



PROJECT MUSE®

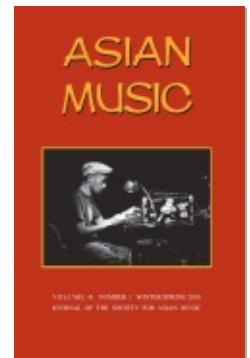
The Rough Guide to Bollywood Gold (review)

Alison Arnold

Asian Music, Volume 41, Number 1, Winter/Spring 2010, pp. 175-178 (Review)

Published by University of Texas Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/amu.0.0049>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/369325>

section is performed in *irama wilet* and *rangkep* (also with *andhegan*, and at times even including “naughty” treatment of certain passages led by the drummer). The above are not the treatments of *wayang* accompaniment. There are a few examples of *sulukan*, a song by the *dhalang* primarily to set and/or heighten the mood of a scene. For the other *wayang* music examples, an older *dolanan* (play song) is given, rather than a newer one, and its use for the clown scene is explained. Two most popular *jineman*, a genre featuring the melodic dexterity of the *pesindhen*, are also presented: “Uler Kambang” and “Gathik Glindhing.” About the latter, it was already mentioned in 19th century gamelan literature, thus was not composed by a recent musician as suggested in the liner notes.

This CD set indeed represents the richness in content of the style, musical treatment, and mood of the gamelan repertoires. A few pieces are highly attached to the court tradition (e.g., “Ela-Ela Kalibeber” and “Laler Mengeng”), but most pieces are well-known in and outside of the court. I have been using this set for listening assignments in my class on Indonesian music and theater, but I reconfigure the order of the pieces according to the needs of the class. For example, to simulate a typical *klenengan*, in which mood and *pathet* (modal) progression is an important aspect of the presentation, I choose the following pieces in order: “Kombang Mara,” “Titipati,” “Gambir Sawit,” “Jineman,” and “Pangkur.” I choose pieces with short *gongan* structure (“Gegot” and “Subakastawa”) to illustrate gamelan musical structure as well as to explain a variety of musical treatments and rhythmic variety. All in all, Marc Benamou and Rahayu Supanggah should be commended for producing this excellent gamelan box set.

Sumarsam

Wesleyan University

The Rough Guide to Bollywood Gold. (RGNET 1182CD). Selected by DJ Ritu and produced by World Music Network, 2007. Compact disc with notes and an extra data track interview with DJ Ritu.

Selecting 15 songs to represent the highlights of a musical genre with a 75-year history can be a daunting task, and to choose 15 from an estimated 75,000 Bollywood film songs produced between 1931 and the present would seem to be a Herculean one. British Asian DJ and BBC radio presenter DJ Ritu has, nevertheless, undertaken this challenge admirably, and not once but twice, having compiled both *The Rough Guide to Bollywood* (2002) and now *The Rough Guide to Bollywood Gold* (2007). For her first Bollywood compilation, DJ Ritu’s “instinct was to put together a dance-floor-oriented collection.” “Contractual complications” prevented her from realizing this vision, according

to her disc notes, but *The Rough Guide to Bollywood* turned out to be a fine collection of 15 classic love songs mostly from the 1970s and 1990s. After compiling two further Rough Guide Albums—*The Asian Underground* (2003) and *Bhangra Dance* (2006)—Ritu returned to the world of Hindi film songs for her second Bollywood collection, this time presenting “a very personal trip down memory lane.” Her criterion for this selection is neither theme-based, as in the earlier love song album or in the recent *Bombay Connection* CDs, for example: *Funk from Bollywood Action Thrillers 1977–1984* (2007, vol. 1), and *Bombshell Baby of Bombay, Bouncin’ Night Club Grooves from Bollywood Films 1959–1972* (2007, vol. 2); nor is it a “greatest hits” compilation of top playback singers, composers, or films. Instead, Ritu draws from the popular film songs she remembers hearing over and over again in the homes of relatives and friends when growing up in England in the 1960s and 1970s (Interview on the CD data track). This personal connection is a major strength of the compilation. *Bollywood Gold* provides the listener with a personal experience of the distant, glittering world of Bollywood through Ritu’s memories and anecdotes. It also presents a sound window into Bollywood in Britain, the “music [that] played an absolutely integral part to the way that these [Asian British] families socialized” (Interview).

Bollywood Gold consists of 14 Hindi film songs and one instrumental theme music track. Most of the major playback singers of the 1960s–1970s era are represented in the songs: Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Mohammad Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Mukesh, Mahendra Kapoor, Hemant Kumar, and Shailendra. The iconic voice of Lata Mangeshkar can be heard on track 14, “Chalte Chalte” from *Pakeezah* (1971), which “became one of the most played songs ever in Asian homes both in the subcontinent and abroad” (disc notes). Lata’s sister Asha Bhosle is likewise afforded one solo song on the compilation, the *ghazal* “In Aankhon ki Masti” from *Umrao Jaan* (1981) on track 4. Asha is renowned for her renditions of cabaret songs and Western-influenced pop songs, such as the 1966 “twist” dance number in her duet with Mohammad Rafi on track 5 (“Aaja Aaja Main Hoon Pyar Tera” from *Teesri Manzil*). DJ Ritu’s selection of the serious *Umrao Jaan* *ghazal* for track 4 is commendable both in illustrating Asha’s versatile singing voice and in highlighting the film for which Asha won her first National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer.

The recordings by male vocalists on the album also present some outstanding songs in the history of Bollywood film music. Kishore Kumar became one of the top playback singers in the 1970s, renowned for his trademark yodel that is clearly demonstrated in “Zindagi ek safar” from *Andaaz* (1971), for which he was nominated for Best Male Playback Singer. Ritu includes two songs on *Bollywood Gold* sung by Mukesh, another leading playback singer of the time, for screen actor and film producer-director Raj Kapoor. The first, the lively title song from

Awara (1951) on track 8, falls well outside Ritu's stated 1960–1980 time frame for her *Bollywood Gold* album. Yet this song, together with the second Mukesh song, “Kehta hai joker” from *Mera Naam Joker* (1970) on track 13, illustrate and frame an enormously popular and successful association between Mukesh and Raj Kapoor that lasted two decades. These two Mukesh songs present the exuberant musical style of the hugely successful composer duo Shankar-Jaikishen, whose music is also heard on track 7, “Chahe koi mujhe jungle kahen” from *Jungle* (1961) sung by Mohammad Rafi. The Rafi song begins with a wailing “Yahoo!” that won instant popularity with Indian audiences and, like Kishore Kumar's yodel, became another Bollywood vocal signature, this time for leading actor Shammi Kapoor.

The album's coverage of the leading film music composers of the 1960s and 1970s is less comprehensive. Film songs by the composer duo Shankar-Jaikishen and Rahul Dev Burman make up half the compilation. These popular music directors certainly created many hit songs during the 2 decades, but other successful composers such as Madan Mohan, Naushad, O.P. Nayyar, C. Ramchandra, Ravi, and Roshan are not included in the compilation. One could argue that Bollywood songs as a genre have limited musical variety given that they exhibit a number of common stylistic features, such as simple memorable melodies, soaring string accompaniments, limited harmonic structures, and a standard verse-chorus form. Each composer nevertheless brought an individual and often recognizable style to his compositions: Naushad drew heavily on classical *rāgas* as well as folk music styles, for example; O.P. Nayyar introduced Punjabi rhythms from his native Lahore; and C. Ramchandra adopted styles ranging from Western swing and do-wop to Latin American dance rhythms. *Bollywood Gold* listeners will have to go elsewhere to hear these Bollywood sounds.

Compiler DJ Ritu celebrates the inclusion of a previously unreleased, “very exclusive version” of the song “Mehbooba, Mehbooba” (track 3), sung live by the composer R. D. Burman himself (Interview). The selection of this song from the 1975 film *Sholay* is an excellent one for *Bollywood Gold*. As Ritu writes in her disc notes, “‘Mehbooba’ is still frequently requested by Asian clubbers now.” The live recording is a curious addition to the collection however. It differs little from the sound track recording in Burman's own voice (available on Polygram's *Immortal RD Burman* and elsewhere) (Polygram Music 1977), and is unlikely to be the version heard in Ritu's childhood, on which the *Bollywood Gold* compilation is based. Details of this “rare” live performance would enhance Ritu's otherwise interesting and helpful notes, and would help clarify the track description that unfortunately identifies the recording as from the *Sholay* sound track.

One or two other errors and anomalies have crept into this production. Ritu claims in her disc notes that playback singers were introduced to Bollywood in 1951. Most of the leading playback singers on the disc made their debut

as playback artists for Hindi films in the 1940s: Rafi 1943, Mukesh 1945, Lata 1946, and Asha 1948 (“Hamraaz”). Ritu identifies the lyricist for the “Mehbooba” (track 3) as Salim Javed instead of Anand Bakshi, who wrote the lyrics for all seven songs in *Sholay*. Also the disc notes identify the lyricist Rajendra Krishan for track 9, the instrumental theme music from *Nagin* (1954), which is surely an oversight. On the album cover is a picture of Aishwarya Rai, a current Bollywood actress in her role as Paro in *Devdas* (2002). Rai’s beauty and her jewelry no doubt symbolize the gold standard of Bollywood today, but her appearance on the album cover as a marketing strategy is a somewhat misleading representation of the music contained in the CD.

Overall, DJ Ritu’s *Bollywood Gold* collection brightly reflects the “twenty-two-carat era of Bollywood music” that the compiler sought to encapsulate. “My mum hated English gold—nine or eighteen carat,” Ritu reminisces in her disc notes, “and would never let me wear any. Only *Indian* gold.” From this memory of her childhood in 1960s–1970s Britain comes the title of this film song compilation. Listeners today, both Bollywood aficionados and newcomers, scholars and students, are confronted by a bewildering number of collections and compilations when searching for recordings of Bollywood songs. It is easy to be overwhelmed by the enormous musical output of this film song industry. World Music Network and the Music Rough Guides have presented an attractive solution, in the form of a personal story imbued with musical memories of a golden era.

Alison Arnold

North Carolina State University–Raleigh

References

Polygram Music India

1997 *Immortal RD Burman—His Own Voice*. Polygram Music India (CDF 201).

Singh, Har Mandir (Director)

1984 ‘Hamraaz.’ In *Hindi Film Geet Kosh*, vol. II, 1941–1950. Kanpur: Sumer Singh Sachdev.

World Music Network

2002 *The Rough Guide to Bollywood*. World Music Network (RGNET1074).

2003 *The Rough Guide to the Asian Underground*. World Music Network (RGNET1096).

2006 *The Rough Guide to Bhangra Dance*. World Music Network (RGNET1154).

2007 *Bombshell Baby of Bombay, Bouncin’ Night Club Grooves from Bollywood Films 1959–1972*. The Bombay Connection, vol. 2. Bombay Connection Records (BC002CD).

2007 *Funk from Bollywood Action Thrillers 1977–1984*. The Bombay Connection, vol. 1. Bombay Connection Records (BC001CD).

2007 *The Rough Guide to Bollywood Gold*. World Music Network (RGNET1182).