

SUNNY JAIN'S *Wild Wild East*

Sunny Jain's *Wild Wild East* (Smithsonian Folkways 2020) encompasses myriad facets of Jain's identity both as a first-generation South Asian–American and as a global musician, from his own family's immigration story to his eclectic musical upbringing. In recasting the immigrant—steeped in the courage to leave a familiar homeland for a new beginning—as the modern-day cowboy and cowgirl, Jain sources musical inspiration from the scores of Bollywood classics and Spaghetti Westerns, Punjabi folk traditions, jazz improvisation, and rollicking psychedelic styles. Sunny Jain's *Wild Wild East* is rooted in the contemporary global soundscape, singing in a new voice, "I am large, I contain multitudes." In 2022, the band embarked on a milestone tour to Pakistan headlining Music Mela in Islamabad, the Lahore Jazz Festival and performing with master Sufi dhol drummers Nasir Sain Wajdani and Sain Tanveer. Just months prior, the group performed on the National Mall in Washington D.C. for the renowned Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

SUNNY JAIN BIOGRAPHY

The career of Sunny Jain is a celebration of cultural diaspora: deep-rooted tradition that ripples outward, changing – and being changed by – the cultures that it touches. He is a composer, drummer, dhol player and thought leader. In 2022, Jain joined Planet Drum for their first show in 15 years, playing alongside drumming legends Mickey Hart, Zakir Hussain, and Giovanni Hidalgo.

In 2021, Jain released *Phoenix Rise*, a collaborative effort featuring over 50 artists such as Arooj Aftab, Michael League (Snarky Puppy), Adrian Quesada (Black Pumas), Endea Owens (The Late Show with Stephen Colbert) and Joe Russo (jam band darling). Accompanying the full digital album is a 72-page physical book that combines music, art, photography and planet-based recipes, all in the name of social justice. As executive producer and music producer, Jain partnered with Center for Constitutional Rights to fundraise and advocate for the work they do.

Called the "Hendrix of dhol" by Manchester Salon (UK), Jain is most known for founding the pioneering band Red Baraat, a frenzied fusion of bhangra, hip-hop, jazz, rock, and sheer, unbridled energy that NPR has called "the best party band in years." The band has performed across the globe including stops at the White House (Obama), London Olympics, TED, Austin City Limits, Bonnaroo, Luxembourg Philharmonic, Peter Gabriel's WOMAD festivals (Australia, New Zealand, Spain, UK) and Padma Lakshmi's Blossom Ball. Jain was also the drummer for the acclaimed Sufi rock band Junoon for several years, recording the single "Open Your Eyes" with Peter Gabriel, performing at the Nobel Peace Prize concert in 2007, Srinagar University in Kashmir in 2009, and the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2009.

Jain is in development of his first musical theatrical piece called *Love Force* - supported by National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and MAP Fund. His entry to theater began in 2018, after serving as musical director to the OBIE award-winning London-based play, *The Jungle*, and then becoming music producer to Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*, *The Musical* in 2023.

VIDEOS

Sunny Jain's *Wild Wild East* [Official video]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxFgHKGrqQo>

NPR All Things Considered interview w. Ari Shapiro
<https://www.npr.org/2020/03/02/811253034/sunny-jains-wild-wild-east-is-a-western-inspired-ode-to-an-immigrant-father>

Sunny Jain's *Wild Wild East* [Live at Nublu, NYC 6.12.23]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBhZpsqujNc>

Sunny Jain's *Wild Wild East* [Live at Music Mela, Islamabad, Pakistan 12.2.22]
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbOs3xyNxcc>

Sunny Jain's *Wild Wild East* [Live at Smithsonian Folklife Festival, DC 7.1.22]
<https://www.youtube.com/live/HnWlwkGkzrM?feature=share&t=3959>

ESSAY

At the Intersection of Jainism, Jazz, and the Punjabi Dhol Drum [Essay] <https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/tradition-of-now-sunny-jain>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Website: www.sunnyjain.com

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/jainsounds>

Instagram: @sunnydrums

<https://www.instagram.com/sunnydrums>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sunnyjainmusic/>

Twitter: @sunnydrums

<https://twitter.com/sunnydrums>

Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/album/44nAny2j7tMjqr4yaGEPBK?si=F58SkqhQcadKmWZ05oziw&dl_branch=1&nd=1

PRESS

Best Albums of 2020. 5/5 star review. "Epic in every sense. One of the leading figures in North America's burgeoning Asian music scene. A global musical alchemist and cultural agent provocateur." - **Songlines (UK)**

"Sunny Jain, the drummer who leads the Red Baraat brass band, vastly expands his palette on 'Wild Wild East,' a furiously propulsive song. Bollywood meets New Orleans, new age, rock and whatever else it takes to make this five-minute track hurtle forward with a new fusion at every junction." - **The New York Times**

The Sunny Jain Wild Wild East Band enthralled a jam-packed hall. He gave a good desi twist to his amazing performance by rendering Faiz's poem, 'Subh-i-Azadi', on jazz music. 'Aye Meray Dil Kahin Aur Chal' was also a heart-touching composition played by the band. The last item got the band a standing ovation, which was a dhamal on 'Dama Dam Mast Qalandar'. - **Dawn (Pakistan)**

"The indefatigable drummer and dhol player Sunny Jain is an unrepentant maximalist—were he a visual artist, one imagines bright-hued paints splattered across his canvas, his floor, and perhaps his ceiling. Think of a genre, and it's probably somewhere in his compositions, yet the musician's hullabaloo stands on considered conceptual ground." - **The New Yorker**

"Creatively and ideologically, this is a perfect storm for Jain. Even in his already formidable body of work, *Wild Wild East* stands out as an album that not only deserves to be heard, but needs to be listened to. An understanding of the stories he tells here with such musical brilliance is liable to change hearts and minds for the better. Sunny Jain is the cowboy we need today, blazing new trails ahead into a sonically marked sense of community." - **PopMatters**

"Many of these compositions are intellectually thrilling to unravel. In *Wild Wild East*, shimmering walls of sound feel like floating face-down in a pool and watching light patterns dance on the floor." - **Pitchfork**

"Jain manages to find a work that in some way demands the listener and in that interaction he is able to give notions of truly novel music and soundscapes." 9/10 stars. - **Mondo Sonoro (Spain)**

"Sunny Jain paints a rich canvas...whether mingling rhythms from Pakistan film soundtracks with spaghetti western motifs ('Immigrant Warrior') or spicing ragas with twisting, turning time signatures ('Osian'; 'Baaghi') the energetic, groove-riding results prove utterly compelling throughout." - **MOJO (UK)**

"Jain makes everything fire and flow, roll and combust. His drumming is never static or simply 'in the pocket'; it's in constant go mode: rolls rattling, beats careening, grooves always pressing, pushing for ecstatic release." - **Modern Drummer**

"It sounds like the middle ground between a Western score and a Bollywood score, with a little free jazz in the mix too, and Sunny Jain fuses these things to the point where they sound like one focused style of music." - **Brooklyn Vegan**

"Jain breaks open the image of the swaggering American cowboy with his acidic, twangy, propulsively hypnotic songs. It's an inspired cinematic concept that conjures kaleidoscopic images. Jain has crafted a masterful, robust celebration of America's immigrant cowboy soul." - **All Music**