



Meet The Kolkata Initiative Keeping Jazz Alive In India

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A Foxtrot Project Gig (Amuze Records) (<http://amuzerecords.in/>)

By Payal Mohta | Posted Jun 28, 2017

Branded as the ‘devil’s music’ by western classical music puritans, the emergence of Jazz in the 1910s was a welcome addition to the underground music scene. The smooth tunes would float out of many night clubs, up until the wee hours of the morning. Today, jazz is constantly fighting a battle against this century’s pop, rock, metal and electronic music. It is oft heard, a whisper here and there, in many underground circuits—*jazz is dead*. But is it really so?

The freedom and improvisational space a musical genre like jazz creates manages to inspire or trigger a musical melody like no other, intoxicating jazz lovers with those familiar melodies. In India, *The Foxtrot Project* is one such platform that is striving to keep jazz alive against the commercial music scene in the country. Produced by Kolkata-based indie record label and studio *Amuze Records* (<http://amuzerecords.in/>), the project records Indian jazz artists whose music has been denied publishing or promotional opportunities, despite being of great quality.

While the internet has made all art easily accessible, it has also made consumers reluctant to pay for it. In the music industry, because of this attitude, independent musicians are unable to financially support their art. For Arijit Chakraborty, sound engineer and owner of *Amuze Records*, “An artist’s job is to compose and perform. He should not be burdened with anything else.” This belief has been the catalyst behind the formulation of *The Foxtrot Project*, whose resources allow independent musicians to play and increase their viewership.

The first volume of the project featured four Calcutta based artists; *The Bodhisattwa Trio*, *Srinjay Banerjee Trio*, *BOP Machine* and *project:Albatross*. The six track album that was released in November 2015, encapsulates Jazz in moods of smooth blues, energetic swing

and some dark and trippy spaces, rarely if ever, explored in Indian Jazz.

The second volume of the project that was completed in May this year, features *The Bodhisattwa Trio* again, with six other artists; *Neel Sarkar Project* from Shantiniketan, *Syncopation* from Delhi and Chennai based artist Maarten Visser and three Calcutta based artists; *The Rohan Ganguli Quartet*, *Shonai*, *Rahul Guha Roy & Friends*. This 14 track album has Jazz in avant-garde saxophone tunes, Chinese folk and Persian music influenced tracks, Blues soaked pop, hard-rock fusions, rock n' roll and funk-swing rhythms with some commercial pop infused Syncopation.

While the first volume of the project was released publicly for purchase and later for free streaming, the second volume went on tour earlier this year. The venues for these gigs were *The Piano Man Jazz Club* in Delhi, where each band had a day to perform, *High Spirits* in Pune, *BlueFROG* in Bangalore, *antiSocial* in Mumbai and *Phoenix Bar and Club* in Calcutta.

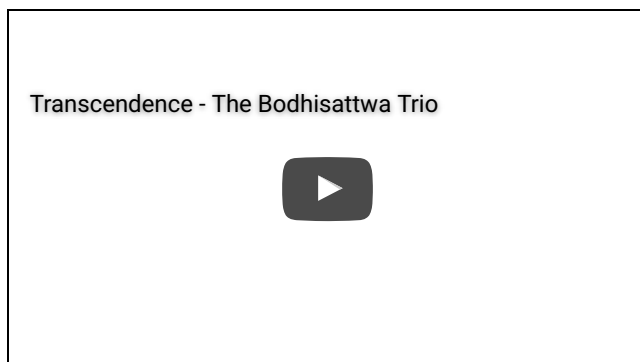


Image Credit: Amuze Records

All recordings of *The Foxtrot Project* have been done live—just the way Jazz is supposed to be. “It’s true that there is an expiration date for everything but at the end of the day it’s about what you really want to do as a person,” says Chakraborty on his refusal to compromise on sound quality with digitalised music.

Their commitment to live recordings did pose as an obstacle as they had to bring entire bands together for a long period of time. Most of the musicians had other studios or bands they were already committed to, while others were permanent faculty members in music schools. That didn’t stop *The Foxtrot Project* from going ahead with their original plan though. “Like Frank Sinatra said, I had to do it ‘my way’!” says Chakraborty, referring to the American singer’s song, written in regards to sticking to his own style at a time when he was sidelined by pop stars like Michael Jackson and Prince.

Chakraborty laments that the independent music scene in India is bleak; with the dire dearth of venues that play original live music and only some sporadic pockets of independent musicians in the country which are “barely making it.” For Bodhisattwa Ghosh from *The Bodhisattwa Trio*, “Improvising musicians in the independent music scene are on the verge of extinction and endeavours like *The Foxtrot Project* are some of the last stands against commercialisation.” Rohan Ganguly from *The Rohan Ganguly Quartet* voices the same, “Not much is happening in the independent music scene.”



While currently there are no immediate gigs scheduled for *The Foxtrot Project* there are plans for a national tour with Jazz influenced instrumental rock band *The Bodhisattwa Trio*. Follow Amuze Records (https://www.facebook.com/amuzerecords/?ref=br_rs) for more details and for more local, independent Jazz and Rock music.

To support the independent music scene you can buy The Foxtrot Project Volume II CDs here (<http://smarturl.it/fxtrtCD>), their digital album here (<http://smarturl.it/fxtrt2>), and for the album preview click here (<https://soundcloud.com/amuzeonline/thefoxtrotprojectv2-preview-2017%20Buy%20links->). Volume I of the project is available for free streaming.

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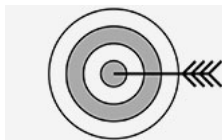
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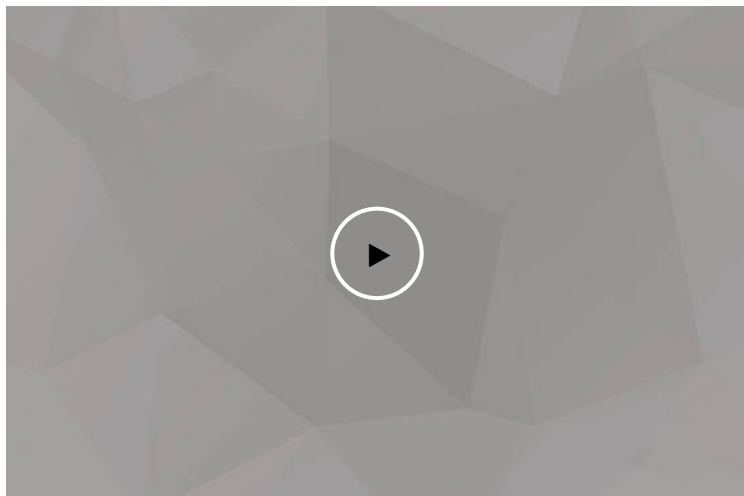
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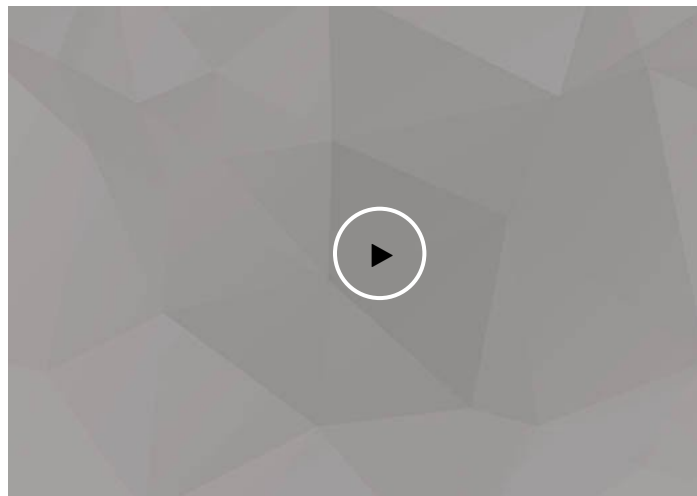
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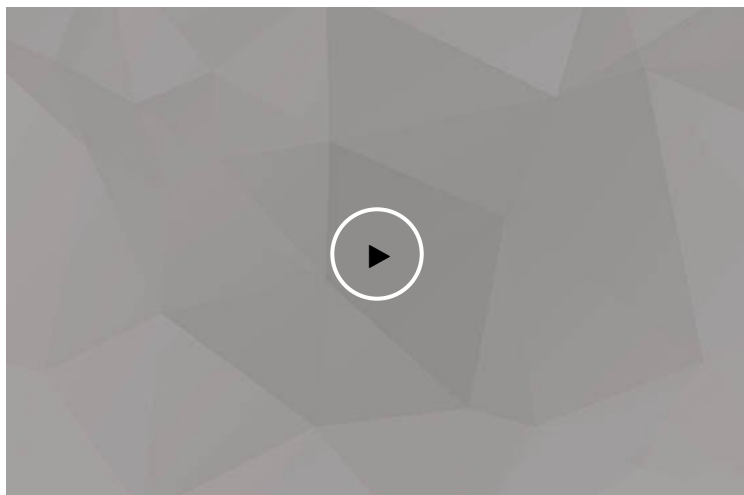
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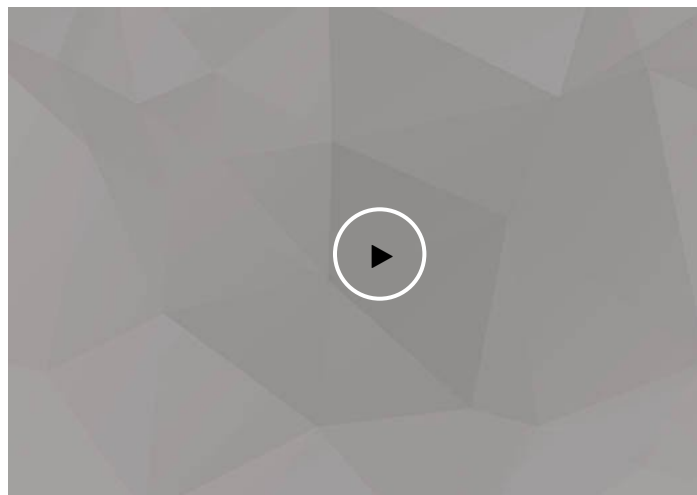
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