**Strand 3 Preface**

**Popular culture-between tradition and innovation
Across three generations, mainly focussing on traditional and more recent British Bengali musical heritage, from the 1970s-80s**

With the success of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical ‘Bombay Dreams’ and the ‘Bride and Prejudice’ (2006), Asian music is now firmly rooted in Britain and has broken out into a mainstream audience. Missy Elliot, Madonna, Britney Spears, Bjork to name a few have all used samples or have remixed their tracks with British Asian music.

The rise of Asian music started in the 1970s by Biddu, Steve Coe and Sheila Chandra but it was in the late 80s that the British Asian youth first started to create a new musical genre by combining dance music with the music of their parent’s generation. The youth were growing up in an environment of racial violence and political struggle for self-identity while drawing strength from street culture and their Asian roots. They took pride in their music as they could claim it as their own - neither white nor music imported from the Indian sub-continent. The artists, who emerged from this period, became some of the greatest Asian artists Britain has seen. Some of these artists (ADF, Joi, State of Bengal and Osmani Soundz) are of Bengali origin and are the true pioneers of the Asian underground scene.

At the same time there were a number of people (Alaur Rahman, Himangshu Goswami, Abdus Salique and Lucy Rahman) who were practising music from Bangladesh and managed to establish themselves over here. There is also a strong following in Baul music as most Bangladeshis who are here are from rural background. Abdul Lotif is a well known British Bengali Baul singer. In 1985 UNESCO declared Baul music of Bangladesh a National Heritage and this was a rare treat to hear it in London. Another trend is the third generation British Bengali (Suzana Ansar, Kishon Khan and Shahin Badar), who are practising contemporary Bengali music in the UK.

We explore these developments through interviews where our participants explain their involvement with and approach to music, the influences on own music and their relationship with their musical teachers, the role models which influenced them, their musical preferences in terms of instruments and musical styles), the festivals, events, performances which they participate in, their songs, released singles and albums, their interest in traditional music from Bangladesh, the mixing of different musical styles and their views about young musicians and the younger generation.

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