

# **Cross Cultural Musical Practices in Popular Music:**

## ***First Generation Migrant Singer-Songwriters in Western Society.***

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of:  
Masters in Research.

Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies  
Macquarie University.

December, 2015.

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## **Thesis Summary:**

The identity of first-generation migrant singer-songwriters in western society is comprised of more than one cultural and religious expression. Often, questions of identity are central to a creative artist's ability when producing music for audiences of western society. Due to migration and globalisation, the west has become influenced by the migrant population – impacting their popular music industry, and, transforming the sound of the industry today. Cross-cultural elements in music are inherently visible in the representation of music and serve both stylistically and functionally as components of successful western popular music.

This project investigates contemporary approaches within the creation of popular music that embraces concepts of cultural and religious diversity. It examines how a culturally hybrid artist of multiple cultural and religious backgrounds, incorporates these elements in the production of music for western popular audiences.

The thesis consists of an analysis of one artist from the UK Asian Underground music scene and will identify practices and approaches inherent in their music. The project will then test these principles through a practice-led creative project - an extended play (EP) of originally created music by myself, as the artist.

## Statement of Candidate

I, Mehreen Javed Certify that the work titled “Cross Cultural Musical Practices in Popular Music:

First Generation Migrant Singer-Songwriters in Western Society” is what I am submitting for the

award: “Masters in Research,” I confirm that this has not been submitted for an award elsewhere

to any other university. Nor, has the work in this degree been published or shared with any other

institution, aside from Macquarie University.

Any other assistance and support that I have received and have been given have been notified in

the “Acknowledgements” section appropriately.

All other resources and tools I have used have been referenced in the Appendix and Reference

List at the end of this thesis.

Signature: **MEHREEN JAVED**

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015.

## Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Julian Knowles for supervising me and always encouraging me with your energy. You have been an extensive support that has helped me get through to the end of my degree.

I would also like to thank Andrew Alter for acting like a second parent, as I have continuously doubted myself going through this lengthy process but he has remained steadfast like a lifeline.

My biggest ever thanks goes to the technical staff at Y3A. For their tireless commitment towards helping me complete the technical work on my creative component. Chris Walkerden has always been available at any time to answer my questions, and, has never said no to any of my requests – even as outrageous as they were.

A special acknowledgement goes to Ben Nash, one of the most giving, knowledgeable and kindest people – who has guided me through my technical hiccups and always been so kind to never say never. Without Ben, this EP creative component would not have existed in its form.

A huge thank you to my colleagues at the Australian Institute of Music for constantly replenishing my energy and being so kind to me when I was always turning up to work with half a face of makeup on. You have always supported my endeavour and have let me take time off to complete my studies. My prayers and well wishes are always indebted to your kindness.

A special thanks to Macquarie Wellbeing for existing as a lifeline for me during my hardest moments during my troubled moments in the year. Thank you to Student Groups and Campus Engagement for keeping student clubs alive.

Thank you to the Pakistani Society on Campus for believing in me and supporting me through my presidency – which was one of my hardest terms.

My friends. A specific mention goes to Jalal, Areeka and Sauda. You have all stood by me through my tense moments, through the hiccups, through the meltdowns when components of this EP would fall apart and I felt so small – like I could not do this. I remember every waking moment stressing about my work, but, you all cuddled me and nursed me back to my confidence. I will never forget these moments.

Finally, my family – especially my mother. You have watched me throw every single tantrum, washed the dishes when I left them, did my laundry when I was frustrated and made me breakfast whilst I was editing my thesis. I cannot sit here and not be grateful for the amount of prayers and good will you have tried to give me – but mostly, I'll always be thankful for the space that you gave – which I know it was hard for you. I love you all incredibly so much.

Lastly, but never least. Biggest thanks goes to Allah SWT for letting me take this journey that has been the hardest thing I have ever done in my entire life. I hope I make it through in the end.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my (late) cousin Mansoor, who was taken from this world last year. I almost gave up, out of depression multiple times. But, I pray that I pulled through.

I hope you are proud of me.

# **Chapter 1 – Literature Review**

## **Introduction:**

The West is generally classified into three specific regions: North America, UK and Australia. Genre-wise, western popular music has matured with the influence of many stylistic and culturally hybrid artists, particularly on the mainstream artistic scene, causing the genre to shift with the cultural modifications of the west.

## **Defining ‘Popular’ and ‘Western Popular’ Music:**

Historically, the initial formation of western popular music discourse, however, was presented as a critique – and, has become the starting point for developing western popular music discourse. One of the first academic essays on popular music was written by Adorno (1941, pp. 73-75) addressing the classification of music into the categories of ‘popular music’ and ‘serious music’. This essay further elaborated on this differentiation, opening up the channels for the discourse to form into popular music as we know today. Since then, Adorno’s viewpoint has been used as a reference point for the expansion of popular music discourse in a western context. His viewpoint has been revised and critiqued by academics to stimulate the beginning of the discourse for popular music within academia.

Adorno, in a popular music context, has been therefore referred to as the father of music sociology, post-critique (DeNora 2003, pp. 3-4) due to the intimate integration of music in his every day practice. Other authors like Paddison (1982, pp. 201) have critiqued Adorno’s critique – describing his argument as emotional, therefore, translating it as a flawed opinion which is filled with contradictions. Adorno’s essay on popular and western popular music has been referenced widely by authors from a variety of academic backgrounds such as: Middleton (1983, pp. 240 &



1990, pp. 35), Johnstone & Katz (1957, pp. 564), Gendron (1986), DeNora (2003, pp. 3-4), Andrew (1991, pp. 186) – to name a few examples.

Going through the variety of pre-existing academic literature on popular music studies, it can be observed that there are mixed approaches written on popular music, especially when it comes to defining the terms both ‘popular’ and ‘western popular music’. There is very little literature, such as, Holt (2007, pp. 1) which cleanly defines the beginning of a text that it is referring to American popular music. Shuker’s (2008, pp. 1-12) introductory chapter in his book provides a definition of popular music, but, purely from a western context. However, in an earlier work of Shuker’s (2006, pp. vii-ix) regarding popular music discourse, he appropriately defines ‘popular music’ – not ‘western popular music’ – as a cultural hybrid of the world’s many influential genres and popular cultural trends.

‘Popular music’, as a term, has the possibility of becoming too ambiguous and confusing if it remains unspecified as to where it is geographically practiced and within which context. It is to be noted that Shuker’s discourse (2008, pp. 1-12) & (2006, pp. vii-ix) of western popular music, utilises ‘popular music’ as an umbrella term to generalise popular music as a whole –beyond the western context or practice. Other popular music scholars such as Longhurst (2007, pp. 26-31) and Middleton (1990, pp. v-vii), adopt Shuker’s generalised approach when defining popular music. Over the years, this approach has remained unchanged when defining popular music as a generalised definition, and then, applying it to the western context.

The critique of Adorno began a discourse for western popular music. It opened the door to the beginning of ongoing development into the genre. Gradually, the definition of western popular music has evolved beyond the traditional idea of it being a genre of music made by, and for, ‘white westerners’. In the past, the social stigmatisation of western popular music has limited the opportunity for developing an ongoing discourse throughout the field.

### Cultural Hybridity and Migrant Subcultures in Western Society.

Current available academic literature on the popular music studies field comes from a multitude of different perspectives and academic disciplines. Many authors approach it from a cultural studies perspective (Frith 1998, pp. 4), (Peterson 1990, pp. 97-98), Cloonan & Johnson (2002, pp. 27-28), Tagg (1982, pp. 40). Other approaches include cross disciplinary inquiries through ethnography by observing the listeners of popular music in community groups (Williams 2001, pp. 225-228), (Kong 1995, pp. 185), Cohen (1993, pp. 126-127).

From an ethnographic point of view, the identity of western popular music has evolved through the influence of the migrant diaspora. In the context of self-identity, the first-generation migrants raised in this western society have become a bi-product of cultural hybridity – harbouring elements of both their migrant and adoptive country (Bhaba 1996, pp. 54). Straw (1991, pp. 369) argues that western popular music scholars have increasingly failed to highlight or integrate the influence of migrant cultural diaspora, in western popular music society. His (Straw 1991, pp. 369) argument articulates a viewpoint that demonstrates why the general definition of popular or western popular music discourse is problematic, arguing that the west has increasingly undergone multiple culture changes through the integration of migrants into their society.

When examining the western popular music capitals of the world, it is evident that major underground music scenes and movements, created in both North America and the UK, have been pioneered by migrants. North America serves as a melting pot of nationalities, with widespread first-generation migrant musicians from a multitude of cultural, religious and political backgrounds. North America's history of black slavery is one of the famous documented examples of an early migrant subculture (Levine 1978, pp. 5-6) – as slaves used music and song to sing about their struggles. Authors Wilson (1974, pp. 3-22), Waterman (1973, pp. 85), Epstein

(2003, pp. 85-88), reference the African-American slave experience in music as an autobiographical recount of their inner suffering – utilising music as the medium for their self-expression and storytelling. Pop music became the initial medium to sing about their slave life which then further transformed into other contemporary styles of music. Porter (2002, pp. 11-14) details the involvement of African-Americans in North American jazz as a spiritual style of storytelling or expression.

There has been significant influence of the African-American experience on North American music and popular culture. Hayes (2000, pp. 156) uses the term ‘reshaping’ to describe the way African-American culture has redefined western America. As Radano (2003, pp. xii) writes, the reason why African-American music has become so influential in North America is due to the soulfulness it radiates from the pain of oppression. A timeline of literature on Black-American identity has followed into more contemporary musical expressions, surpassing folk songs (Levine 1978, pp. 5), into moving into underground rap and hip-hop scenes. Articles by authors Rose (1991, pp. 278-279) and Forman (2000, pp. 67-68) speak about the content, geographical nature of rap and the cultural context of its representation. Each geographical location holds a particular nuance of cultural identity which impacts the nature of the style of musical genre.

Along with the Black-American identity, a very heavily influenced Latin-American identity also coexists – especially within the context of the music industry. Unlike the African-American identity, the first-generation Latin-American identity in North American music integrates a more deliberate, commercialised use of Latin cultural materials when creating their popular music. Also like African-American discourse, Latin-American discourse in North American popular music is well developed. This could be because Latin-American music has sonically and visual commercially appealing rhythmic pulses, structures and melodic elements.

There is very little academic literature that covers the Latin music scene in North America through the perspective of a first-generation migrant popular musician. From what is available,

Bender (2000, pp. 723) suggests the names of various successful artists such as Ricky Martin, Enrique, Selena, Jennifer Lopez and Christina Aguilera who have mainstreamed themselves with their Latino identity. Although Gloria and Emilio Estefan were listed as pioneering the Latin movement, Cepeda (2000, pp. 57-59) gives credit to Ricky Martin as the figure who started the Latino music boom in 2000. Other written studies and opinions by Turino (2003, pp. 169-209) and Livingston (1999, pp. 66-85) speak about the mainstreaming of Latin-American identity in North America, , however do not address it specifically from the perspective of western popular music.

After North America, the next dominant cross-culturally influenced western is the UK. The South-Asian British cultural portrayal, as put by Ahmad (2001, pp. 71) in academic literature has been in a sociological discussion – not musical. This is because in the UK, first-generation South-Asian migrant youth come from highly cultural and highly patriotic migrant backgrounds. This has caused cultural confusion and clash with the youth, emerging from traditionalist, conservative family models (Kim 2012, pp. 559-560). Dawson (2005, pp. 2005) supports this by attributing it towards the parents of Asian youth who uphold the memories, traditions and religious frameworks from their migrant background – putting first-generation migrant youth in a position of dual identity. This is also why the term ‘cultural hybridity’ has been used numerously throughout the literature written on the Asian Underground scene that rose to prominence in the UK mid-1990’s. Reference of this can be seen prominently in Ahmad’s (2001, pp. 72) article where a large segment exists, defining the term ‘hybridity’ within the cultural context of Asian Underground. Ahmed (2001, pp. 72) furthermore expands on how the term ‘cultural hybridity’ was formulated through the ideas of multicultural theorists such as: Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hill and Paul Gilroy – who call this hybridity a form of diasporic cultural formation. The work of Slobin (1992, pp. 46-47) attributes diasporic cultural formation to the approach of the artist. He (Slobin 1992, pp. 46) furthermore suggests that the intercultural elements vary according to each

individual subculture – as the experiences of their home country varies from their region and generation.

Throughout the Asian Underground music scene, the relationship between the performance artist, identity and their music material shows a peculiar and fascinating connection. The movement, as Huq (2003, pp. 33) describes, emerged as a post-bhangra genre of music that then progressively became a popular culture movement in Britain. Banerjea (2000, pp. 64-65) comments on the pioneer of the movement Talvin Singh, who launched the nightclub 'Anokha' in 1995, established it as the launchpad of where Asian Underground became the voice and expression of identity within the first-generation South-Asian youth.

Kim, (2012, pp. 556-559) through experience of an Asian Underground club, describes the atmosphere and crowd to be made of multiple different regions of South Asia that come together to share their frustrations of living a dual identity. It was with this frustration that the Asian Underground scene was born (Dawson 2002, pp. 29). The Asian Underground movement was a huge cultural success worldwide and influential into music industries beyond the UK. Murthy (2007, pp. 225-227) speaks about the South-Asian American music scene in this context, noting the influence of the success of Asian Underground. Another example is the article by (Maira 1998, pp. 357-370), which makes reference to the New York South Asian scene and explains that the inspiration of the Asian Underground movement was what caused this scene to prominence..

Whilst some North American crossover artists will be referenced in this thesis, , it is the UK Asian Underground which will be the main focus The reason why I have chosen to reflect on the Asian Underground scene in depth is because Asian Underground follows the South-Asian identity with similar questions and dilemmas identified prior to commencing this project. Content-wise and context-wise, the musical history of Asian Underground is closest in resemblance to the creative component that is accompanying this thesis – and, also relates to me, as the artist, in terms of

identity, cultural background and creative process. There will be some references and examples of the Latin American mainstream pop artists within this thesis, as their musical content is rich with cross-cultural elements.

## Context Review

When analysing western popular music artists, their persona and outward physical expression is also analysed alongside their material. Musicians and artists bring in performance and songwriting as their identity – which is why identity and discourse are huge in forming an understanding within academic literature.

Cross-cultural materials are common elements found in the production of music by first-generation migrant singer-songwriters. Within the popular music industry, these cross-cultural materials are cautiously, used by high-profile mainstream artists as they can become misused if integrated inappropriately. Quite often in western popular music, cultural elements are utilised to exoticise, or, culturally exaggerate a sound purely for the purpose of commercial appeal. This is an argument developed by Foster (1982, pp. 21-23) with the consideration of Said and Foucault's perspective, about how the west has this elaborate perspective of 'other cultures'. Selena Gomez (Gomez 2013, 0:00-4:50) song 'Come & Get It' serves as a high profiled misuse of cultural content as her cultural background is South American – but the samples were South Asian. The tabla samples and the exotic imagery in the song bear no resemblance to any of her experiences, expertise or hold any relation to her as an artist or performer. Additionally, on her Wikipedia (Wikimedia 2013) page, one of the genres associated with her song is 'bhangra' – which is a traditional style of cultural dance music that generated from Punjab and is widely practiced amongst the Asian Underground scene.

The example of Selena Gomez, and many other high profile western popular music artists of migrant background like her, is that they do not create or write most of their content – such as this track. Jennifer Lopez’s Latin-infused hits such as ‘Let’s Get Loud’ (Estefan & Santander 1999, 0:00-3:59), ‘No Me Ames’ (Bigazzi et al 1999, 0:00-4:38) and her fifth studio album, but, her first Latin album ‘Como Ama una Mujer’ (Salgado, Reyes & Antony 2007) were not written by her. Ricky Martin (Wikimedia 2015) is also placed in this ‘performer only’ category, as only being a performer of cross-cultural material, and not a songwriter or content creator.

It is veteran performers such as Gloria Estefan who have been writing and producing a portion of their released material, including writing Jennifer Lopez’ hit ‘Let’s Get Loud’ (Estefan & Santander 1999, 0:00-3:59). Currently, in the North American Latin-pop scene, Shakira (Ripoli et al 2001) and Pitbull (Combs et al 2007) serve as two mainstream artists who create and write their own musical content with their cross-cultural materials in the production of their work. These findings do not by any means imply that Shakira (Ripoli et al 2001) and Pitbull (Combs et al 2007) are the only artists present in North America that have this unique approach. However, for the purpose of examining the mainstream popular music industry for this study, the example of Shakira and Gloria Estefan will provide reference points only in this context review for the Latin-American first-generation migrant singer-songwriters.

The mainstream examples of first-generation western popular musicians can vary from scene to scene. A variety of different artists exist with this first generation label in the popular music scene, expressing their identity throughout their musical styles and/or artistic ability to songwrite. A contemporary example is the solo artist The Weeknd (Tefaye 2012, 0:00-3:50) who utilises his voice as an evocative, expressive instrument when he tells his stories. He (Tefaye 2012, 0:00-3:50) has within his vocal sound, techniques and elements of his cultural East African roots. The melismatic nature of his vocals are categorised by an Arabic-style melisma (Wikimedia 2010) which he gradually developed by conversing with his grandmother in his native language

Amharic (Wikimedia 2010) & (Giorgis, 2015). There are a number of songs where this is evident, such as: 'The Hills' (Tesfaye 2015, 3:36-3:50) where he uses a sample of his first language Amharic that he twists to match his dark, industrial storytelling pop style. Although The Weeknd is of Canadian descent, he was signed by North American record company Republic Records and gained the status of mainstream artist fame after touring in North America (Wikimedia 2010).

Following the North American music scene, the Asian Underground movement in the UK includes a wide variety of different South Asian diaspora musicians - mostly specialising in the pop, R&B and hip-hop genres. The uniqueness of the Asian Underground scene is the way artists integrate their cultural hybridity and traditional migrant roots as a form of cross-cultural frustration into their chosen musical expression. One of the first UK bands of South Asian descent were Cornershop. However, their material was indie pop without any significant cultural sounding materials or motifs in their musical performance that would be counted as cross-cultural music (Singh, et al 1997, 0:00-4:14). Sheila Chandra (Chandra, Coe & Smith 1982, 0:00-3:02) also serves as an early example of a first-generation migrant singer from the UK, however she does not write her content herself. This does not discredit her ability for being able to carry both cross-cultural elements into her performative practice. But for the purpose of the study, the focus is on practitioners who create this cross-cultural sound through the elements of their cultural hybridity and their own songwriting.

The formation of the Asian Underground scene was a huge cultural movement for the South Asian British identity. The music that came from this scene was highly reflective of first-generation migrant musicians on the scene. An interview with Jay Sean (2007 0:00-0:49) showed how he, as the artist, identified himself through his musical expression and how becoming a first-generation in both cultures shaped the sound of his music. This is usually done with the use of foreign words or lyrics in songs, adopting the sampling of tabla beats or old Hindi film songs, utilising traditional South-Asian musical theoretical systems (taal and raag) in conjunction with western popular



music structures – and the methods go on. There is no real limit or guideline as to what can or cannot be used.

Talvin Singh (Banerjea 2000, pp. 64) gave prominence to the power of the producer by mixing both elements of the west and the east to create a culturally hybrid sound in contemporary music. The 'Soundz of the Asian Underground' (Singh 1997, 0:00-5:59) album was then created in 1997 by Talvin Singh featuring the work of multiple different artists to help start the movement of Asian Underground. The album consisted of fusion raag and taal with samples of old Hindi film music and contemporary digital and electronic music. The project brought to prominence the rise of producers in Asian Underground - bending the perception of identity of first-generation of migrant South Asians to mainstream UK.

The producer that had the highest impact internationally on popular culture was Rishi Rich (Wikimedia 2015). Rishi Rich scouted the talent of Jay Sean and Juggy D by collaborating with them on his track 'Dance With You' (Rekhi 2003, 0:00-3:33) (Kim 2014, pp 5). The track contrasted Jay Sean's English vocals and Juggy D's Punjabi lyrics on a hip-hop track with an Indian instrumentation sample replayed in the background. Rishi Rich then went onto creating the 'Rishi Rich Project' which became a springboard to launch new and upcoming artists into the Asian Underground music scene. The success of the Rishi Rich Project gave Rishi Rich, Jay Sean, Juggy D and Veronica big breaks by collaborating on two Bollywood song numbers: 'Mere Dil Vich' from 'Hum Tum' (Rishpal, Dhaliwal & Mehta 2004, 0:00-3:08) and This started the birth of R&B Indian Hip-Hop and Bhangra fusion in the UK. The third most influential producer was Panjabi MC (Hankins 2011, pp. 204)), releasing the hit song 'Mundian To Bach Ke' in 2002, later remixed with Jay-Z for the film trailers of 'The Dictator' (Cohen 2012, 0:37-1:55).

Asian Underground today consists of many different artists, and most artists on the scene overlap each other's practices and style. Artists such as Mumzy Stranger (Ahmed 2015, 0:00-

5:21) who comes from a Bengali background, uses the Indian native language of Hindi to perform in his songs – rather his native language. An extensive body of literature on the Asian Underground movement rose to prominence in the UK early 1990's – however, ironically, after conducting a context review of practitioners, almost all artists that gained popularity from this scene produced music that was either completely in English, or, their South-Asian language. Juggy D (2007, 0:00-3:50) was the first UK-Indian background artist to have a non-English album reach number 1 in the UK, whilst Jay Sean (2009, 0:00-3:44) was the first British-Indian to become commercially popular singing in English. Both these artist perform in their respective dialects, but do not necessarily form a connection between both languages within their representation.

A common problem with academic discourse in this field is that there is little written from the perspective of the first-generation migrant popular musician. Too many articles are produced from a variety of perspectives using different types of terminology – attempting to create a discourse but not executing it by utilising examples of artistry. There is a lack of perspective on the first-generation migrants' artistry, particularly written from in the field of practice-led research. Too much of the literature, even when discussing Asian Underground, is not explored by observing or detailing the musical elements that these artists bring into their expression, nor, is their work analysed by putting the perspective of the artist at the forefront. One exception is by Tariq (2005, pp. 233-241) who attempts to tackle a musicological angle with his Asian Underground research – but still approaches the topic from a broad angle and does not narrow it to a specific artist to exemplify a practitioners' perspective when creating this music.

Another relevant work is the dissertation published, only recently, by Wilson (2015, pp. 1-2) who conducts an ethnographic study into the commercial singer-songwriters producing content for country music artists in the Nashville, Tennessee USA area. Although, the study covers the work of songwriters, it does not look at the holistic and cultural identity that the artistry creates.

Furthermore, the study is specific in terms of examining the songwriting culture of Nashville, and, is written in a particular context around the genre of country music.

Again, the research above comes from an intercultural perspective, not a cross-cultural viewpoint. Evans' (2014, pp. i-367) PhD in intercultural Indian Carnatic and Jazz crossover music also showed elements of similarity – however, the research was analysed through a traditional musicological framework and had the focus on improvisation and jazz. Whereas, popular music and jazz differ in expression as genres.

Studies within the field of intercultural studies conducted by Hughes & Keith (2012, pp 177-190) look at the artist and how they create their artistry through these cultural materials. It was actually the Hughes & Keith (2012, pp. 177-190) article which inspired me to create this research project idea, after exploring the field and reading other authors' such as: Hunter (1989, pp. 186-202), Corn (2006, pp. 81-102) and Sadoh (2004, pp. 633-661), who examine the artist and their artistry through case studies of songwriting approaches to shape their writings. Another key author Bendrups (2013, pp. 49) has addressed how the influx of migration during the 1990's in Australia has enriched and transformed the musical soundscape of Popular music in Australia. The nature of a practice-led project creates a discourse for practitioners in the field (Barrett & Bolt 2014, pp. 3) – and examines how they recontextualise cross-cultural materials for the production of western popular music. These elements, became the crux of an examination of the field through the artist and are often disregarded through the process of traditional academic articles.

Throughout the academic context, literature that has been written and referenced has often been accumulated from the perspective of the academic, or, observed through the perspective of the audience. The newer research now emerging, such as Wilson (2015, pp i-300) shows a new direction– by examining how the artists formulate content for western popular music. For my

research approach, there is an importance of this term 'cultural hybridity'. The terminology is essential as I will be attempting to formulate a discourse through the creative component of my thesis. From the available literature that I have examined, I have not yet come across an investigation where the recontextualisation of cross-cultural materials is explored or discussed from the perspective of a practice-led researcher – particularly in an academic context. This does not imply that this form of practice or inquiry is brand new and has not been attempted before. However, my methods for understanding the recontextualisation of cross-cultural elements and immersing myself into the practice of first-generation migrant singer-songwriters in western popular music, can genuinely open the discussion further into a newer perspective.

## Conclusion

The above highlights a gap within the academic literature. There is limited, to no literature that addresses cross-cultural elements in popular music from the perspective of a first generation migrant singer-songwriter. This gap furthermore provides myself, as the author, an opportunity to contribute towards the dialogue of first-generation migrant musicians who practice popular music. After reviewing literature currently present in this field, I wish to approach this gap through the means of a practice-led project. This provide an opportunity to generate insights from reflective practice as a first generation migrant singer songwriter. The songs in the creative folio therefore operate as both a site for enquiry but also data for analysis. To make sure I have a reference point, I will be using a case study of an artist from the Asian Underground scene and two artists from the Latin American scene to create a comparison with my own creative project. I will be comparing the perspective by examining the artists' background, influences, songwriting methods, and musical content. After examining the artist and their background, I will explore the similarities and differences when it comes to their artistry and report on the findings throughout this research inquiry.

In the following chapter, I will be discussing the methodologies of this project and will be

addressing the area of research and questions I have for this research. The chapter will detail how I will conduct my research and what approaches I will use to come to my findings.

## Chapter 2 - Methodology

This project is a practice-led creative research project, created and compiled by me independently as the singer-songwriter and producer on the EP. The definition of practice-led research I am adopting for this mode of research is from Creative & Cognition Studios (2009):

Practice-led Research is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. In a doctoral thesis, the results of practice-led research may be fully described in text form without the inclusion of a creative outcome. The primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. Such research includes practice as an integral part of its method and often falls within the general area of action research. The doctoral theses that emerge from this type of practice related research are not the same as those that include artefacts and works as part of the submission (Creative & Cognition Studios 2009).

The research questions into this project were:

- How do existing western popular music practitioners, of first-generation migrant singer-songwriter background, integrate elements that come from their religious and cultural identity?
- How do these materials crossover, and, what techniques, nuances or instrumentation do these artists use to convey their cultural hybridity within their music?
- How do artists, through their songwriting and artistry successfully deploy these elements into the mainstream style of popular music?

On completion of this project, the proposed outcomes of new knowledge would :

- Decipher the message or logic the artist applies when they create their music through their songwriting themes and components, production and creative process.
- Show that first-generation migrant singer-songwriters have created a third space (Ahmad 2001, pp. 73) by neither being disclosed as one culture, or, the other.
- Define why particular elements of cross-cultural elements are used in the context of the songwriter to generate this cultural hybridity of first-generation western popular singer-songwriters.

The criteria for this project was to choose musicians and content that was created by first-generation migrant popular singer-songwriters. My choice of singer-songwriters specifically was for three main reasons:

1. Firstly, singer-songwriters are self-generating artists who create content based on their personal experiences.
2. Secondly, singer-songwriters have complete creative control on their music because they create the entire content of the music.
3. And thirdly, I myself am a singer-songwriter. This tied in well with the theme of my research by exploring how different first-generation migrant popular singer-songwriters integrated elements of their culture into the musical component of their artistry.

And finally, the two main objectives of the study are:

- Discover how the cross-cultural materials are used and recontextualised to form a new, homogenised identity
- Examine processes the artists go through to create this logic behind this identity

The EP for this project is written, recorded, engineered, edited, played and mastered completely by myself. The EP was recorded in a recording studio, provided by the Arts faculty where I

undertook my research. The approach to the EP was completely independent, keeping me in control of the content and clear minded about the direction of the music and identity.

The EP component of this project provided a practical first hand investigation into the creative singer-songwriter. This written component provides an analysis. Through my creative process I wanted to show that the recontextualisation of traditional cultural materials can be applied within a western popular music framework. As Garfrerick (2003, pp. 13) suggests, creative artists utilise both the right and left side of the brain, when working creatively, to produce their musical content. Creativity, therefore, is an intensive unspoken and undefined framework that is unique to each different artist. Cultural hybridity is an inevitable part of my own songwriting identity. As Ahmad (2001, pp. 73) wrote in his article, the result of hybridity creates new parameters for a new cultural authority and a 'third space' from two different cultures. The objective of the analysis was to come closer to understanding the internal discourse artists go through when defining identity in their music.

I made an observation, when compiling the literature review, that most of the available academic literature was focusing on the involvement of the audience towards the artist – but was failing to address the music from the approach and perspective of the artist. To address my research questions, I adopted a practice-led approach to involve myself, as a first-generation migrant singer-songwriter living in Western society. Utilising a practice-led methodology assists me, as the practitioner, to embody the experience and produce a perspective that could not have been found through purely a theoretical framework. Macleod & Holdridge (2002, pp. 8) state that practice-led approaches to research build on existing theory through using unconventional methods. Additionally, Williamon et al (2006, pp. 161) speak about creative practitioners as elements of the 'other' who – through creative embodiment – generate content of utmost originality. The work of Garfrerick (2003, pp. 13-21) also speaks about creativity via a similar opinion, stating that it is work of great uniqueness and originality. Throughout this project, the



construction of knowledge occurs through a creative, practical investigation. The creative component functions as an embodied investigation of the research questions that frame this project. The EP will be used to build on the theoretical suggestions, and, to see through practice how I can answer the questions that I had presented

After adopting a wide reading of the field, I have chosen, to undertake an ethnomusicological approach when conducting my research methodology. The Society of Ethnomusicology describes it as a field that is incredibly interdisciplinary and the individuals who usually adopt this methodology come from practitioner backgrounds of, musicology, performance, dance, cultural studies and gender studies (The Society of Ethnomusicology, 2013).

To undertake a study under ethnomusicology, three distinct criterion need to be met:

1. Is the research taking a global approach to music? (regardless of area of origin, style, or genre).
2. Is the research understanding music as social practice? (viewing music as a human activity that is shaped by its cultural context).
3. Does the research engage in ethnographic fieldwork or practice? (participating in and observing the music being studied, frequently gaining facility in another music tradition as a performer or theorist) (The Society of Ethnomusicology, 2013).

Ethnomusicologists also study the meaning of music through the eyes of the practitioner and their audience (The Society of Ethnomusicology, 2013). Titon (1992, p. 315-316) gives a descriptive, holistic and practical approach to ethnomusicology – explaining that practitioners of ethnomusicology are not limited to academics. He (Titon 1992, p. 315) says that these practitioners exist in the form of music therapists, critics or even managers of musical acts to manage the integrity of musical expression within the general public.

I completed the EP beforehand, and reflected on the creative process through listening to the content and conducting a track by track analysis. I will explain the theme and inspiration first, then speak about the components in the music which create a cross-cultural sound. As Cohen (1993, pp. 123-124) suggests, this kind of approach to songwriting is quite reflexive by nature. The open-ended nature of western popular music gives birth and space for first-generation migrant musicians to explore multiple methods of challenging their musical experiences and manifesting it into a new sound. This cycles back to the statement of Ahmad (2001, pp. 73) where he claims that when a fusion occurs, new parameters are set and a new sound is formed – therefore, creating new knowledge.

The nature of practice-led research into ethnomusicology allows for me as the researcher to immerse myself into the creative processes of the artists. I am able to reflect, provide insight and support my academic understanding with the sophisticated understanding of my cultural hybridity. Contributing my immersed experience and widely researched knowledge into this field helps expand the discourse for migrant singer-songwriters in a multicultural society. Even with the existing literature, there is limited written academic content on cultural hybridity through the context of the artist. Acting as both the researcher and the practitioner assists myself into formulating the discourse to bridge the gaps that exist in the current literature.

## **Conclusion:**

Conducting the research findings as the artist and researcher provides insider perspectives into the subject of the enquiry. As I am undertaking an ethnomusicological approach, I am examining the ways in which these cross-cultural elements come into play when creating music.

I will be examining the EP in great detail next chapter, speaking about my experiences as a musician and performer and the influences that have shaped the sound of the EP. A break down of the songs will also be provided in the chapter ahead with details regarding each track and explanations of the cross-cultural elements.

## Chapter 3 – The EP and the Case Study

### Overview of the Creative Project ‘The EP’:*(See Appendix A, B, C & D for detailed overview)*

The EP, was created in the context of this thesis to operate as both a site for enquiry and also as research data that could lend itself to examination. The aim was to create an EP that had the ability to demonstrate and generate knowledge through the mode of practice. The way this was achieved, was by going through alternate musical structures, elements, themes and language as to how cross-cultural materials are re-contextualised within western popular music. I drew upon my years of ongoing experience as a performer/singer-songwriter in western and eastern musical contexts to create the content that is in this EP. This was, and is, the purpose of me as the songwriter.

There are many layers to the EP, with each song being starkly different from each other in terms of structure, theme, execution and context. Each song functions completely separately due to the dialogue of the lyrics, arrangement of the instrumentation, rhythmic pulses and feels, artistic choice and direction of the song. Regardless of their thematic differences, the songs still, however, function seamlessly together as a cohesive project. This is somehow metaphorically related to Ahmad (2001, pp. 72), as merging two different unlikely cultures (in this context, merging ideas not cultures) together can create for a harmonious and cohesive sound.

As a creative artist, I do not adopt a formulaic approach when creating my work. Almost all of my music is created in intuitive fashion, drawing upon a range of cultural and musical influences. Goldberg’s view that the creative process is a ‘psychological state’ (2013, pp. 278-279) is reflective of my approach, I create by visualising images and themes and creating improvised sonic and musical responses that draw upon my cultural and religious identity.

Ironically, I was raised with limited exposure to music as I came from a conservative Muslim family. The greatest exposure to music I had was listening to the spiritual Qawwalis of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (2012, 0:00-11:20) during my upbringing. Musical expression was not something that was practiced in my early environments. I learned of my vocal ability when I was accidentally chosen for choir in primary school – then progressively my childhood became choral music and Qawwali.

My repertoire, as an artist, slowly built up overtime as I went further into high school and discovered western popular music. Even choosing western popular music repertoire, the artists I chose as a stylistic influences were Delta Goodrem (2003, 0:00-4:10), John Mayer (2001, 0:00-4:17), John Legend (2004, 0:00-3:36) and Chris Brown (2005, 0:00-4:10). My discourse of music from a very young age made me perceive music as a way of life where I could express my soul and identity in a way to capture my audiences. Reflective to my artistic choices, I chose artists who came onto the popular music scene early who, at the time, brought a different approach to western popular music. I automatically deviated towards artists who created content that could offer a unique contribution to music – which has not changed.

These experiences have infiltrated into my practice and sound, as I believe influences are the reason why my sound and perception of art has developed this way. My approach to creating my music embodies mysticism and journeying – which is a concept of the dervish common in the Sufi expression of Islam and found in Qawwali. Qureshi's (1994, pp. 117-118) explains that the poetry is the crux of Qawwali music, taking the listeners on a journey with the words. My interpretation of Sufi music is, however, altered – which I will elaborate below in the 'track by track' component of this chapter. Qawwali as a genre is regarded more of an experience, rather than casual listening. As Qureshi (1986, pp. 1) states, the genre is highly performative and its' objective is to engage the listeners. Even the audience is called a '*sama*' which translates to listening assembly.

Audience members are engaged in high trance-like journey with the '*qawwal*' (lead singer) - and slowly involve themselves into following the pace of the trance.

I use elements of more traditional Islamic systems of the Maqam notes and theory – which is evident in the composition of 'Takbeer' (see Appendix A) – to take the listeners on a sonic journey. The sample that I have used during the bridge of 'Takbeer' (see Appendix A) is the Islamic call to prayer which is recited and produced with vocal overtones to evoke an emotional response in the listener to come and join the congregation. This element of sampling religious texts has not been utilised for the release into western popular music as of yet, or, as I have researched and observed. However, I will not claim to be the first to have done this within the context. I would like to clarify, the sampling of religious words and texts in music is not a new concept and been done in mainstream Bollywood. This is not a new practice, and, has been occurring for years. Two prominent examples are 'Shukran Allah' by Iyengar, Merchant and Merchant (2003, 0:00-0:23) and Joshi, Pundit and Pundit (2006, 0:00-0:40). Sami Yusuf, an Islamic singer also has sampled portions of Islamic words from religious texts in his western-style songs (Yusuf 2009, 0:00-4:00).

With the production of my own material, I have been increasingly interested in expressing my Islamic identity in a performative context – as I feel like I am deeply rooted into it, and, there is too much social taboo over Islam and music crossing over. The essay of Nasr (1976, pp. 1-2) states the rich history of Islamic empires of the past who have always incorporated music into their way of life – and how the logic behind modern day banning of music is unclear.

I tend to focus on using portions of classical Islam and pulling components of my upbringing into the mainstream – as I was taught briefly in my youth how to pronounce Arabic in the proper manner. The influence of Islam has been a degree stronger than my cultural Pakistani identity – which is why there are two very Arabic-Islamic influenced pieces on the EP. My first track on the EP 'Habibi' (see Appendix A) was an embodiment of Arabic cultural words and phrasing. The

third track 'Follow' (see Appendix A) on the EP is purely a cultural track with excerpts of Urdu, including an improvised section nearing the end. The improvised element section in 'Follow' was inspired by the loose-structured and improvised nature of Qawwali music and the popular representation of Pakistan's Coke Studio segments of: 'Ik Aarzu' (Hyatt 2011, 3:27-7:51), 'Tajdar-e-Haram' (Kapadia & Maqsood 2015, 0:00-10:28) and 'Chaap Tilak' (Kapadia & Maqsood 2015, 0:00-9:03).

Compositionally, my lyrical content is straight forward. I do this intentionally to keep balance in between the different types of cross-cultural nuances that are occurring in the music so the audience does not have an unpleasant time processing what I am doing as the artist. My music is sung majority in English, with certain sections in the song performed in Urdu or Arabic which is translated straight away by the context of the song itself. In the case of 'Follow' (see Appendix A), the concept of the song was to 'Follow' everything, so, the song would start with one line in Urdu and then be explained in English with great detail – almost like the English follows the Urdu and the statement follows with an explanation.

## **The EP – Track by Track**

### **1. Habibi:**

First track 'Habibi' has a wider instrumental section than the other two tracks on the EP. The instrumentation consists of: rhythm guitar, strum guitar, lead guitar, egg shaker, vocals and a darabuka (a hand drum used widely throughout the Middle East). Most of the instruments in this piece are predominantly western, with the exception of the egg shaker and darabuka. The vocals use melismatic phrasing in this piece to enrich the western-pop sound. As melismas are also used widely throughout the West, this may not seem as a huge cross-cultural element. However, Hage (2008) explains that the voice serves as the centre point in Arabian music and the melismatic embellishments carried in the vocal perform a vast array of improvised notes that are highly melodic. The nature of the melodic melisma creates a mystic-spiritual sound, that authors Kubik

(1976, pp. 644) and Frishkopf (2000, pp. 167) explain are used to ignite mysticism and excitement to the listener.

The only Arabic word that I have used in this song is 'Habibi' – meaning, 'my love'. The choice of this word is due to the nature of love being a sacred expression to me as an artist – and, also is a vital pillar in Islam. The word 'Habibi' is also pronounced from the back of the throat, and, when I found myself singing it – I could hear overtones in my vocals due to the position of the sound in my throat. Singing through the throat is an ancient tradition that is practiced in Mongolia (Levin 1999, pp 80) that generates overtones due to its' unique characteristic – however, I am not claiming to be a throat singer who has any formal training in the genre. Unfortunately, I had difficulty recording the full extent of these overtones in the EP - as these sounded more elaborate live than recorded.

Rhythmically, the piece is structured on the Latin clave beat – which the rhythm guitar plays throughout the piece. Clave, is a beat that is utilised extensively in many Western popular music songs – such as 'On the Floor' (Lopez and Pérez 2011, 0:00-4:26) and '2 On' (Kachingwe et al 2014, 0:00-3:50).

I produced this track in a way to give a spacious, room-like feel. I felt that it would add to the feeling of being at home with my family. This was important for me, as the artist, as it showed that the song came from a very familiar, close place – and would help the listener to understand the place the person had in my heart prior to the heartbreak. I smoothed out the vocal and added minimal reverb to it, to help give an airy texture. During the mastering, some light reverb was added to the entire track to provide a spacious touch to the song.

## **2. Takbeer (The Call):**

Second track 'Takbeer' is written closely with the impetus to bring the spiritual element into my musical performance. As I have mentioned above, my interpretation and expression of Sufi music



is altered. I wanted to elaborate with the composition of this song. The reference of Sufi music that I was raised with was Qawwali. The instrumentation in Qawwali is focused on the pulses that are generated by the hand-clapping, a tabla and a harmonium. Although these are fundamental elements of the Qawwali genre, it is the vocal that is the centrepiece. The vocal carries a message of divinity, but uses intricate melismas, crescendos, decrescendos and microtonal uses as evident mostly in the performances of the late Khan (2012 0:00-11:19)

Mostly from Qawwali performance and the Sufi culture, the aim is to express your devotional and spiritual self through your performance. With this track 'Takbeer', I use the voice as an evocative element to persuade the listener to hear my story. This is my method of expression of my Sufi music side, using contemporary instrumentation to carry the message of the vocal – however, without the heavy rhythmic element that is in Qawwali. I choose to stay true to the voice and letting it guide the listener on an emotional, spiritual story with the voice. How I achieve this, is by using the same throat technique that I utilised in 'Habibi' to sing the Arabic phrases 'Allah-la-la-llah.. Allahuakbar Allahummah' (which translates to 'God, dear God... God you are the Greatest, you are my God'). The overtones in the vocal are more apparent in this song during the chorus – as there are longer phrases. Unfortunately, there was difficulty again to capture the full extent of the overtones in the recording. As you can hear, there is a slight distorted buzz in the chorus, which are the overtones in the mix.

I used melismatic embellishments in my vocal in this piece again, more in the chorus than throughout other sections of the piece. This song had more inclusion of Arabic and verbal elements – as juxtaposed to 'Habibi'. Also included is a sample of the Adhan, known as a call to prayer. It functions symbolically in the piece, as the lyrics of the protagonist is asking for guidance. The call to prayer is used in the bridge, and, I also sing the beginning of the call in the chorus.

### 3. Follow:

This song 'Follow' is structurally inspired by the music I have grown up with from my culture.

The instrumentation is simplistic, consisting of percussive acoustic guitar, an egg shaker and vocals. The song is structured in two sections with the first half of the song as percussive and chunky, then slowly transitioning into a slow, spiritual style acoustic flow.

This concept and idea was inspired by Pakistani trance-style Qawwali music where the structure of the song/performance is left open ended and the song 'Rolling Stone' by The Weeknd (Tesfaye 2012, 0:00-3:50). In particular, the second half of the song is reminiscent of The Weeknd's 'Rolling Stone' with the wet, light acoustic guitar in the background and an airy, loopy vocal doing improvisational melismatic runs (Tesfaye 2012, 0:00-3:50). In the second portion of 'Follow' (starting at 1:59), the vocal is performed in a traditional Pakistani style where I wobble and slide notes. This is a characteristic that is applied in most Pakistani traditional and popular music and can be seen in 'Aankhon Kay Sagar' (Hyatt 2009, 4:00-5:18). This method of singing is more stylistic, and, is a characteristic of Pakistani/Indian singing.

Dialogue in Urdu are used in this song, with a translated line of English that follows the Urdu. The song is translated line after line, literally embodying the idea and concept of the word 'Follow' – which is something that occurred organically. The lyrics in the language of English are also poetic, in particular the second verse where I write 'you painted colours in my soul' – which aligns with the poetic nature of Qawwali and its' words.

### Understanding Cross-Cultural Elements in Western Popular Music

Cross-cultural elements in songwriting can be reflective of *anything* that can be added from a different cultural background, to another culture, for the formation of a new, distinct hybrid sound. As this research is looking at cross-cultural elements within western popular music, a

cross-cultural element therefore in this context could be any musical element that is 'other than western'. The music of the Asian Underground scene was, therefore, rich in cross-cultural crossover – integrating elements of South Asia into western popular music and bringing into to popular culture the mainstream identity of the culturally hybrid first-generation migrant identity. Kim (2011, pp. 557) distantly observes this in an article where she enters an Asian Underground club and witnesses the hybridity on the scene within the sound and the urbanised atmosphere that came from being on the scene.

When examining music created by the western popular singer-songwriter, the cross-cultural elements are usually found in the composition element and structure of the music. Unlike other styles of music, popular music analysis does not study a of a particular traditional form of music, nor does it have a concrete method of analysing the musicology of a song. Middleton (2000, pp. 4-6) argues that popular music scholars themselves are divided when choosing a particular mode of traditional musicological, or sociological analysis, when examining popular music.

In terms of western popular music, music and songs are traditionally composed within a particular, popular style structure to signify the genre. Xu, Maddaga & Kankanhalli (2004, pp. 65) outline this typical popular music song structure into the components: intro, verse, chorus, bridge, instrumental and then concluding with an outro. Majority of mainstream popular music songs are structured in this format, however, there are some exceptions to the genre – such as The Weeknd (Tefaye, 0:00-3:50). On his debut album 'Trilogy', The Weeknd had a variety of tracks such as 'Rolling Stone' which do not have a structure. The songs are looped and turned into a soundscape, with each song varying from the other.

Each track on the EP has different nuances of cross-cultural elements, making each track slightly unique. This could mean that the analysis could vary from track to track, as some tracks could show it within their instrumentation, through vocal performance, or even through the song

structure. However some songs may convey cross-cultural elements through their recorded representation of the music. In some more modern-classical approaches to music, the recorded or performed piece may not show the obvious elements of cross-cultural music during the first listen. This could be because the song has been written and arranged in a way that is very non-western.

An example of this in the Asian Underground is the band 'Tabla Beat Science', whose arrangements are technical in terms of the tabla arrangement, but, the musical execution is carried out in a way where the average listener would not be able to decipher the cross-cultural approach with the structure (Singh et al 2000, 0:00-7:33). 'Tabla Beat Science' is fundamentally a rhythm-based band who create a fused indo-electronic improvised soundscape for the listener. As shown in Singh et al's (2000 0:00-7:33) track 'Secret Channel', polyrhythmic use of the tabla is the core of the piece. Lavezzoli (2006, pp. 346) also brings attention to the tabla performance on 'Secret Channel' but also credits the accompanying drummer, percussionist and bassist for balancing the blend in the piece.

### **Conclusion:**

Cross-cultural elements are used differently in each song, and function as a component of the song that enhances, or assists in conveying the narrative of the song. Elements are not just mere embellishments of a piece that are there to create an aesthetically pleasing sound. Throughout the EP, cross-cultural elements serve as musicological elements in the form of instrumentation, vocal technique, rhythmic placement and use of language.

The next chapter will elaborate on the various practitioners in this field who have made a significant contribution towards the cross-cultural musical scene. All of these musicians are first-generation migrants who create their own content. The chapter ahead will focus on how they convey their identity within their musical representation and will elaborate on their cross-cultural elements in their representation.

## Chapter 4 – Popular Music Artists

### Identity in Music – Raxstar, Gloria Estefan and Shakira:

The musical work of Asian Underground rap artist Raxstar contains a multitude of cross-cultural elements integrated into his rap writing style and choice of artistic nuances. Although he settles predominantly in the genre of Asian Underground, Raxstar's musical content is uniquely crafted and well thought out in terms of composition and cross-cultural elements. Raxstar creates a strong sense of both his British-Indian and Punjabi-Indian identity, and is quite outspoken about his cultural hybridity due to his first-generation migrant upbringing. He (Raxstar 2014, 1:08-1:12) attributes this strong sense of hybridity in his work and influences due to the vibrancy which exists in the UK. Raxstar (2014, 1:24-1:37) also raises awareness to how cultural hybridity is a bi-product of the different racial crossovers of 'east meets west', therefore, it has musically given birth to a racially hybrid identity and sound within music. He internalises his identity and is outward in how he expresses it with his music as his chosen medium. Raxstar (2014) even writes on his website:

"This duality is an integral part of my identity as a British Asian. The culture I inherited and the one I was brought up in are worlds apart but there are millions like me who are also trying to figure it all out. Music is my creative outlet to explore that journey" (Raxstar, 2014).

Ironically, Raxstar is one of the more well-known mainstream artists on the Asian Underground scene, but does not have a Wikipedia page or extensive marketing channels – using his YouTube page (Raxstar 2007), Twitter (Raxstar 2009) and Tumblr (Raxstar 2011). However, he has been on the Asian Underground scene for over ten years (Raxstar 2011, 1:00-1:35) and has achieved his first Brit Asia Award in 2014 for 'Best Urban Asian Act' (Farooq 2014). His breakthrough single 'Jaaneman' (meaning 'my love') released in 2011 was his first commercial success reaching over two million YouTube views (Raxstar 2011, 0:00-3:38).

Raxstar, stylistically uses two dominant elements when creating his music: hip-hop and his South-Asian identity. Raxstar's started his career by creating mixtapes for distribution before becoming professionally recognised as an artist. Raxstar (2015, 3:02-4:00) recalls that he used to pen lyrics to old hip-hop instrumentals and recording them to share with people – as hip-hop was also not a genre that was huge in the UK when he was growing up. When stating his influences in music (Raxstar 2015, 0:50-1:45), Raxstar cites: 'Coolio – Gangster's Paradise' and 'Warren G – Regulate' as his influence of his growing identity. But, it is the work of 'Common' who influenced his love for hip-hop the most and changed his stigmas about music being more than just purely a superficial form of entertainment (Raxstar 2015, 1:22-1:40).

Raxstar uses the framework of hip-hop songs, to structuralise his songwriting process. The music that Raxstar creates is sample based, which is not related to the methods that I use. If we were to compare the styles, genres or the musical influences, then Raxstar and I share no commonalities.

Elements that we do share are the use of Hindi/Urdu/Punjabi dialect in our work. Language is used in our music to convey both streams of our western and South-Asian identities. Language has the ability to speak to the listener, communicating a variety of messages and themes. Feld (2004, pp. x) writes in his article that language is a factor which can share the location, place, ethnicity and little hints about the artist or performer. Literacy is therefore regarded as an element of cross-cultural importance when analysing music, as it conveys details of the artists' influences in their music, their interests and their background or upbringing. Literacy is also an obvious element in the musical content which the listener can immediately differentiate as a non-western element, if the artist is using a dialect other than English.

Shakira is also an artist that is well-known to the American and Latin music scene who incorporates elements of her Latin background in her music. She also uses language as a cross-

cultural element in her music, performing in both Spanish and English in her body of repertoire. Her song 'Hips Don't Lie' (Ripoli et al 2005, 0:00-3:38) uses excerpts of Spanish very minimally in her performance, only during the portions of the breakdown of the bridge and during the verses where the lyrics 'Como se llama, bonita, mi casa, su casa' (Ripoli et al 2005, 0:15-0:19) are used. Coincidentally, 'Hips Don't Lie' is one of the few tracks which she uses both English and Spanish together on a track.

Alongside Shakira, Gloria Estefan is also an artist who uses Spanish in her music to convey her Latin identity in her music. Similarly like Shakira, Gloria Estefan (Wikimedia 2016) performs most of her Spanish and English content separate, rather than performing in both languages on a single track. One of the exceptions to these songs is the track 'Te Amare' (Estefan et al 2004, 0:00=3:37) where the song is completely performed in English and the chorus is a repetition of the Spanish phrase 'Te Amare' – meaning, 'I will love you.'

Similarly, the track 'Follow' on the EP uses excerpts of Urdu dialogue, which is a language that Raxstar and I both use in our own work. The use of Urdu in 'Follow' works symbolically with the concept of the song, where the Urdu lines literally follow the English words. The English lines in the song are loose translations of the previous Urdu dialogue, giving the listener an opportunity to comprehend what the message of the song is. The use of language is a component in all of these examples is to portray the speech of the artist, and the different sounds and backgrounds that they originate from.

Another common element is how our use of genre influences how we structure our music. What differentiates Raxstar's music from other mainstream Asian Underground rappers is his ability to maintain the traditional format of hip-hop songs in his performance. To juxtapose this, current artists on the scene such as Bohemia (David, Raikoti & Ikka 2015, 0:00-4:07) and veteran Hard Kaur (Dhillon 2010, 0:00-3:37) all showcase a style of hip-hop that has been created to be

sonically pleasing specifically for a South Asian audience– not so much for a western audience. Modified hip hop by Bohemia and Hard Kaur is a variation of the genre, created to suit the Indian audience. Raxstar’s content is also predominantly in English, rather than Punjabi or Hindi – which both Bohemia and Hard Kaur use either little of, or, none at all. As Raxstar is also a rap artist, there is limited variety of melodic and rhythmic similarities that are apparent in music that is sung.

As Shakira and Gloria Estefan’s music falls under pop, there are not many differences or variations that are used in their framework when creating their music. There are traditional verses with accompanying choruses, bridges and concluding choruses. During the song ‘Turn the Beat Around’, Gloria Estefan (Jackson and Jackson 1976, 0:00-4:02) performs with the chorus in the beginning, which is different to most conventional pop songs – but is not unfamiliar. Unlike the hip hop genre, vocals in mainstream popular music are primarily used as melody to lead a song. Hip hop vocals however are mostly used differently, where the focus is on the phrasing and the pace at which the words are spoken.

Raxstar’s (2007, 0:00-5:06) first release ‘In Perspective’ is a solid example of his style overall, as it contains the sound of classic old school New York hip-hop, with jazz-influenced piano underscoring a pulsing hip-hop beat. His style of representation goes along with the thematic ideas of the streets – which is a very traditional sound to what hip-hop was. Along with this, Raxstar uses the themes of British-Indian daily struggles regarding family, culture and identity crises – but, narrates these all using English – as a clever way of playing on his identity. He (Raxstar 2015, 2:27-2:48) describes how both his backgrounds serve as the points of reference for his writing, and, he also verbalises how he tries to fit this into the hip-hop framework that has so heavily influenced his sound.



Similarly, Gloria Estefan has spoken about how adding elements of her Latin culture were things she could not compromise on:

“They told us ‘that stuff... you’re too American for the Latin! You’re too Latin for the American! Lose the percussion, lose the horns!’ but, that’s who we are. We’re not going to lose any of that, or else why be a success? We were never trying to chase that fame thing. We were trying to do music that we felt could do something new...” (Winfrey, 2013).

Gloria Estefan, is referenced by Aparicio (1994, pp. 580) as one of the mainstream Latin artists who shaped the ‘Latino sound’ for western popular music audiences. Her work has been recognised by personalities such as Oprah (Winfrey, 0:00-6:55) and Barack Obama (Wikimedia, 2016) for her contribution towards cross-cultural popular music. According to Winfrey (2013, 0:00-6:55) Billboard Magazine has coined Gloria Estefan as the greatest crossover artist of all time.

The foundation of Gloria Estefan’s cross cultural elements stem from the strong percussive sections in her music. In her biggest hit ‘Conga’, (Garcia 1985, 0:00-4:14) Gloria Estefan uses a wide ensemble of Latin percussion to create the atmosphere and energy of a Latin dance floor. The song immediately starts with trumpets with a layer of vocals harmonised in unison, followed by a light tapping cow bell in the background. The layers gradually build in the piece to include a piano playing Latin arpeggios, a funk bass guitar and electronic synths to create an electric vibe. The elements of the synths and funk bass contrast against the cowbell to create a balance between the Western and cross-cultural soundscape. The inherent Latin element of the song is the salsa groove which is played by the congas and supported by the rhythmic arpeggios played by the piano. The vocals are sung in English and are enunciated crisply to match the rhythm of the song.

Shakira (Ripoli et al 2005, 0:00-3:38) in her song 'Hips Don't Lie' uses far less instrumentation than Gloria Estefan, but has a very strong reggaeton pulse which dominates the feel and the rhythm of the song. The use of trumpets and chunky beats, along with random background spoken vocal adds to the element of reggaeton street-style. The texture of Shakira's voice is also deep in the top section of her range, with a thinner, softer and clearer enunciated bottom register.

Shakira's vocal, as she has said many times, is influenced from the Arabic/folk side of her heritage that came from her father's Lebanese roots (Wikimedia 2016). Her performative voice and top vocal range holds similarities to the vocal technique and sound that I choose in the EP for the tracks 'Habibi' and 'Takbeer'. Her chunky upper register creates a hypnotic, spiritual and mystic appeal for the listener – which is what I was aiming to achieve with the vocal overtones.

Raxstar as a rap artist is mostly limited to creating his cross cultural elements through his language and lyrics. Like most hip-hop artists, Raxstar utilises sampling within the content of some of his music. The sampling that he integrates in his music is very distinct and identifiable as the cross-cultural element of his representation where he most often uses a sonically identifiable melody that is reminiscent of his heritage (Raxstar 2011, 0:00-3:38). This melody would often be reference to a Bollywood tune from his childhood or would be an atmospheric vocal loop that is reminiscent of a Mumbai-esque backdrop (Raxstar 2013, 0:00-4:42).

## Conclusion:

The musical works of Raxstar, Gloria Estefan and Shakira have all a multitude of cross-cultural elements evident in their own work. Even as each artist varies from their styles, they all utilise language, instrumentation, rhythms and vocal to create variation so their identity is honoured in their content. The cross-cultural elements stem from their necessity of expressing themselves in their cultural contexts for the representation of their dual identity. These cross-

cultural elements which crossover to the mainstream are regarded as the artists' creative choice.

All artists vary with their representation according to their influences, identity, location and genre. As shown, genre can have an impact on the types of cross-cultural elements that can be featured in music. Genres such as hip hop rely on the sampling and linguistic element whilst mainstream popular is inclusive of instrumentation and melodic vocal lines.

The work, or, compositions of Raxstar are made by using cross-cultural elements from both his western and eastern identity. The style of his rap vocal is very distinct, as he chooses to rap about issues and topics that form questions of identity and struggle – which is a very common practice amongst even the most mainstream artists. Jay-Z (Wikimedia 2015), Eminem (Wikimedia 2015) and Kanye West (Wikimedia 2015) all as hip-hop artists rose to fame speaking about their inner struggles in society – which is a quality of Raxstar that he brings into the representation of his music. Raxstar's rap placement is also done quite poetically and is well thought out, with a good balance of fast and slow delivery in speech (Raxstar 2013, 0:00-4:42).

For the other tracks where he does not use sampling, he either chooses to work with a feature artist (Raxstar 2011, 0:00-4:02), uses elements, hooks or samples through instrumentation (Raxstar et al 2013, 0:00-3:41) or, like recently, he is beginning to include small verbal snippets of Punjabi in his hooks or one liners during his verses in rap (Raxstar 2015, 0:00-4:03)

## Chapter 5 – Thesis Findings and Conclusion

The artist comparisons of Raxstar, Gloria Estefan and Shakira detail the variety of ways artists express their identity within popular music through the use of cross-cultural elements. The purpose of conducting a comparative study between these artists and the EP, by genre, does not show much similarity between the content – as each artist varies from experience and genre. These artists were chosen as they had an established body of work within their genres. Raxstar's work and background was cited in more detail, as he related to my experience and background of being a first generation migrant musician. His experiences and struggles of a South Asian subculture musician were also elements and identity that I could relate to. As his musical examples were not of my genre, I supported my EP with further examples of musical content from Gloria Estefan and Shakira.

The study through creating and comparing the EP with the already available artists in today's music scenes was conducted to help formulate the discourse and address new knowledge that has not been approached within the literature today. Undergoing my own journey into creating the EP then doing a close listening of Raxstar, Gloria Estefan and Shakira found me comparing and noticing visible correlations between my own work. As this was a pilot study into my inquiry, I did not approach this project with the intention to be able to provide initial insights into the questions posed as opposed to a comprehensive treatment of them.

To understand an artists' creative process, or, to decipher the logic that coexists within them was one of the main objectives of conducting this study. The ideal outcome was to be able to explain how the creative process functioned. The findings that have stemmed from this study show how the cross-cultural elements in popular music are related to the identity of the musician. The cultural hybridity gives the musician alternative approaches to creating music. Alternative

approaches, as addressed in this thesis, can be structural, melodic, instrumental, linguistic or rhythmic differences to standard western popular music. As shown with the case studies, artists wrote their material with a combination of English and their other spoken dialects. Artists all had songwriting backgrounds, so they remained in charge of the creative and cross-cultural elements they could incorporate in their music.

The findings in this study showed that the most common elements that all artists used were their regional dialects and instrumentation or samples (in the case of Raxstar) to translate their identity within their music. Also in the EP I created, each track was reflective of the experiences and sounds that resonated with the cultural and religious identities that I was raised with, in a Western society. It was vital to use the cross-cultural elements for me, as the artist, to create the soundscape of culture which was reflective to who I was. All the cross-cultural elements that I utilised were relevant for me to tell the story of my upbringing.

By conducting this research project, I have made another finding (as an artist and researcher) that my personal creative process has no structure, nor can I form anything formulaic to explain the method or logic behind the creation of the project. The process of creation is an internalised process which occurs subconsciously. I furthermore would like to add that when I was creating the EP for the purpose of this project, I never consciously or calculatedly arranged the cross-cultural elements in the piece. Raxstar also reflects on the creative process similarly, saying in an interview (Raxstar 2015, 4:00-4:47), whilst quoting Michael Jackson, that the ideas in music already exist, and, the artist is the vessel from where it is created. He (Raxstar 2015, 4:00-4:47) elaborated further on the sentence, saying it is powerful because all creative artists would not be able to verbalise the creative process as it just occurs unconsciously. Shakira also has said (Wikimedia 2016) that she cannot choose or explain what she responds to when it comes to her music. The experience I had whilst creating the EP was a trial and error of sounds. The concept or image would appear in my mind and I would hear a soft melody which would be the start of

the song which I would then turn into a melody. On each of the three tracks, I have tried to show a few different ways of performing and singing songs with different portions of cross-cultural elements.

The opinions of Raxstar and Shakira are supported by the research findings in Dijksterhuis & Meurs (2006, pp. 145) who have attempted to challenge the concept of conscious and unconscious thought with creativity – but found that the liberty in unconscious thought was unmatched. Andreasen (2001, pp. 42-43) suggests that creativity is the reason why original thought and practice is created – labelling it as a form of extreme intelligence.

Although maybe the logic behind creating the art cannot be completely deciphered, it can be analysed as a completely internal process which comes from within. This idea of ‘within’ is interesting as it implies that an artist creates from a body of inner historical knowledge that pre-exists within themselves. The idea of within ties in with studies centring on epistemological theories of knowledge. Khine (2010, pp. 4-5) writes in his book the commonality of examining research in multiple cultures as a result of varying perceptions. Hofer & Pintrich (1997, pp. 88-89) mention Piaget’s theory of mind and knowledge and how they have not been confidently studied or explored further – leaving room for questions of development. Although this is a rather plausible suggestion, I hesitate with making this a concrete statement – as this was not my intention to approach the research findings through this perspective. My research findings became more comparative in my analysis, as I researched the works of Gloria Estefan and Shakira to create a comparison between the EP and their work. I found interest in the vocal technique that Shakira, who also coincidentally has Arabian roots. Her vocal performative style, as I have discussed, has an interesting and distinct Middle Eastern sound. Her technique is one that also embodies many different cultures in her sound – and I feel that the tracks ‘Habibi’ and ‘Takbeer’ in particular are a reflection of that.

Looking into the nature of these research finding suggestions, it shows that there may be a close link between creativity and epistemological studies when it comes to creating music. Gruber & Wallace (1999, pp. 93-95) speak about creative people to be unpredictable with their development. This finding suggests that creating a theory on creative can lead to unpredictability, as the stream of ideas for creative people is not sustainable. Findings from this proposition could create a different dimension to the discourse, as this has not been explored or suggested so far in the context of music and Raxstar, Gloria Estefan and I were raised with environmental and cultural influences that bridged together two types of major influences: the east and the west. Our cultural hybridity was ingrained into us from the beginning, allowing for us, as artists, to attain an unknown and unspoken discourse of both cultures. As suggested by Ahmad (2001, pp. 72) earlier within the literature, the bi-product of this hybridity is a third culture from two very opposing cultures. The value of this third culture is that it exhibits a new place for people to construct a relevant identity with rules, values and customs relevant to the space they belong to.

Throughout the creative process, there were I needed to place my identity within the music – sometimes my western identity more than my eastern. Like Raxstar (2013, 0:00-4:42), the way cross-cultural elements functioned together in the music creating this cultural hybridity was balance of all musical elements, and a good ear to differentiate the elements so they could work spatially together in sound. The cross-cultural elements for us, as first-generations, became an element of identity balance – and throughout creating the content for the music.

As this perspective of research is relatively new, there is room to build on the findings gathered throughout this thesis. Practice-led research approaches allowed for me, as the author and the artist, to immerse myself into the experience and add my research contribution through an integrated experience. The findings are initial insights into this field and by nature are not able to be exhaustive answers to the questions posed. This is due to the limited scope of a research project of this nature.

## Conclusion

Overall, the research findings show that cross-cultural elements in the music are incorporated to translate the identity of the artist. They are used as a component of storytelling in song, telling the histories and experiences that are reflective of the first-generation migrant artist.

Cross-cultural elements within artistry are a component of identity that are inherently embedded into the upbringing and customs of first-generation migrant singer-songwriters. Their ability to shape their sound comes from this identity being inbuilt into their upbringing – due to their cultural hybridity. The cross-cultural elements in their music act merely as a self-representation for their audiences, through the form of instrumentation, sampling or vocal nuances. These culturally hybrid artists of first-generation migrant singer-songwriter backgrounds generate original material through their creativity, changing the sound of the conventional, or, stereotypical musical representation of the first-generation migrant singer-songwriter in western popular music.



## Appendix A:

<b><u>TRACK TITLE &amp; DURATION</u></b>	<b><u>MUSICIANS FEATURED</u></b>	<b><u>PRODUCTION DETAILS</u></b>	<b><u>WRITERS/COMPOSER</u></b>	<b><u>NOTES</u></b>
1. Habibi Duration -4:28	<u>Rhythm, Lead and Strummed Guitar:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Vocals:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Shaker:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Percussion:</u> Mehreen Javed.	Studio recording conducted at: Macquarie University Y3A studios – 2015.  Engineer & Producer: Mehreen Javed	<u>Writer:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Composer:</u> Mehreen Javed.	
2. Takbeer (The Call) Duration – 4:45	<u>Piano:</u> Mehreen Javed <u>Vocals:</u> Mehreen Javed <u>Athaan:</u> sample from the internet. Author unknown. (see notes).	Studio recording conducted at: Macquarie University Y3A studios – 2015.  Engineer & Producer: Mehreen Javed	<u>Writer:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Composer:</u> Mehreen Javed.	Athaan sample is acquired under Creative Commons, and, does not have copyright. The sample I have used can be found here under 'Athan – Mecca': <a href="http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=adhan">http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=adhan</a>
3. Follow Duration – 3:42	<u>Rhythm Guitar:</u> Mehreen Javed <u>Percussion:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Shaker:</u> Mehreen Javed.	Studio recording conducted at: Macquarie University Y3A studios – 2015.  Engineer & Producer: Mehreen Javed	<u>Writer:</u> Mehreen Javed. <u>Composer:</u> Mehreen Javed.	

## Appendix B:

### Habibi Lyrics:

#### **Key words:**

- Habibi – Arabic word for ‘my love’ or ‘my darling’
- Habibi, ya Habibi – Arabic phrase for ‘my love, oh my love’

Heyyyyyyyyy  
Habibi, ya Habibi  
There was a time Habibi,  
Not long ago Habibi,  
When you were my Habibi... ohh  
Habibi, ya Habibi,  
We were in love Habibi,  
Two little hearts Habibi,  
That were so young Habibi,

I promised you all those years ago,  
I'd fall for you and you alone, but,  
Time's have changed,  
And my heart's been torn,  
'Cause you're out there living,  
And I'm at home,

Habibi, ya Habibi,  
Foolish was I, Habibi,  
To think that we, Habibi,  
Were meant to be, Habibi,  
Habibi, ya Habibi,  
You were always so good, Habibi,  
Talented with words Habibi,  
But you never really had to try...

Your eyes,  
Always seemed to keep me mesmerised,  
Your face,  
Drowned my thoughts into their shame,  
You took,  
My heart and I will never be the same,  
And now I'm lonely screaming to your  
name...

Habibi, ya Habibi,  
What did you gain, Habibi?

You call this love Habibi,  
But why do I feel betrayed, Habibi?  
Habibi, ya Habibi,  
I was a little girl Habibi,  
Didn't know any better, Habibi,  
About these relationships...

My eyes are wide and open,  
Sifting through things unspoken,  
Everything hits my like it's yesterday,  
In a hurricane,  
I wonder if you're lonely,  
As I'm telling our story,  
Of two hearts who parted day by day,  
It doesn't go away...

Habibi, ya Habibi,  
Where are you now Habibi?  
I won't forget, Habibi,  
All that we've shared Habibi,  
Habibi, ya Habibi,  
We're love's little mess, Habibi,  
Didn't know any better Habibi,  
The world goes on and on,  
And so do we Habibi,,,

Habibi, ya Habibi (my love, oh my love)  
There was a time Habibi,  
Not long ago Habibi,  
When you were my Habibi... ohh  
Habibi, ya Habibi,  
We were in love Habibi,  
Two little hearts Habibi,  
That were so young Habibi,

I promised you all those years ago,  
I'd fall for you and you alone, but,  
Time's have changed,  
And my heart's been torn,  
'Cause you're out there living,  
And I'm at home,

Habibi, ya Habibi.....

## Appendix C:

### Takbeer (The Call) Lyrics:

#### **Key words:**

- Allah, la llah – God, oh dear God
- Allahuakbar – God, you are the greatest
- Allah huma – You are my Lord

Find me another way,  
Find me another place to stay,  
I've been hiding all my love,  
In my heart for you,  
Find me another way,  
Find me another way to pray,  
I've been in this world too long,  
I've been waiting for you...

I'll stay silently still,  
I'm down on my knees, and praying...

Allah, la llah, (repeat twice)  
Allahuakbar  
Allah huma  
Allah, la llah (repeat twice)  
Allahuakbar  
Allah huma

It's hard to stay the same,  
When your heart is broken and every feeling tears you up in shame,  
Where does faith come in, where do I get started?  
Open up the gates,  
I'm a casualty with all my baggage,  
I'm here to heal away,  
I'll stay right here with you...

I'll stay silently still,  
I'm down on my knees, and praying...

Allah, la llah, (repeat twice)  
Allahuakbar  
Allah huma  
Allah, la llah (repeat twice)  
Allahuakbar  
Allah huma

*(Call to prayer sample)*

Allah, la llah, (repeat twice)  
Allahuakbar  
Allah huma  
Allah, la llah (repeat twice)  
Allahuakbar, Allah huma

## Appendix D:

### Follow lyrics:

\*each Urdu lyric is followed by its loose translation.

*Mujhe dhuka diya*

Slowly I can see the pain in my eyes,

How much longer do I compromise,

Till I can do no more,

*Sab ko dhkha diya,*

You're not the man that you were used to before,

I locked you out but you tore down my walls,

You're back for more,

Here we go...

*Mahiya mein tere peechay chali aayi,*

*Chali aayai,*

*Sari duniya ko chori chal aayi,*

*Chali aayai,*

You said follow me, I'll follow... *chali aayi...*

*Ban gaye raasta,*

You were the star in my sky,

Under the moonlit night you took my life,

And left me on my own,

*Har rang bhara diya,*

You painted colours in my soul,

And left me nowhere to go,

So now, I'm right here on my own...

*Par mahiya mein tere peechay chali aayi,*

*Chali aayai,*

*Sari duniya ko chori chal aayi,*

*Chali aayai,*

You said follow me, I'm following... *chali aayi...*

(Improvising section until fade)

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