

Digging for treasure * Bollywood or wouldn't?

Porting the funky from the fogeys

Fitzpatrick

Frank Fairfield, a 25-year-old from Angeles, is the sort of person who you feel sort of glad to be alive. Passionate is he about his obsession from a boyhood age. He plays old-time "hillbilly" music on fiddle, mandolin and guitar, he wears tweed, flannel shirts and hat. Just talk to him for a few moments and his heart begins to beat a little slower. So, so striking are his luscious nose and his talent that he was also spotted by Fleet Foxes on their US tour. Aside from performing, he is also a leading collector of 1950s-appreciated-end-of-world's music. In his 70s, gathering the music and lyrics and songs and stories and that survive only on the few records left in existence.

Fairfield is a hardcore digger, someone who travels the swap-meets, thrift shops and junk shops across the country to a battery-powered record player, digging out anything he considers particularly interesting looking, in particular what he describes as "the stuff no one knows about". These are the test-tube, spoken-word pieces, comedy lines and records by performers like M Faver, Charlie Poole, Fiddlin' Carson and the Carter Brothers, were usually passed over by the 70s collectors, who focused almost exclusively on blues and jazz.

Every once in a while, I'll find a rare band record or an 'original sketch' in a thrift store," Fairfield says. "I found some phenomenal George Shearing piano solos for \$20. I do the work, ploughing through records for seven hours at a time. I just went to the west coast and brought home records." A few weeks ago, a man reached Fairfield in the street with a stack of 78s that contained a 1925 recording of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. "And this was recorded in New Orleans, which makes it even more special," he continues. "I gave him \$5 for it's an absolute gem."

Fairfield has now collected some of the most beloved sides on to an album Unheard Of and Forgotten Hits, which mixes up pieces recorded between 1915 and 1964. There's music from Scotland, Japan, Kenya, Venezuela and Indonesia. There are Sicilian wedding minstrels and free-indiano piano piece. There's country folk pioneer Charlie Bowman, the key jazz of Hungary's Sándor Remeth and Chinese composer Liu Tianhua. It's a remarkable compilation, full of finds and ideas and styles that have been ruthlessly squeezed out of modern popular music.

"Record labels in America used to be different communities and they knew what they wanted," Fairfield says. "Everyone got a record that reflected their own culture. But then the companies realised it would be more efficient to create a new culture that everyone can try and follow - so everyone ended up drinking Coca-Cola and listening to Frank Sinatra and real music got cut down like the trees."



Frank Fairfield

What really gets Fairfield (gentle and politely agitated) is the gap between corporate music and what he calls "the people's music", songs passed around between generations for hundreds of years before an industry gave up. "Music is something that humans do," he says. "In every corner of this planet, wherever there has been a human, there has been music. But music was not for sale before the first big gramophone companies came into being, it was just aural. Now it's like the difference between food and McDonald's. Masochist lyrics nodes wrapped in cellophane isn't food, but we're so used to the barren landscape we don't question it. ...but how I feel about today's music, it's barren. But there's beautiful music out there if you're just willing to take a look." *Unheard Of & Forgotten Hits* is out now on Thornhill Square/Poser.

Sex, shame and Indian cinema

Nirpal Dhaitwal

India is the most sexually contradictory place on earth, the most prudish and permissive. There, half men proudly exhibit elongated penises they've painfully stretched over years by tying them to boulders, and parents take their children to temples full of sculpted figures locked in graphic and gynoessic copulation. Nonetheless, Bollywood protests take place each year against the "western festival" of Valentine's Day, and making a gentle pass at a woman can easily start a riot.

All of these contradictions are manifested in Indian cinema, for which rape, infidelity and romance have been staple storylines since its inception, though showing the nearest onscreen kiss has been a taboo. Last week saw the first London screening of *Love, Sex Aur Dhokha* (Love, Sex and Pain), Bollywood's belated attempt at addressing India's increasing sexual openness. The film caused a kerfuffle in India with its voyeuristic storyline and CCTV foot-

age of a couple writhing on the floor. But that scene, excitedly described on Wikipedia as a "seven-minute long bareback love-making scene" was cut by the censors to a short sequence showing only a woman's blurry, naked back as she wriggles on top of a man.

The prudishness of Indian cinema is at odds with wider society. Throughout the country, the government routinely puts up huge posters snuffing condom use, and ordinary Indians often live with a degree of tolerance that is rare in Britain. Illiterate women celebrate in their slum when the wife they haven't seen in years writes telling him she's just borne him a son, and many Indian men fondly remember the "aunty" he skipped school to kiss his virginity with while her husband was at work.

Why, unlike almost everywhere else, are Indian films much more conservative than reality? Parul Dhillon, who wrote the script for *Banhi Queen*, suggests it is because the cinema has taken the temple's role in society. "India is so disparate that cinema became the national lingua franca and its national religion. People go to the cinema to worship the idols on screen. The characters are icons telling morality tales. There are devas (demons), but they are always defeated."

"Indian cinema isn't realistic, it does not draw from real life, it only creates myths. Hollywood creates myths, too, but there's a lot of observational stuff there also. In India, films

are treated like religion and that's why the stars are so idealised. Like gods in a temple, characters on the screen are treated with reverence."

Dhillon tried breaking the mould when he wrote the movie *Split Wide Open* in 1999. "It was all about the seamy side of Mumbai life - paedophilia, cheating wives and homosexuality among the upper classes, and what not. But the censor cut it usefully, and when the producer complained, saying it ruined the integrity of the film, this star-wearing Indian woman replied, 'Why are you making a fuss? We have given you three "fucks", what more do you want?' And that was all we were given."

The director Deepa Mehta also tentatively tested boundaries but caused outrage. Her 1995 film *Farewell to the King* caused much harrumphing at its anodyne depiction of middle-class lesbians, while its sequel, *Water* (2005), led to rioting. That film only stated the common knowledge that widows dumped at temple refuges are often forced into prostitution. Reactionaries objected to that fact being displayed onscreen far more than the actual practice itself.

"Indians go to the cinema to goggle and worship," says Dhillon. "They don't want the truth." In Britain, no one would screen pornography in a church, but in India, it's the reverse. Explicit sex is on show in the temples, while the movies don't even get to first base.



Love, Sex Aur Dhokha

Readers recommend songs about manual labour

By Paul MacInnes

From stage school to stardom via a year in a van - some of today's pop poppets have as much experience of life outside showbiz as the Milliband brothers have of a weekend's raving. This, as may have been observed by others, is not a pretty situation. Bands will soon have nothing new to sing about than their relationship with their stylist.

There are not, therefore, many songs from the past 20 years on this week's playlist. There are also lyrical themes not common to current popular music: detailed description of manual work, and a celebration of the life and community that surrounds it.

Loezeta Lynn's *Coal Miner's Daughter* is one such number. Lynn is the daughter, proud of her father who works in the mine at night and the fields during the day (and sleeps no one quite knows when). The family pay their bills just in time, and buy shoes only for the winter, but they're happy. It's a piece of straight-up country music, and one might be tempted to infer that its sentiments were reactionary, encouraging workers to be happy with their lot. But pride permeates the song, a convincing pride in thrift and endeavour facilitated by labour.

"What's my life? I'm happy cleaning windows," sings Van Morrison. "I'm a working man in my prime." This is swayed by an ingenu charm, apparent as he bounces from job to lunch break to spots playing sax in "that down joint". The message of the song is simple - the window cleaner's happy in his work - and the lyrical vignettes combined with delicate, upbeat folk (with Mark "That ain't working" Stropper on guitar) convey that feeling wonderfully.

Van's window cleaner is an autodidact who reads Kierkegaard and disappears home to listen to Jimmie Rodgers. No doubt he's tuning in to *Blue Yodel No 6*, in which a man who loves to work can find but none and gets about harping and yodeling at the ungrateful employer.

Does Bruce Springsteen enjoy working on the highway? Not much, but you wouldn't know it without scrutinising the lyrics, so sparkling is the tune. A similarly odd conjunction occurs in Björk's *Dovilla*, taken from *Late autumn*. It starts off as a factory and Ovella is a hymn to that life, with machine noises fulfilling percussive responsibilities.

The Decembrists slip into historical mode, singing about a long-dead barrow boy. It's lifted by Colin Meloy's distinctive and distinctly 21st-century vocals. The Imagined Village give a contemporary spin to a traditional ballad with effects echoing underneath a tale of love across the factory floor.

The Potato Pickers covers similar territory but does so with an aching delicacy (no more so than when the protagonist pleads "I know that friends say I'm rough but I can be tender, easy enough"). It also sketches life outside of work with meetings by the factory gates and vivid dreams of Saturday night. We get a similar perspective from Junior Marvin and his robust falsetto, the grind of work followed by the escape. Hugh Masekela grew up watching local miners drown their sorrows in his grandmother's shabbeer, and *Shimela* is a choral tribute to those men.

Which rain scenes have floated your boat, and why? Are you a sucker for the test drops, the gentle drizzle, or the hard blast? Streaming down an upturned face or beating against a window-pane? Establisher of metaphysical mood or action element? Just don't tell us you hadn't noticed.

Clip joint rain

Got movies on your mind? Join in our blog in which a reader picks their favourite clips on a particular theme. This week: rain

Give your say at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/thisseries/clipjoint>

Sweatshop writes: Big rain scenes might have been fine once upon a time - or so the story goes - but lately they've been overdone and overused. From thrillers to romcoms, Bollywood has drowned, devoured the climactic deluge. John Cusack has stood in the rain for the last 20 years, and "Is it still raining? I hadn't

noticed," remains a contender for the line of dialogue most likely to make a date eat his or her own head.

And yet rain scenes aren't going anywhere. Rain is an unrivaled diffuser of light and sound. It shortens visual and aural focus alike, so that, like darkness, it intensifies and excites by subtraction.

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1 In *Seven Years in Tibet*, the characters shelter



2 In *Gold Diggers of 1933*, Busby Berkeley uses pitting in the park



3 A drenched Gene Kelly seals one of the most purely film



4 In *Foreign Correspondent*, Hitchcock makes a rain-soaked



5 The chase scene in *Seven* begins with hearing rain fall within a half-film hits the rain impact

This week's playlist

- 1 *Coal Miner's Daughter* Loezeta Lynn
 - 2 *Cleaning Windows* Van Morrison
 - 3 *Blue Yodel No 6 (Muleskinner Blues)* Jimmie Rodgers
 - 4 *Working on the Highway* Bruce Springsteen
 - 5 *Credits* Björk
 - 6 *Bill, the Barrow Boy* The Decembrists
 - 7 *The Handweaver and the Factory Maid* The Imagined Village
 - 8 *The Potato Pickers* Junior Marvin
 - 9 *Weekend in the Coalfield* Junior Marvin
 - 10 *Shimela* Hugh Masekela
- Next week: Bicycles.
Join in at <http://music.guardian.co.uk/>

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Nirpal Dhaliwal

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