

From Brian Eno

"In April this year I attended the Palestinian Music Expo in Ramallah. Many bands and performers were featured, generally for quite short sets. The choices were very eclectic: pop bands, jazz combos, EDM groups, folk singers, hip-hop artists. I began to realise that the distinctions we in England might make between genres are not so clear here. What particularly impressed me was seeing a great rapper – Tamer Nafar - perform to tumultuous applause, and then be followed immediately by an oud trio - to more howls of enthusiastic applause.

That oud trio, of course, was Trio Joubran. Three brothers, three ouds, and a deep understanding of the classical traditions of Arabic music - and yet playing a completely contemporary music. It seems to me that in the Arab world things don't fall neatly into 'classical' and 'contemporary'. The classical, in the right hands, is stunningly contemporary.

The Oud is really at the centre of Arabic music, and, as the ancestor of the guitar, at the centre of modern western music too. Ouds are described in 11th century documents and the form of the instruments has not changed fundamentally since then: a pear-shaped wooden instrument with between 11 and 14 strings, and no frets.

It's normally either a solo instrument, or part of an orchestra, or an accompaniment to a singer. But Trio Joubran is three oud players working together - an unusual configuration made workable by the fact that the players are three brothers who appear to have a near-telepathic connection.

The brothers - Adnan, Samir and Wisam - are from a family of Oud players going back several generations. Their mother Ibtisam is a singer, and father Hatem a distinguished oud maker. Wisam himself is also an oud-maker, and is now making some of the most beautiful ouds in the world. So the oud is in their blood, deep in it. And it shows in the effortless fluency and creativity of their playing, which ranges from romantic and delicate to thunderingly fierce.

I've had the good fortune to spend some time in the studio with Trio Joubran. Their gifts as musicians are complemented by their compassion as human beings. They believe that their art can make the world a better place, and they act on that belief. It's natural to them that their art should be a part of the struggle of the Palestinian people for recognition and liberation.

Their longstanding and determined commitment has made them a symbol of Palestinian identity and resistance. Trio Joubran, in its brilliant and fiery exuberance, sends out a message: Palestine is alive."

Brian Eno