

Alien Chatter Press Reviews



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Alien Chatter at Temple Bar.

Few working musicians can make a living with just one steady gig, whether it's playing with a band or in the studio. Those who pay the bills solely from their artistic labors often have a laundry list of credits to their name.

Hopefully, though, they have that special project or two that keeps their creative juices gushing and their spirits buoyant. Satnam Ramgotra and Rodney Lee have collaborated with dozens of lesser and greater name-branded acts, but their passion peaks when they pair up in Alien Chatter. Ramgotra, a peripatetic percussionist, and Lee, a consummate keyboard tickler, have created a genre-busting, acoustic-electronic hybrid that melds tabla burble-thwack, melodious pianisms and deep-space programming on the duo's self-produced *Music for Aliens*. Their shit's trippy, funky and jazzilicious, laced with extra helpings of curry powder or double doses of chill-pill, depending on which way their galactically informed muses sway them. Alien Chatter reside at Temple Bar for three consecutive Mondays, providing ample opportunity to hear vestiges of the big bang channeled through two of L.A.'s most cosmic groove voyagers. (Tom Cheyney)

"Alien Chatter's jams are exotic, unique, and funky as hell. My two fave tracks are 'Kervah Swings' and 'We're All Connected'. They're amazing jams that deserve to be played, dug, and bought!"

Gomez, [The Groove Boutique](#), December, 2003

"Jazz/Electronica rolled up with traditional/classical South Asian beats is something we have all heard before, but it's rare to hear it done so well done... You could, leave this album playing allowing it to be the melodious background music that soothes your night at home or, let it's haunting beauty wander all over your spine stimulating your body bit by bit. The utter lack of presumption combined with an unerring ability to lay out beats, where neither the East nor West takes over the other is a harmonious quality missing in most of this album's counter parts. Here the tabla isn't added as an afterthought, it holds its lead in the crowd yet allows the other instruments to have their moment to shine. This isn't the new age of fusion - you know "fusion for the sake of fusion" - this is two guys doing something that feels right to them and you hear it. Get the album! But, only if you want some of the best Electronified Jazz cooing in and out of you, cleansing every pore in your body."

Gaurav, [Asian Vibrations.Com](#), September, 2003

"Alien Chatter combines Satnam Ramgotra's ferocious tabla mastery with Rodney Lee's piano prowess in a blend of uptempo chakra-shakers and downtempo ambient chill-outs"

[FlavorPill LA](#), October, 2003

"... Indian Jazz fusions, there's not that many of them that work. The first really great one was John McLaughlin's group, Shakti. But there haven't been that many of them that also bring in the electronic element, and that's what sort of sets these guys apart and [what] I think makes them really worth checking out."

Bob Duskis from Six Degrees Records in a feature on [NPR's "The Savvy Traveler"](#), March, 2004

So this disc arrives in our lavish New York City office the other day and

the cover letter states, "With today's resurgence in Indo-Jazz, Alien Chatter furthers this genre with a combination of the classical Indian tabla coupled with the traditional jazz piano." The phrase Indo-Jazz has only ever managed to conjure visions of Shakti and Oregon for me, so these guys have some high standards to live up to if that's their claim. And as far as the pairing of tabla and piano go...not quite sure what to make of that.

Behind this project are two very able and accomplished musicians: Rodney Lee (Piano, Synths, & Programming) and Satnam Ramgotra (Tabla, Drums, Percussion, Vocals, & Programming), who it would seem, crossed paths by accident, and that's just what happened as it turns out. Each has toured and done studio work for a slew of notable artists including Anastacia, Jody Watley, Terence Trent D'Arby, Beck, Sting, Seal, & Nikka Costa, among others. And both have had their music featured in national television programs and major motion pictures.

So how 'bout the music you ask?

Self described as "A sophisticated blend of original contemporary jazz piano, laced with pop, soul, R&B, and electronica elements, with a special emphasis on Indian classical tabla and percussion stylings, "Music For Aliens turns out to be an incredibly easy CD to listen to! I hadn't been sure what to expect with the combination of tabla and piano, but I was amazed to find just how well these two guys made things work. For you listeners out there who have Duke Ellington, Oscar Peterson, Thelonious Monk, Ellis Marsalis, George Winston, and the like in your collections, but haven't quite made the leap to all things Indian, this may just be the disc to tickle your ivory tandoori stylee.

Ensnared within the framework of an electronica background, the tabla and piano (supported by a cast of synths, vocals, percussion, & drums), symbiose in the foreground to make you wonder why this hasn't been done before?! Neither instrument overpowers, but complement and enhance each other instead. Rodney's keys provide the basis for melody, while Satnam's tablas & drums partner alongside to support and propel the music forward, and at times taking lead. The piano is reminiscent of Cecil Taylor, Keith Jarrett, & Lyle Mays, unified by an R&B context that is extremely refreshing. The tabla, while based in classical Indian music, is liberated to act as its own entity, irrespective of genre, yet fully suited to all as the songs clearly demonstrate.

I'll dispense with the track by track breakdown in favor of simply extolling to you to get this CD and become one with the Aliens. Power to the people...that's the point!

[Biz, Ethno Techno.Com](#), November, 2003

"Straight to the heart jazz with a contemporary twist – Indian Classical beats that sway the listener into another world. The music is obviously influenced by the musical developments of the last few years, but it's fresh and innovative. Ramgotra has 20 years of performing and teaching under his belt and the experience with the tabla shows in his expressive touch on most tracks. Definitely a dynamic recording, showcasing some fine instrumental yet classical pieces."

[Dr. Bombay, Bombay Beat Science](#), October, 2003

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