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CLUB REVIEWS



Red Baraat Festival: A party scene where cultures and styles collide.

Red Baraat Festival

Santos Party House
New York, NY

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Web: MySpace.com/redbaraat
festival

The Players: Sunny Jain, dhol, percussion, vocals; Rohin Khemani, taval, percussion; Tomas Fujiwara, drumsel, percussion; Arun Luthra,

soprano sax; Mike Bomwell, tenor sax; MiWi La Lupa, bass trumpet; Dave Smith, trombone; John Altieri, sousaphone.

Material: Unless you have witnessed an Indian wedding or marching band, to begin assigning a genre to this music might be futile. However, those familiar with New Orleans funeral parades could have a clue. Having said that, Red Baraat is an even deeper fusion of

East and West, North and South, incorporating funk, jazz, samba, bhangra and, yes, Led Zeppelin. To call it "party music" would be to damn it with faint praise. It is a raucous, blaring, clashing celebration of a multitude of cultures come together as one joyous explosion. In that way, of course, it is typically American.

Musicianship: Sunny Jain is an excellent dhol player who has authored a couple of books on the usage of this North Indian drum — thus his credentials with the instrument are impeccable. As much can be said of the other members; each appears to be a seasoned musician, but special kudos must go out to Messrs. Luthra and Lupa on soprano sax and bass trumpet respectively. Which is not to deny the impressive ability of the others, but to acknowledge that with so much going on, only so much can be noted.

On the other hand who could have missed John Altieri's funky and perfectly timed sousaphone bass lines? Come to think of it... when was the last time you saw a sousaphone player in a band?

Performance: "Are you ready to party?" Mr. Jain leads and cues his band with the kind of furor any frontman could wish for

— by pounding out rhythms on both sides of the barrel-shaped drum slung over his shoulder, or blowing a whistle, inciting both performers and audience toward ever greater heights of delight. The band — all eight of them — follow Jain's instructions like an invading horde. They suggest a crude brass instrument made up of many subtle and sophisticated parts. Sometimes, like their Indian forebears, their intonation is slightly dissonant, but this just adds to the excitement. Never so their rhythm, the gift of the third world to modern society.

Summary: Red Baraat Festival is an appropriate name for the band. Baraat is the Hindi word for a marriage procession, and this music is the marriage of many cultures and styles — while the experience of their live performance is truly nothing less than a festival. As to whether that experience translates to record is another question; it may be hard to capture all that sound on a small silver disc. On the other hand, when dancing and celebration are called for, Red Baraat Festival will supply not only the required soundtrack, but the energy, the enthusiasm and the electricity as well. If you ever get the chance to see them live, be prepared to party!

—Henry Lewis