since first bursting onto the world beat music scene almost a decade ago.

Her soaring and unforgettably haunting vocals in the performance of Punjabi folk songs as well as many of her own sensual musical settings of ghazals (highly literary poetic forms about love and loss that date back centuries), reveal her to be one of today's most popular exponents of the fine art of creating hybrid musical styles that become almost signature in the ear of the beholder.

This time, Ahluwalia has gone beyond even the realm of melding Portuguese fado and Indian classical forms - to the Tuareg grooves of the Malian Sahara, in fact, for which project she became her own poet.

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"In previous CDs, I took the works of Pakistani- and Indian-born Canadian poets, and composed the music to that," says Ahluwalia, who brings her touring show, *India Calling*, to Jack Singer Concert Hall on Saturday, as part of the Epocor Centre's BD&P World Music Series.

But as soon as she set about composing music that incorporated the phrasings, scales, and trance-like rhythms of the Tuareg (nomadic people of the Sahara) which she so admired, Ahluwalia recalls finding herself unable to find suitable words in the ghazal genre to carry out her musical intentions.

"That's why I wrote my own words. Not because I had some big desire to be a poet," she adds, laughing.

"But I would call them Indian contemporary songs."

Ahluwalia's two-pronged Calgary gig consists of Aam Zameen: Common Ground-supporting performances with guitarist Rez Abbasi and his ensemble (bass, harmonium, and tabla players), as well as performances with a group of Indian desert musicians, Rhythm of Rajasthan.

The latter collaboration is aimed at presenting "a bigger picture of India," says Ahluwalia, noting that Rhythm of Rajasthan is more traditional, musically speaking - "and I'm known as a more contemporary composer and singer."

Showtime: 7:30 p.m. Tickets: Call 403-294-9494.