

thejazzbreakfast

start the day behind the beat, then catch up here

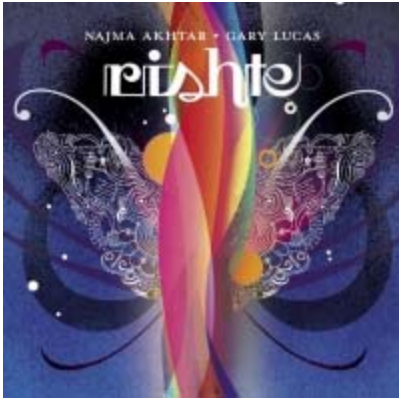
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Disc of the day: 25-06-09

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by peterbacon



Najma Akhtar & Gary Lucas: *Rishte* (World Village 450008)

Time for a bit of a break from jazz and a pretty little slice of exotica comprising equal parts Indian singing and trance blues guitar.

For some reason when I listen to this I think of the Raising Sand collaboration of Robert Palmer and Alison Krauss, not really taking in until I read some background info that, of course, Najma Akhtar had contributed her striking voice to the works of Page and Plant. Of course rock and country are, on the surface, closer together than the classical Indian styles and the blues... except that in reality the blues are part of every other music.

For the younger readers Gary Lucas's name will be familiar from his work with Jeff Buckley; for the rest of us we think of him as one-time guitarist for Captain Beefheart. Yes, we are talking a long and illustrious career here.

Try track six first – an amazing take on the Skip James blues song *Special Rider Blues*, with Akhtar making it completely her own. A lot of the others are in Urdu and the general mood is from the Indian subcontinent with Lucas adding his winning acoustic/electric blues strum and lightning runs. Both musicians are just so all-encompassing in what they do. So Akhtar can take an English folk theme for *Soul Taker*, and Lucas can be a multi-headed guitar monster. Just try all his different parts on that same *Soul Taker*.

In the end I think it all works best on the Urdu-language pieces, but maybe that's because sometimes I like voices as pure music without having to worry what the words are.
