



# Sufi Punk

Artistic Director/Music Producer  
My World My Music Label















MUSIC: Britain's first female Muslim band to perform in front of 12,000

# Islam's sisters on a peace-ful note

By Anna Iqbal

THEY might not lead a rock'n'roll lifestyle but the Uthah Collective are already making waves in the music industry as Britain's first female Muslim band.

And the Birmingham-based group are set to share the same stage as former Bee Gees Robin Gibb.

The 14-member band, formed in March 2008, have been touring various peace concerts across the country to share their music.

They will be performing in front of 12,000 people alongside celebrities, politicians and community figures in a concert at Wembley Arena tomorrow to mark the United Nations International Day of Peace.

The band, which has members from Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Yemeni and Jamaican backgrounds, will also be seen by millions as the concert is broadcast on television and the internet in their biggest concert yet.

Uthah Collective use Islamic lyrics for their Islamic songs told through poetry and music and are slowly building a reputation across the world.

They have already performed at festivals in Manchester, Edinburgh and Brighton this year and have been invited to play in 10 foreign countries including Morocco, Norway, Jordan and Canada.

The group organise their rehearsals around prayer time



■ ON WITH THE SHOW... Uthah Collective will share the stage with Robin Gibb (right). Picture: Phil Hitchen

and are careful not to compromise their beliefs. Some members do not perform alongside music and others do not believe in performing in front of men.

Naz Koser, director of Uthah Arts, said: "The Uthah

Collective shows how you can work with faith within the arts.

"For some of the Muslim community the word music puts up barriers but we need to break down these barriers.

"We are very flexible and work around the beliefs of the

group. We are so excited to be performing at Wembley Arena, it's very surreal.

"It's like a dream come true, when we formed a year a year ago we never thought we would have this much success so quickly."

















## RECOMMENDATIONS

Ulfah Arts recommends the following solutions to help Muslim Women Music Makers overcome barriers:

- **Online directory** – a website where artists can profile themselves, see what other female artists are doing and seek collaborations.
- **Lobbying for radio play** – encourage DJ's to give time to these artists or develop an online radio show / station.
- **Lobbying for space at particular festivals and events** – work with existing festivals to connect these artists and create new platforms.
- **Space at Womex** – to have an annual meeting place for networking and discussion and invite industry professionals etc.
- **Audience development** – look at ways to improve the image of music makers to the Muslim community and wider through branding and PR.

Survey responses show that all of the above would be welcomed as key areas of support.

This report contributes to the formation of the **Missing Voices Consortium**. Missing Voices consortium has been initiated by Ulfah Arts, UK; Marmoucha, Holland and Tasse Stemmer, Denmark. **The consortium believes in implementing strategies to encourage missing voices from the World Music scene to come forward.** This includes developing artists and audiences. The consortium has decided to focus on Muslim women as its first project and is launching a seminar on Muslim Women Music Makers at the World Music Expo in Seville, Oct 08.

This report was produced with the support of:



The Missing Voices Consortium:



Thanks to Ben Mandelson and Chris Everall for their support and advice in compiling this summary.



muslim women music makers

Ulfah Arts SUMMARY ON

**Muslim Women Music Makers** IN THE UK, OCTOBER 2008

This report contains a summary of a mapping exercise undertaken by Ulfah Arts between August and September 2008. It contributes to the formation of the **Missing Voices Consortium**. Missing Voices Consortium has been initiated by Ulfah Arts, UK; Marmoucha, Holland and Tasse Stemmer, Denmark. **The consortium believes in implementing strategies to encourage missing voices from the World Music scene to come forward.**

### Activity

Ulfah Arts circulated a survey for Muslim Women Music Makers to complete, in order to understand their barriers and the support needed for them to make a contribution to the established music scene in Britain.

In an attempt to define Ulfah Arts' understanding of this music, we feel it includes all music making activity, apart from any music that contradicts the parameters of Islam such as promoting sex, drugs, alcohol, adultery etc.

The following is a summary of key facts we believe are important for those in the music business who wish to engage and create opportunities for these artists.



Artists: Poetic Pilgrimage

Image courtesy of Women's Arts International Festival, UK



We very much look forward to your comments and responses. To learn about our plans and get involved please visit our website [www.missingvoices.co.uk](http://www.missingvoices.co.uk) or contact:



Missing Voices

C/o Ulfah Arts  
Unit 16 Highgate Craft Centre  
8 Highgate Square  
Birmingham. B12 0DU. UK

T: +44 (0) 121 446 4460

W: [www.missingvoices.co.uk](http://www.missingvoices.co.uk)

E: [info@missingvoices.co.uk](mailto:info@missingvoices.co.uk)











# Sister Act draws new audience

**Midland based all singing Sister Act group The Ulfah Collective surprised its audience at the Edinburgh International Festival of Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace by being the first practising Muslim female band to perform.**

They performed universal themes in, Nasheeds (Islamic songs), gospel, hymns and they have even learned a Japanese peace song and to much surprise a rap. The venue where the event was held St Augustine Church added to the unique feel to the event and to the messages of unity and peace to a female audience. Naz Koser, Director of Ulfah Arts commented, "Over half of the women at the Edinburgh performance were first time audience members for the festival. Ulfah shares its work

with all women. Segregation that has its benefits, and by having women only events women from grass roots communities are able to participate who would not normally have the chance due to faith or culture beliefs.

We are actively looking for women to join the Ulfah Collective, all you need is commitment and we will explore the rest and you don't have to be a Muslim to get involved". Neill Walker, Middle East Festival Co-Director commented, "We are delighted to have supported this concert by the Ulfah Collective."

Listen out for more peaceful vibes and harmonies from the sister's.

For more details contact:

Naz Koser: [naz@ulfaharts.co.uk](mailto:naz@ulfaharts.co.uk)











The Buco  
Gallery











# Muslim arts group goes global

**ANNA BLACKBURN**  
Creative Industries Editor  
an.blackburn@birminghampost.co.uk

A Muslim women's arts organisation from Highgate is among the West Midlands companies representing the region at a prestigious music event in Copenhagen.

UK Trade & Investment, working with Advantage West Midlands, is taking a group of ten firms on a supported visit to The World Music Expo (WOMEX) in the Danish city this week to help them develop international contacts, opportunities and networks.

WOMEX brings together thousands of professionals from the worlds of folk, roots, ethnic and traditional music and also includes concerts, conferences and documentary films.

One of the West Midlands group attending is Ullah Arts, of Highgate, Birmingham, which seeks to empower Muslim women musicians by providing

them with a creative platform to find their voices and perform on stage.

The company organised a tour of the UK, Denmark and Holland after presenting a seminar on breaking down the barriers faced by Muslim women music makers at WOMEX 2008, which it attended with support from UK Trade & Investment.

Founding director Max Koser said: "We are such a niche organisation that we realised we needed to reach a global audience of music professionals, and WOMEX is ideal for this."

"This will be our third visit and we have always had excellent support from UK Trade & Investment."

"In particular, last year's event gave us the international treasures and contacts on the ground to enable the three-country tour, which was very well received, to go ahead earlier this year."

At WOMEX this year, the company will be promoting a specially composed piece made up of three genres – classical, jazz and experimental – with the aim of securing international funding for a collaboration with Albania.

Max added: "We are bringing a Kosovo composer here to create a piece of music from a series of workshops in which we will be asking British Muslim women for their perspectives on issues that matter to them."

"The aim is for a group of British female Muslim artists to perform the piece in Kosovo next summer."

Ullah Arts was established in 2004 and has five employees.

Jonathan Webber, Director of International Trade at Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is UK Trade & Investment's West Midlands international lead for the screen image and sound business cluster.

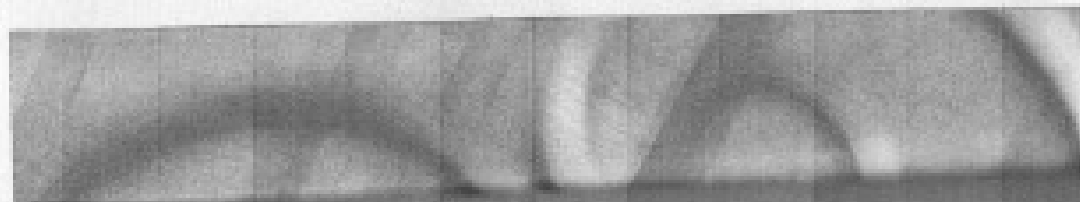
He said: "This is a perfect example of UK Trade & Investment and Advantage West Midlands working together to showcase the world-class creative talent the West Midlands enjoys."

"WOMEX is a landmark event and is a really good vehicle for demonstrating our creative vibrancy and the diversity that underpins it."



Artists Sarah Yuseen (left) and Simona Abdallah during the Muslim women music makers' recent tour

## Multinationals being flooded by feedback



## Charis says she is fired up for smithy awards







