



Behind the Curtain: Making Music in Mumbai's Film Studios

By Gregory D. Booth

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Beginning in the 1930s, men and a handful of women came from India's many communities—Marathi, Parsi, Goan, North Indian, and many others—to Mumbai to work in an industry that constituted in the words of some, "the original fusion music." They worked as composers, arrangers, assistants, and studio performers in one of the most distinctive popular music and popular film cultures on the planet. Today, the songs played by Mumbai's studio musicians are known throughout India and the Indian diaspora under the popular name "Bollywood," but the musicians themselves remain, in their own words, "behind the curtain"—the anonymous and unseen performers of one of the world's most celebrated popular music genres.

Now, Gregory D. Booth offers a compelling account of the Bollywood film music industry from the perspective of the musicians who both experienced and shaped its history. In a rare insider's look at the process of musical production from the late 1940s to the mid 1990s, before the advent of digital recording technologies, Booth explains who these unknown musicians were and how they came to join the film music industry. On the basis of a fascinating set of first-hand accounts from the musicians themselves, he reveals how the day-to-day circumstances of technology and finance shaped both the songs and the careers of their creator and performers. Booth also unfolds the technological, cultural, and industrial developments that led to the enormous studio orchestras of the 1960s–90s as well as the factors which ultimately led to their demise in contemporary India.

Featuring an extensive companion website with video interviews with the musicians themselves, *Behind the Curtain* is a powerful, ground-level view of this globally important music industry.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Behind the Curtain* does more than cheer the vital contributions of the unsung heroes on the floors of the recording studios. It also unveils the cultural and industrial idiosyncrasies of the Hindi film music world."--*TimeOut Mumbai*

"In *Behind the Curtain*, Greg Booth presents a fascinating oral history of the Hindi film music industry, allowing the words of the performers themselves to be heard for the first time. *No* student of Indian cinema, public culture or the history of film music can afford not to read this captivating study."--Rachel Dwyer, Professor of Indian Cultures and Cinema, SOAS, University of London

"The world of an average Indian is filled with Hindi film songs. But not much is known about the people and the processes behind the scenes. Greg Booth has opened several doors to the everyday world of Hindi film music. This is an important ethnographical work that benefits many Indian cinema scholars. Those who simply love film songs will also enjoy the book as it brings together stories of people, lives and musical passions."-- Gayatri Chatterjee, Film scholar and teacher, Film & Television Institute of India

"In this extensive oral history, Booth takes us behind the curtain of anonymity to meet the musicians of India's hugely popular films. Sensitively weaving together the recollections of musicians, Booth offers a rich, multifaceted and very human Bollywood history."--Paul D. Greene, Pennsylvania State University

About the Author

After early training in western classical music, Gregory D. Booth began the study of North Indian tabla drumming with Ustad Zakir Hussain in 1977. He has published widely on South Asian classical music pedagogy, processional music, and Hindi film music. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Auckland.

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