

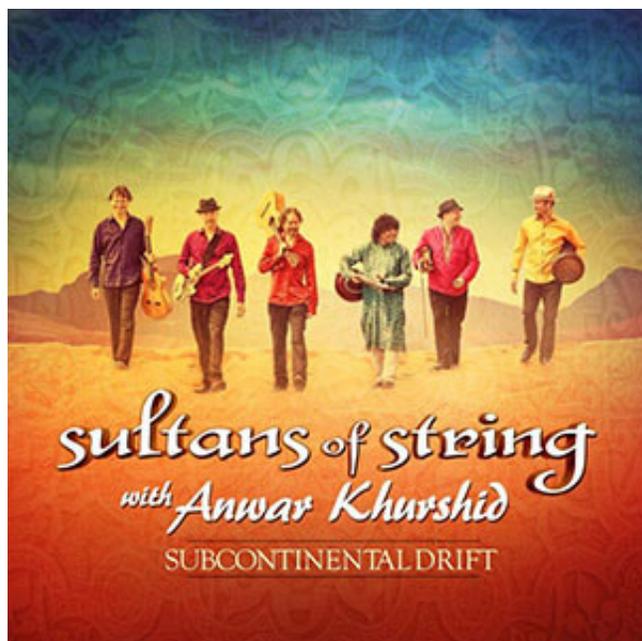
Sultans of String with Anwar Khurshid: Subcontinental Drift

By **Raul da Gama** - Oct 28, 2015



You can attempt to put many labels on the Sultans of String, but ultimately either you will run out of labels or none of the labels will fit. The group is genre-bending, a collision of so many artistic cultures that their musical atlas seems infinite. They can do so many musical things and the best thing about that is that they are away with it. They are superb musicians, to a man – not just virtuosos but intuitively each is a specialist. So it is natural to expect the unexpected and you will never be disappointed. Rousing moments abound in *Subcontinental Drift*, the varied programme of works that the Sultans of String have put together with the renowned Indian sitar player, Anwar Khurshid. But the moments that truly seize the ear are husky

in which the ensemble does a mesmerising job of suspending time (and leaning into musical suspense with subtle expertise).



Such expressions of near sacred devotion are striking in *Subcontinental Drift* which moves through slowly evolving harmonies, and the profoundly beautiful *A Heart Does What it Does*, a piece of truly reflective beauty. Magic also unfolds in *Snake Charmer*, in long, poignant lines, while Chris McKool and Kevin Laliberté juxtapose extended and ornamental passages with the rapturous playing of Anwar Khurshid almost continuously through the repertoire. Among the disc's selections are also classic pieces of rhapsodic beauty: *Jamalo* and *Parchan Shaal Panhwar*. But it is not simply the Indian repertoire that is enchanting. Listeners will fall for the charms of all of the repertoire on this wonderful album.

Amid the serenity of the choir and Anwar Khurshid's sitar the Sultans of String weave music of unbridled joy and celebration. Even the melancholic *Blowin' in the Wind* is turned into a work of great expectation and therefore something truly joyous. The Sultans of String bring textural clarity, finesse and fine textures to their scores, driving several sections to the edge of earthy mayhem. Their playing has exceptional point and tension and the various layers of the music are balanced to superb effect. Remarkably all of the music savours the scores' forays into folk and classical Indian sources that Anwar Khurshid brings to the table. In turn, he partners with the Sultans of String in readings that are by turns sweeping, luscious and intimate. You can almost imagine a troupe of classical dancers from around the subcontinent trying to catch their collective breaths as they negotiate some of the propulsive tempi taken here.

Speaking of tempi the percussionists, Rosendo "Chendy" León and the tabla master Ravi Nampally do a remarkable job weaving their cross-cultural rhythms into a fine fabric that lies abed with the harmonic rest of the Sultans of String led by Chris McKool and Kevin Laliberté. Together the passion of the album is palpable and that includes the chorus whether they are whispering or lifting voices to the skies.

Track List: Enter the Gate; Rakes of Mallow; Rouge River Valley; Ho Jamalo; A Place to Call Home in the Wind; Snake Charmer; Parchan Shaal Panhwar; Journey to Freedom; Subcontinental Drift; A Heart Does What it Does.

Personnel: Chris McKool: violin, viola, chin-cello and vocals; Kevin Laliberté: nylon string, steel string and electric guitars, and vocals; Eddie Paton: nylon string and steel string guitars, and vocals; Drew Birney: acoustic and electric bass, and vocals; Rosendo "Chendy" León: drums, percussion, palmas, jaleo and

with Anwar Khurshid: sitar and vocals and guests: Ravi Nampally: tabla; Shweta Subram: vocals (7); Abdulhamid: vocals (3); Choir: Amoy Levy, Ciceal Levy, Adrienne McKenzie, Camille Harrison, Nevo and Danah Martin.

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Running time: 45:47

Buy music on: amazon

About Sultans of String

2015 JUNO nominees and SiriusXM winners Sultans of String create "Energetic and exciting music from a band with talent to burn!" (Maverick Magazine UK). Thrilling their audiences with their genre-hopping passport of Celtic reels, flamenco, Gypsy-jazz, Arabic, Cuban, and South Asian rhythms, Sultans of String celebrate musical fusion and human creativity with warmth and virtuosity. [Read more...](#)

Raul da Gama

WMR Canadian Editor. Based in Milton, Ontario, Canada, Raul is a musician and an accomplished writer whose profound analysis is reinforced by his deep understanding of music, technically as well as
