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SOUNDING OFF ON SOUNDS | Pooja Goswami Pavan: Hindustani music straight from Minneapolis

By [Dwight Hobbes](#), [Sounding Off On Sounds](#)
April 30, 2014

Pooja Goswami Pavan - Hori Thumri in Raga Mishr...

Premier vocalist-composer Pooja Goswami Pavan's, *Piyaa Basey Kaun Des?* (*In What Land's My Beloved?*): *Songs of the Sufis* on Blind Eye Records, is an eye-brow arching delight. As was her Twin Cities recording debut *kaise keh duuN* (*How Shall I Say?*) on Innova Records. This time around, though, Pavan throws a very interesting curve, even for this fascinating artist.

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A bit of background. Pooja Goswami Pavan, Ph.D. purveys North Indian classical music. Having mastered her craft at the University of Delhi, she owns awards and performs internationally, including stints at, among other prestigious venues, Guthrie Theater and Ordway Center for Performing Arts. There's more information at www.poojagoswamipavan.com. Suffice to say Pavan is no piker.

To the point, beyond academics and accomplishments, you don't learn a gift in class or come by it with a track record. Certainly not such artistry as Pavan purveys on *kaise keh duuN* and *Piyaa Basey Kaun Des?*, subtly impassioned, aural grace itself. The seven pieces on *kaise keh duuN* are what she calls, "throwback love songs" culled from timeless tradition. So, apparently, are the arrangements readily recognizable as being the same vein as immortal icon Ravi Shankar and others.

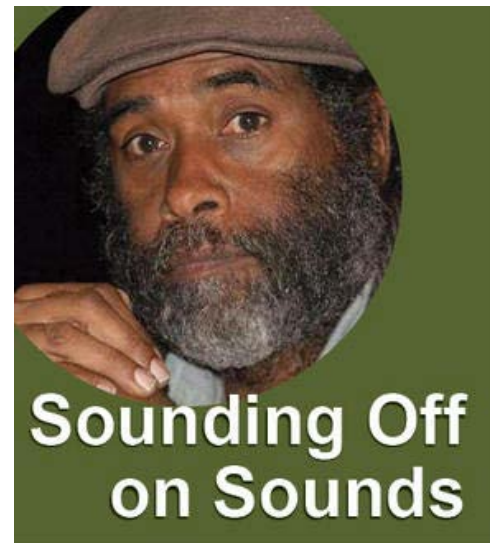
The singing, beautifully done on both albums is in her own tongue — voiced so exquisitely it doesn't matter in the least whether understand two words of it (lyrics are translated in the liner notes): you feel it to the point of being virtually entranced. *Piyaa Basey Kaun Des?*, however, can make you wonder, for a moment, if you're hearing things. It has the same fluid, lilting Eastern quality but the underpinnings as music begins and, increasingly, as it goes on, are remarkably Western. Courtesy of producers A. Pavan and Pooja Goswami Pavan and arranger Ranjan Sharma. Amazingly the flavors span from jazz piano to old-time scat and doo-wop to R&B and, believe it or not, funk. All without distracting from the art form's innate authenticity.

Sharma, in an email, reflects on the project, "Well, the idea was to make it 'melodious'. After all melody is the thing that touches your heart. Pooja is a great singer with a unique, melodious voice. I wanted the album to...have a blend of both acoustic and some modern elements...which add to the overall feel."

Pavan, at home with her husband A. Pavan, notes, "I want to reach a [universal] audience that may not understand [Indian] classical music. Especially a younger generation. In Bollywood music, more and more Western instruments are used. My vision was to use all kinds of elements to showcase this thing as [having] one flavor. Because music is a universal language. Music is music. Everybody can relate to that."

The accompaniment for this intriguing departure from form is Ajay Prasanna (bansuri), Keith Peters (bass guitar), Babbi (dholack), Parvez Hussain (tabla), Raju Khan (harmonium) and Amar Sangan (guitar, mandolin) with guest artists on certain tracks Greg Herriges (bouzouki), Ahsan Ali and Faiyaz Khan (sarangi). Quite well spent funding underwritten by Minnesota State Arts Board and Art Works/National Endowment for the Arts. *Piyaa Basey Kaun Des?* (*In What Land's My Beloved?*): *Songs of the Sufis* and *kaise keh duuN* (*How Shall I Say?*) are both quite remarkable finds for lovers of exquisitely unique music.

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Writer and musician Dwight Hobbes writes weekly about music, spoken word, and culture.

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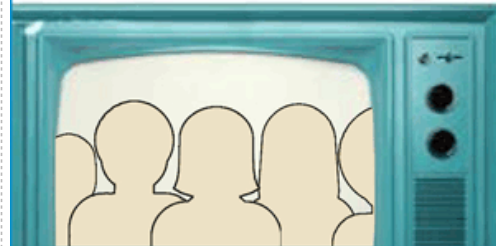
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