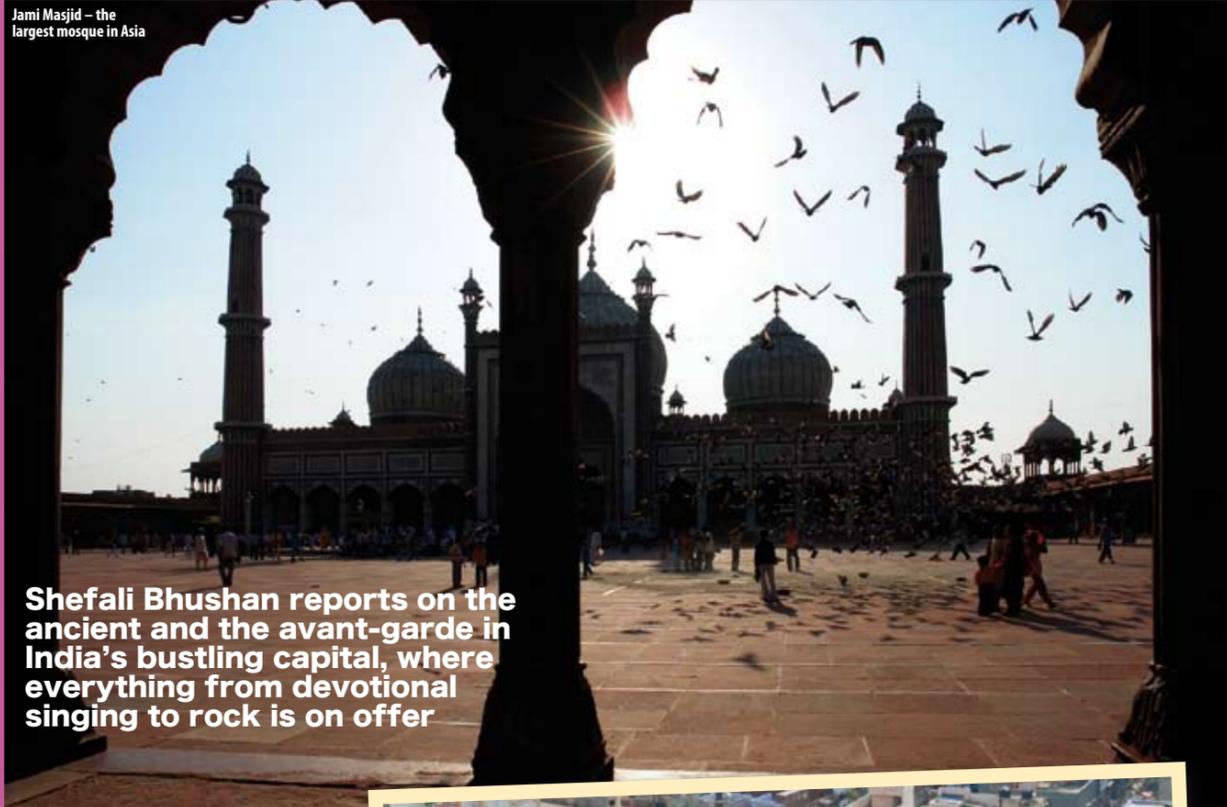
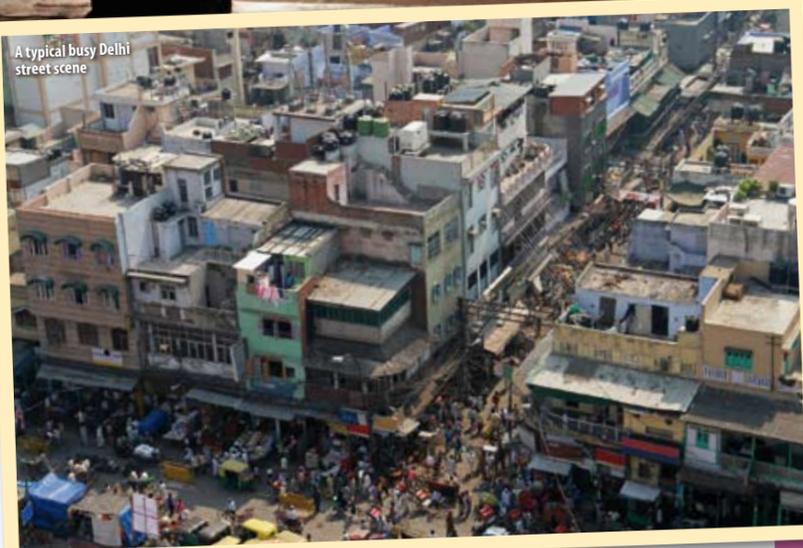


Jami Masjid – the largest mosque in Asia



Shefali Bhushan reports on the ancient and the avant-garde in India's bustling capital, where everything from devotional singing to rock is on offer

A typical busy Delhi street scene



Culture Amongst Youth) organises lecture demonstrations of classical and folk music and dance in unusual venues spread out all over the city, especially schools and colleges. The ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) puts on a lot of world music for Delhi audiences – although passes often get snatched up within hours of becoming available. Jazz and rock music have found a home in several restaurants, pubs and bars of late, but college festivals – held in October and November – provide the best opportunity to hear local bands.

For those interested in Sufi music, *qawwalis* can be heard at shrines across the city, most notably at Nizamuddin Dargah. Hindu and Sikh devotional music can be heard in temples all over the city, although Lakshmi Narayan Mandir and Bangla Sahib Gurudwara are probably the most accessible. Visitors are welcome at all these sites, although you need to dress conservatively.

Delhi, India's capital city with a population nearing 17 million, is at first a bewildering metropolis with a long history and dynamic present. In the congested streets of the Old City, trucks, buses and old Ambassador cars rub fenders with mopeds, rickshaws and holy cows. Smart businessmen on mobile phones and women in chic clothes share the pavement with bearded *sadhus* (ascetics) and beggars. There are three UNESCO World Heritage sites – the 12th century Qutub Minar (Victory Tower), the 16th century Humayun's Tomb and the 17th century Moghul Lal Quila (Red Fort) – plus Jami Masjid, the largest mosque in Asia, and countless temples and shrines. There are boutiques, bazaars, skyscrapers and shacks, plus a lively music scene associated with all of this and more.

Delhi has been a patron of Indian classical music for centuries and even boasts its own *gharana* (a musical style, or school) – the *Dilli Gharana*. The city hosts several classical festivals throughout the year. Until a few decades ago, these were all-night affairs, where performers delved deep into every *raga* for hours and the listeners got to hear a wide variety of music. Sadly that is not the case anymore and most concerts are two or three hours long, so you only get to hear a fraction of the ragas, and are usually held in the evenings. There's probably an Indian classical, vocal or instrumental concert in Delhi every day; traditional folk music, being a rural phenomenon, has a limited presence.

Since the concerts and festivals organised by the Sangeet Natak Academy, a government body working in music and theatre, have now ceased, concerts tend to be one-off affairs and are, unfortunately, few and far between. SPIC MACAY (The Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music And

Epicentre, based in the sleek Apparel House, boasts an auditorium, art gallery, restaurant and amphitheatre



VENUES

Siri Fort Auditorium

This cultural complex has three halls, the largest with a capacity of over 2,000. Some of Delhi's best world music programming takes place here.

Khel Gaon Marg, +91 11 2649 3743

Kamani Auditorium

One of the most prestigious auditoria in the city, with a capacity of around 600, comfortable seating and good acoustics. It hosts three of the major Indian classical music festivals, as well as various concerts.

1 Copernicus Marg, Mandi House, +91 11 2338 8084, www.kamani Auditorium.org

India Habitat Centre

A venue with several indoor and outdoor performance spaces. It hosts Lohri, a harvest festival widely celebrated by the farmers of Punjab. Held on the lawns in February, with

atmospheric fires keeping the traditional performers warm.

Lodhi Road, +91 11 2468 2001, www.indiahabitat.org

India International Centre

With its small auditorium that can seat upwards of 200 people, this is a popular venue for an eclectic mix of music.

40 Max Mueller Marg, Lodhi Estate, +91 11 2461 9431, www.iicdelhi.nic.in

Epicentre

Housed in the ultra-modern Apparel House, Epicentre offers excellent musical options in the new suburb of Gurgaon.

Apparel House, Sector 44, Gurgaon, +91 12 4271 5000, www.epicentre.co.in

Central Park (Connaught Place)

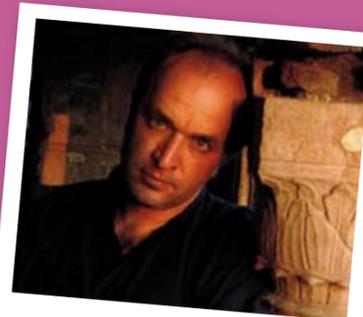
The park has recently disappeared, replaced with water features and a new amphitheatre. Perfectly located to attract a mix of shoppers, strollers and discerning audiences.



Lohri celebrations held at India Habitat Centre

My Delhi WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

"I've been living in and writing about India for 20 years now and, during that time, there's been a depressing amount of violence between Hindus and Muslims. A place like Nizamuddin is terribly important because this is still a place where Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Christians all come together to pray, bring their wishes to the saint and listen to *qawwali* all sitting down together. Here you have Sufism not as something fluffy and other-worldly, but as something that acts as a balm on India's festering religious wounds"



LISTINGS

The magazines below have comprehensive events and festival listings, plus other useful city information. They're available from market magazine stalls and at hotel reception counters.

Delhi Diary www.delhidiary.com
First City www.firstcitydelhi.com
Time Out Delhi www.timeoutdelhi.net

MUSIC STORES

Mercury Khan Market
Planet M South Extension II
Music World Ansal Plaza

SHRINES & TEMPLES

Nizamuddin Dargah

The most famous shrine complex in south Delhi, dedicated to the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325). Within the complex is the grave of Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), considered the creator of *qawwali* music. The *dargah* comes alive especially on Thursday nights when the *qawwali* sessions can last late into the night.

Off Mathura Rd, near Humayun's Tomb

Lakshmi Narayan Mandir

A spectacular modern Hindu temple with extravagant paintings and decorations and *bhajans* (hymns) sung in the Krishna shrine.

Mandir Marg, west of Connaught Place

Bangla Sahib Gurudwara

Delhi's main Sikh temple, made of white marble with golden domes. All Sikh temples have continuous devotional singing of the holy book, the *Granth Sahib*, with vocals, harmonium and *tabla*.

Off Ashoka Rd, south-east of Connaught Place



Nirmalya Singh and group playing at Sahmat Festival

FESTIVALS

ITC Sangeet Sammelan (March)

Vishnu Digambar Jayanti Samaroh (January-March)
Sriram Shankarlal Music Festival (February-March)

The three most prestigious and long-standing Indian classical music festivals are all held at Kamani Auditorium.

Phoolwalon Ki Sair

A three-day festival for communal harmony. It is held in Mehrauli, near Qutub, with flower sellers holding decorated flower fans and walking in a procession to a *dargah* (shrine). Held in October/November.

Bhakti Utsav

Taking place in Nehru Park, this three-evening festival features seven or eight groups invited from India and the wider subcontinent – the common thread being *bhakti* or devotion. Held in March-April.

Gurbani Gaveh Bhai

A festival of Sikh devotional music held in the Talkatora Gardens. Every April.

Sahmat

The Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust brings together different artists, poets and photographers at VP House, Rafi Marg, in memory of murdered human rights activist Safdar Hashmi. Held in January.
www.sahmat.org

Jahan-e-Khusrau Festival

Held on the ramparts of Humayun's tomb, the setting provides a perfect backdrop to this Sufi music festival. In March.

Qutub Festival

This three-day festival by Qutub Minar showcases a variety of classical music and dance. November-December.
www.delhi-tourism-india.com

GOING TRAVELLING?

Check out www.songlines.co.uk/musictravel for our bespoke tours, including a trip to Rajasthan in February. *Songlines* has now profiled the world music scene in 40+ cities. Visit our archive at www.songlines.co.uk



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