

TAREK YAMANI - PENINSULAR

Peninsular is a pioneering new work which blends the virtually unexplored rhythms of the Arabian Peninsula with the frameworks of African-American jazz.

The music of the *khaleej* (common term used to describe the Arabian Gulf) is famous for its laid-back feel and distinguished sense of swing, which is a trait not found in the music of the rest of the Middle East.

Jazz and *khaliji* music have so much in common due to their shared ancestral African polyrhythm and therefore merging both worlds together was more like connecting two distant family members.

Another important aspect of **Peninsular** is the introduction of “quarter tones” in a rich harmonic context. In this album, Tarek plays on both, acoustic piano and electric keyboard with the latter being programmed to play the quarter tones found in Arabic *maqam*, giving the compositions an added dimension to their sound.

Peninsular features seven original compositions, one traditional Yemeni song and a rearrangement of a Bedouin tribe vocal sample. Each of the original compositions is based on a rhythm from the region:

Indisar is inspired by a desert genre predominant in all of the peninsula called ‘*arda*. Every region has its own variation of ‘*arda* and this particular composition used the Qatari version which is in 3/4 and characterized by a subtle sense of swing. **Indisar** features up to 15 layers of percussion which gives it this huge sound.

Hala Land is based on one of the most popular rhythms used in the pop music of the Gulf, the *khaliji* Rumba. It's believed that this rhythm originated in Yemen and spread around the Peninsula.

Hala Land is in the *maqam* of Bayat (second and sixth degrees half-flatted). In his solo on this track, Tarek experimented with playing piano and keyboard at the same time to produce interesting effects because of the clash of the well-tempered notes with the quarter-toned ones.

Samrias is a samri + bulerias. Samri is a widely used term which describes the late-night musical gatherings in the desert until the dawn and it is also the name for one of the oldest Bedouin musical arts. The rhythm behind Samrias is a polyrhythmic 6/8 with a ternary cycle which seemed reminiscent of the Spanish bulerias.

Qumeirah is based on a rhythm played in the UAE called *sittati* or *bannati* (both mean “girly” but *sittati* has a double meaning the other being “in six”) and the rhythm is indeed in 6/4. **Qumeirah**'s melody is in the *maqam* of *mahur* which a variant of the *rast maqam* but with only the 3rd degree half-flatted.

Al Qorbi Nasnas is a beautiful traditional song from Yemen made famous by Yemen's iconic singer Abu Bakr Salem. The poem is written by a religious Sufi scholar called Abu Bakr Al Aydarus (1447-1508). It describes the passionate moment when two lovers meet at the beginning of the night and how they try to influence everything around them so that the night goes on forever and the sun never rises.

Gate of Tears is based on the African-influenced rhythm called *sharh 'adani* from Aden, Yemen. It is believed that the first human migration out of Africa, 60,000 years ago, was through what is now the strait of Bab-Al-Mandeb between the Horn of Africa and Yemen. Bab-Al-Mandeb literally means "door of mourning" or "gate of tears" which is probably named as such because of the symbolism of this route with slavery trade.

Gate of Tears tells the painful story of those who were forced out of Africa into Arabia.

Peninsular is the album's title track because it seems to represent the jazz/*khaliji* intermarriage the most from the points of view of harmony, rhythm and improvisation. The melody follows a jazz harmonic progression which adapts to the alternating tunings between quarter-tones and well-tempered scales.

Rastprints is a composition inspired by the wedding music of south of Saudi Arabia. As the name suggests, it is in the scale of *rast* but the solo section alternates between two keys, *G rast* and *Ab Major*. The harmonic progression is that of the typical jazz "rhythm changes" and the rhythm is based on the '*arda janubia* from Saudi Arabia which has clear similarity with Brazilian samba.

Ayyala Cubana features a vocal sample from a tribe from Saudi Arabia who still performs an ancient style called *dahha*. This art is characterized by the use of a special vocal technique that they used to trick the enemy to believe they're in large numbers from hearing their sounds at night. The '*ayyala* is a traditional art from the UAE which bears close resemblance to the Cuban *cha cha*. In this track, the *dahha* sample was combined with the '*ayyala* rhythm which inspired the band to perform in a Latin music atmosphere.

Watch **EPK/Behind the Scenes**

<https://youtu.be/1grc2feUyyY>

About Tarek Yamani

Born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, Tarek is a self-taught NYC-based jazz pianist and award-winning composer critically acclaimed for his work on *Lisan Al Tarab: Jazz Conceptions in Classical Arabic*. In an invigorating style, Tarek ingeniously bridges the boundaries between two eclectic cultures and musical heritages. Winner of the "Thelonious Monk Jazz Composers Competition", he has performed in prestigious venues such as the Smithsonian Museum, Gran Teatro de la Habana, and the United Nations Assembly Hall in NYC.

"Trailblazing pianist transforms Khaleeji music." – CNN

“Lebanese-born pianist Tarek Yamani proved to be a magician with his chromatics and disquieting passing tones.” – New York Music Daily

“Yamani’s resonant chords echo hauntingly in a provocative improvisation with a touch of thrilling angularity.” – All About Jazz

“A piano in each hand.” – Agenda Culturel

For career highlights and awards please visit: <http://tarekyamani.com/biography>

Books/Educator

As an educator, Tarek has self-published an educational book on mastering polyrhythms entitled “**Duple Vs. Triple: 56 melodic exercises to mastering polyrhythms in jazz and other groove-based music**”.

His next self-published book is called “**The Percussion Ensemble of the Arabian Peninsula**”, which offers 36 transcriptions of traditional rhythms from the 7 Gulf countries including a brief about the historical and societal background of each rhythm.

About the album cover art

Alien Technology is a large fiberglass sculpture (3mx2.5m) by Kuwaiti artist Monira Al Qadiri.

“A gigantic sculpture of an iridescent oil drill alluding to both an underwater world that fed the Gulf’s economy for so many years and simultaneously, the tool that is central to the current economy of oil. The pearl industry is invisible to most – a forgotten history after the economic transformation that came with the discovery of oil in the region. And while the presence of oil is known and all-pervasive, the nature of its extraction is rarely seen. This drill is the basis of the wealth of the region, a central cog in the workings of the economy, finally made visible in this shimmering monument.”

Listen

Hala Land

<https://youtu.be/RLY6Gu6ZNLc>

Gate of Tears

<https://youtu.be/LWzzIM9KJuU>

Website

www.tarekyamani.com