

# fROOTS

FROOTS : WOMEX AWARD WINNER 2010

Local Music From Out There

## ASHA BHOSLE & SHUJAAT KHAN

**Naina Lagaike** Saregama CDNF 154218

The pairing of the singer Asha Bhosle and the sitarist Shujaat Khan conjures many possibilities. She is the film industry playback singer who consistently stepped outside her safety zone, collaborating with such as Ali Akbar Khan, Boy George, Alaap and REM's Michael Stipe. He is the son of one of the greatest ever sitarists, Vilayat Khan, a mainspring of the world music ensemble Ghazal, a truly gifted vocalist in his own right and arguably the best sitarist of his generation. What they have done with *Naina Lagai Ke* ('I rue having locked eyes with you') – though it says "*Naina Lagaike*" everywhere on the front cover and spine – is pull off the first major new work to arrive from India in 2011.

Vocally they solo, duet or trade verses. The credits give the material as traditional lyrics set to compositions by Shujaat Khan. And very fine they are too. By all accounts, this was Bhosle's first project since her recordings with Ghulam Ali, the acclaimed Pakistani ghazal virtuoso, some three decades ago, in which the session was done live. The approach works marvellously. There is a spontaneity to the performances and when Shujaat Khan begins to let fly on sitar just over three minutes into the penultimate track in the programme, *Kangana Main Bandhoon* (*I Tie A Bracelet* where kangana suggests a wedding bracelet), it is a model of concision and serving the song. The groove on *Aaja Re Piya Mora* with its electric bass makes it plain that even though there are classical elements this is firmly in the realm categorised as 'modern song' in the subcontinent.

The main accompanists are Shujaat Khan's regular tabla accompanist, Amit Choubey, his son Azaan Khan on guitar, flautist Ajay Prasanna (especially noteworthy on *Humre Naina Tumri Ore* (*My Eyes Are On You*)) and Bheem Rao on dholak. Adding to the sound palette are Upmanyu Bhanot's arrangements and orchestrations and instrumentation such as the (uncredited) electric piano on *Kangana Main Bandhoon*. Truly a milestone work for both Asha Bhosle and Shujaat Khan. The prospect was genuinely exciting. What they deliver exceeds all expectations.

[www.saregama.com](http://www.saregama.com)

Ken Hunt