

## Outcaste Records

A major label in world music, Outcaste Records was formed in 1995 by Shabs Jobanputra and Paul Franklyn. Based in London, the record label endeavours to maintain a creative space for artists of world music and produce music for and by young British Asians that reflect their South Asian and British cultural traditions. Outcaste are also dedicated to making this music increasingly accessible and appreciated to mainstream audiences.

The idea for a specialist record label developed when Shabs Jobanputra attended a 'New Music Seminar' in New York City. Participants discussed the increasing level of production and promotion of music by African Americans. This inspired Jobanputra to question what he as a British Asian music producer could do to raise the status of British Asian music in the UK. Co-founder Paul Franklyn recalls, "*We wanted people to realise that British Asian music didn't have to mean just Bhangra or Bollywood soundtracks.*" So a record label promoting new British Asian music grew out of the pair's PR company, Media Village.

The name of the record label, Outcaste, was devised to reflect the predicament of being an outsider. The logo is based on the standard 'no entry' road signs in the UK, following the same principle. As Jobanputra describes, "*The name of the label is about trying to take a different look and to convey a positive message - about people wanting to keep a sense of their own identity rather than be drowned in an amorphous mass.*"

In the early 1990's, Shabs Jobanputra saw multi-instrumentalist Nitin Sawhney playing the tabla on Channel Four's Asian programme, Network East. Jobanputra felt that Sawhney's material was dually informed by the sounds of London and by classical Indian music. Sensing that Sawhney was an artist who embodied the cultural fusion which Outcaste Records sought to endorse, the company signed Nitin Sawhney, and the label gained its first artist.

Outcaste began sourcing talented British Asian musicians and artists through press contacts and their extensive database. The famous monthly 'Outcaste club night' was launched in June 1995, at Ormonds nightclub in London which showcased new music and artists. Outcaste produced posters featuring taglines such as 'Asians to Attack London' and 'Do You Fancy An Indian Tonight?' each followed by '(Musically, That Is)'.

Jobanputra and Franklyn took their own records to the first club night and both dj-ed. A new sound emerged by mixing Indian classical raags with old jazz and new break-beat rhythms from the new music. Other contributors to the first night were new Asian underground pioneers Earthtribe, DJ Ritu and DJ Badmarsh. Badmarsh later merged his club music with the music of Bombay-born bassist and tabla player Shri, in a collaboration that would further Outcaste dance music and include a new signing to the label.

Reflecting on the first club night, Shabs Jobanputra has said, "*I didn't know what that moment meant at the time, but looking back I can see how new and exciting it was, not just for those involved but also for those attendin*". After a brief sojourn at The End nightclub in London, the Outcaste club night moved to the newly established Notting Hill Arts Club. Here the company continued to build a cohesive music community, and a regular club night, which enabled the record label to launch.

Since the signing of Nitin Sawhney in 1995, Outcaste has launched ten further South Asian British artists to great acclaim, each working with a different style of music. The artists include Badmarsh & Shri, Ges-E and Usman, Mo Magic, Niraj Chag, the six artists of Oi Va

Voi, and Outcaste DJs Harvinder Nagi, Sanjiv Sharma as well as Shri and The Dave Pike Set.

Outcaste Records have produced numerous albums, covering a wide range of global musical styles including Brazilian, Latin American, Bollywood, jazz and Classical Indian fusion tracks. Outcaste's 2004 releases have included diverse musical influences 'Tango Club' (June 2004), 'Essential Latin Flavas 2' (May 2004), 'Outlandish presents...Beats, Rhymes & Life' (April 2004), and 'Brazilian Love Songs' (February 2004).

Outcaste's international dimension is reflected by its large following in Europe where Outcaste DJs have held tours and residencies at clubs in major cities. The label's record distribution has also grown in India with clubs in Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore playing Outcaste material. In the USA, Outcaste compilations are also distributed by hip-hop giant, Tommy Boy Music. Outcaste music is also particularly popular in Australia, the US, New Zealand and Singapore.

The growth of Outcaste Records is even more apparent since the establishment of its two sister labels. Urban music label Relentless Records was launched in 2000 as part of the Ministry of Sound by Shabs Jobanputra and Paul Franklyn. It is now part of Virgin/EMI.

Stimulus Records is an independent music label, which recently signed Scottish singer-songwriter, KT Tunstall. Currently, the Outcaste label continues to search for artists, nurture new talent and compile exemplary collections of contemporary world music. The label is working with popular artists Joss Stone, Jay Sean, Maxi Priest and MC Skibadee.