



## القَات ★ BIO - EL KHAT

**El Khat** - a homemade junkyard band led by multi-instrumentalist Eyal El Wahab. Named for the drug used so widely chewed across the Arab Peninsula, The band brings original compositions inspired by the music of the golden age in Aden, Yemen. El Wahab plays many instruments, like the dli and the Kearat that he constructed himself. It's something he started doing several years ago, using his skills to make music from the items people discard. A child of the Yemeni diaspora who's grown up in Tel Aviv Jaffa. it's a practice that harks back to the family homeland, where even rubbish can have become an instrument.

El Wahab has always been a man of invention. He talked his way into the Jerusalem Andalusian Orchestra as a cellist, self-taught from busking and unable to read music, learning the

repertoire by ear as he went along, and picking up music theory. It gave him a strong foundation, but his world changed when he was given 'Qat, Coffee & Qambus: Raw 45s from Yemen' an LP of Yemeni traditional music from the 1960s. It came as an epiphany. He quit the orchestra, began building instruments and put together El Khat

**Albat Alawi Op.99**, El Khat's new album, released on March 2022 via Glitterbeat Records, celebrates an homage to Faisal Alawi, a popular Yemeni singer who died in 2010, along with an alba, a small tin box that can contain many treasures, while the Op.99 is intended to give the compositions "the same respect as Western classical music."

**Saadia Jefferson**, El Khat's debut album, released on Batov Records, brings a funky, psychedelic reimagination to the traditional Yemeni songs that electrified him when he first heard them, this is an album almost entirely filled with his own compositions, something close and personal that constantly looks back to his family's homeland in Yemen.

**The Yemeni Orchestra**, In 2022 El Wahab with The Association For Society and Culture - Yemenite Tradition established an orchestra focusing on the old sound from the 60-70s in South Yemen and preserving the tradition. Those new arrangements for the Classical Yemeni repertoire are performed and sung by the entire members of the orchestra and with guests such as Riff Cohen, Zion Golan and more



*"Joyously mixing authentically Arabic musical tropes with ethnomusicological forgeries. Vigorous psychedelic stomps ... an exciting new discovery." **Uncut***

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Phil England presents *Adventures in Sound and Music*  
March 2022



Coltrane front (L-R) *Adventures in Sound and Music* by John Christopher, George Duke (right) with Adam Mirviss, 1970s, Anthony MF, Anthony Sandman in *The Wire* 441 by David Niles, El Khat by Malcom Cooper

The 10 March edition of *The Wire*'s weekly radio show on Resonance FM and Resonance Extra featured tracks by Alabaster DePlume, George Duke, Nyokabi Kariki, Homeboy Sandman, El Khat and more



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“The songs on *Albat Alawi Op.99* are [band leader Eyal el Wahab’s] own compositions and he has created a denser, rougher sound to carry them. The result is like a whirlwind in a workshop: a barrage of freaked percussion, whomping bass and choral voices set off by banks of detuned brass.” **The Wire**

“Band theme song *El Khat* has searing desert guitar and Leilat Al Henna’s mournful vocals, as violin and ghostly organ conjure a distant, unknown homeland.” **Mojo**

**MOJO**

MAY 2022

**El Khat**

★ ★ ★  
Aalbat Alawi Op.99  
GLITTERBEAT.CO.UK/ALP

A further excursion into re-imagined Yemeni sounds.



A son of the Yemeni diaspora, Eyal el Wahab bluffed his way into the Jerusalem Andalusian Orchestra as a cellist but quit to form El Khat after hearing a compilation of traditional Yemeni music from the 1960s, using self-made

instruments to stretch the band’s musical boundaries. Debut album *Saadia Jefferson* was couched in funk and psychedelic shades, but its follow-up has looser frames of reference. On much of the album, instruments drop in and out of the mix at unexpected intervals, with Djaja overpowered by swirling female choruses at times, before moving to disjointed percussive interludes, shifting the focus between the traditions of the past and the limitless potentials of future stylings. Band theme song *El Khat* has searing desert guitar and Leilat Al Henna’s mournful vocals, as violin and ghostly organ conjure a distant, unknown homeland.

David Katz



**Eyal doesn't mind if you trash his music**

**BY JONATHAN JARVIS**  
MAYHEM! Eyal el Wahab, 34, is a Yemeni immigrant to the UK who has spent the last few years building a reputation as a leading figure in the Yemeni diaspora music scene. His band, El Khat, has released two albums, *Saadia Jefferson* (2020) and *Albat Alawi Op.99* (2022). The latter is a collection of his own compositions, many of which are inspired by traditional Yemeni music. In an interview, Eyal discusses his journey from a cellist to a band leader, his love for traditional Yemeni music, and his plans for the future.

**Winkler thought he'd be entering a war zone on first visit to Israel**

**BY GABRIEL BOVIERE**  
“I WASN'T aware of any of the tensions in the region when I first visited Israel,” says Winkler. “I was just a young man looking for a new challenge. I was told it was a war zone, but I didn't believe it. I was wrong. It was a war zone, but not in the way I thought. It was a war zone of the heart.”

**Italian film *Three Floors* based on Israeli Nevo's novel**

The Italian film *Three Floors* is based on the novel by Israeli author Nevo. The film tells the story of a man who is expelled from Arab lands and his journey to a new home.

**SONGLINES**

April 2022

**Next Issue...**  
May 2022 (#177)  
On sale April 8

**Lido Pimientos** (pictured) – Ahead of a world tour this May, the Colombian-Canadian artist talks to us about her music and activism  
**Songlines Music Awards 2022** – This year’s nominations announced!  
**El Khat** – We catch up with band leader Eyal el Wahab about their new album, *Aalbat Alawi Op 99*, a deep dive into his Yemeni roots

**Maya Youssef** – The Syrian *qanun* player’s new album ruminates on concepts of home  
**Iberic Choir** – A feast of Georgian polyphonic singing celebrating the tradition of toasting  
**Spotlight on Yungchen Lhamo** – The Tibetan singer with a new album, *Awakening*  
**My World: Mukoma Wa Ngugi** – Talking inspirational music with the Kenyan author





*El Khat make joyful clatter on Albat Alawi Op.99 ... The title track of their new album has no regular instruments at all: everything is recycled metal, plastic or wood, all coming together in a funereal march that sounds like a huge, disgruntled anima shaking itself into life. .... "Never joined the army", El Wahab sings on opener Ma'afan, "never held a gun." The percussion clatters behind the beat, a violin climbs up and down embellished scales. "Never could tell/who are the bad guys." Then for the last half minute of the song horns crowd in, echoing as if in a marketplace." \*\*\*\* Financial Times*



**"Brilliant!" Gilles Peterson**

**"Wow, loving this" Jon More Coldcut**



**parfaitement orchestré aux racines yéménites du leader.**

Enfant de la diaspora yéménite qui a grandi à Tel Aviv, Eyal el Wahab a fait ses débuts au sein du Jérusalem Andalous Orchestra en tant que violoncelliste avant de plonger dans la culture musicale de ses racines et de fonder la formation **EL KHAT**. Charpentier et musicien autodidacte, il perpétue l'art de la récupération de son pays d'origine en fabriquant ses instruments. "Les gens jouent simplement sur une boîte de conserve là-bas. Ici, les gens jettent des choses, des trésors ou des bric-à-brac, et je les transforme" explique le compositeur et arrangeur du groupe qui en 2019 sortait l'album *Saadia Jefferson*, une réimagination funky et psychédélique de chansons traditionnelles yéménites.

"C'est un peu comme la musique pop, où l'âme c'est quatre accords et une mélodie. La différence est dans l'expression" explique le leader. Le groove enivrant porté par la basse et les percussions se mêle avec finesse aux instruments mélodiques et au chœur, aux riffs de guitare, aux cordes et aux cuivres pour un hommage profond à ce pays toujours meurtri par la guerre et une terrible famine.

Un album plus personnel qui revient constamment sur la patrie de sa famille dans la péninsule Arabique. "Je n'ai pas de message", rajoute l'artiste, "Je veux juste

Malgré la crise sanitaire, Eyal el Wahab a réussi à réunir, non sans mal, un chœur et son quatuor dont les membres viennent d'Irak, de Pologne, du Maroc et du Yémen pour enregistrer les douze titres de son nouvel album *Albat Alawi Op.99*. Une œuvre cette fois composée de titres originaux et guidée par le regard de l'artiste vers le passé de sa famille et vers le

Link to download: [photos](#)

[WATCH/ SHARE: "Djaja" music video](#)



<https://youtu.be/x1p0dhZHgRQ>

"Djaja" (meaning "chicken" in the Yemeni Arabic dialect) is a frenetic rush of energy that sets the tone for the album's dense sonic and emotional architecture. Eyal el Wahab explains: *"The song talks about how fake what we see on our screens can be, about the constant need to be seen by others, to stay relevant and attractive all the time. An unreal reality that shows itself off with money and cars, with property, with things and more things."* About the video he says: *"It all seems so clean and shining in every TV channel you pick, I just wanted to show how awkward it could look when you place certain people in a very unnatural space such as a TV set. The band is forced to wear suits and sit nicely but underneath those outfits they are pretty much nomadic people, the dancing scene is showing who they really are."*

## [WATCH/ SHARE: "La Sama" music video](#)



<https://youtu.be/-rYzOp9KwGk>

"La Sama" is a kaleidoscopic track punctuated by twangy guitar, off-kilter piano, swirling horns and hypnotic percussion. Eyal el Wahab: *"La Sama means 'No Sky' and it's referring to the saying 'the sky's the limit.' It's about an undefined group of people who have lost their identity and their wishes for the future. The video for 'La Sama' is chapter 2 from a 3-part series. So it's related to the 'Djaja' video but it goes back in time, showing the journey of a 'Yemeni orchestra' (El Khat) when they were immigrants crossing lands. The 'La Sama' video is showing what happens before the 'Djaja' video, where you see the Yemeni orchestra being a 'successful' group, performing at a TV studio."*

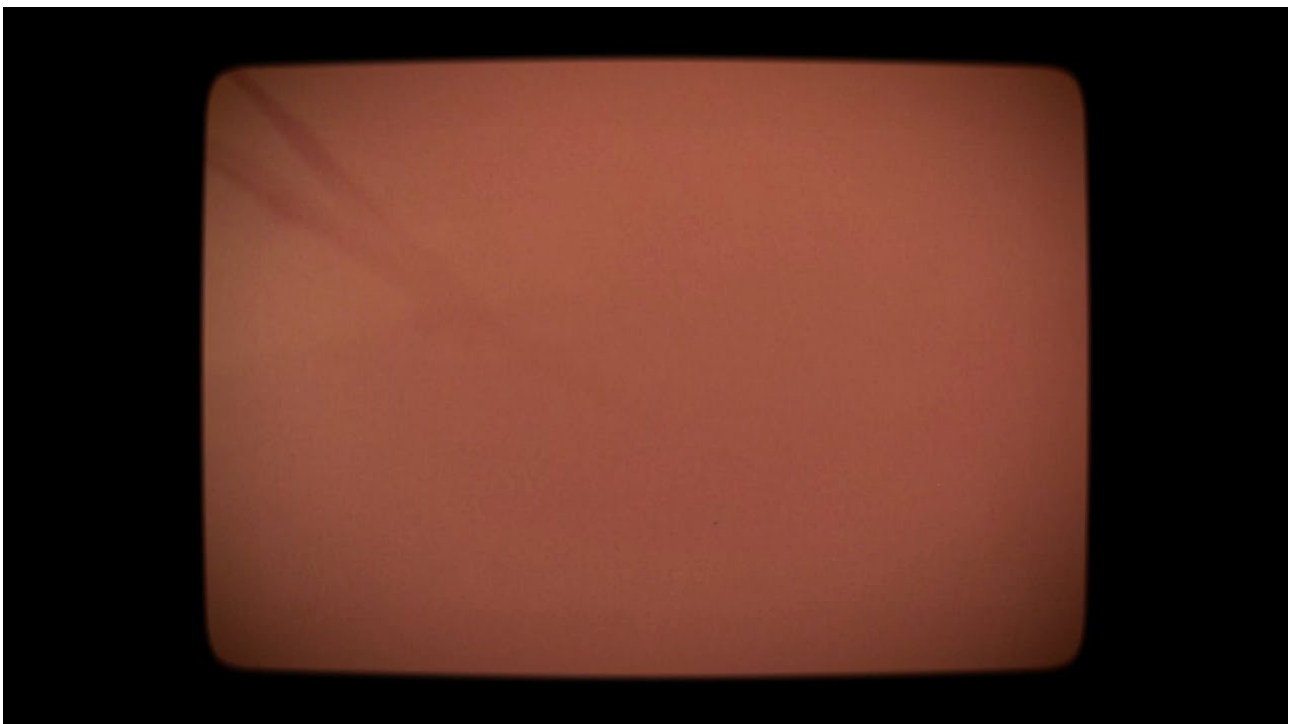
The trilogy (told in reverse) will conclude with "Ala al Ma", the third single (out now) and video which is due to be released soon.

LIVE CONCERT 2022



**EL KHAT - *The Yemeni Orchestra***

***“Rih Al Yaman”***



## Live Session – WOMEX 2020



[WATCH/ SHARE: Video of El Khat building DIY instruments](#)



<https://youtu.be/N2SC2Aa1xCQ>



Eyal is also a skilled carpenter: *"I first became familiar with making instruments out of 'garbage' from the Yemenite street musicians that depend on music to earn their bread and can find the usefulness in every thrown out thing and somehow turn it into a musical instrument. I wander through the streets of Tel Aviv and Jaffa, drumming and strumming everything I can find, and trying to get a sound. I'm trying to stay loyal to the original sound of the instrument, without any store-bought additions. The ability to bring to life and create music from what used to be a 'piece of junk', to me reflects the ability to be happy with the little and simple things in life."*

\*\*\*\*\*

**El Khat**

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To order the album on Bandcamp: <https://elkhat-music.bandcamp.com/album/aalbat-alawi-op-99>

To stream or download the album: <https://idol.lnk.to/AalbatAlawi99>

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