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**Listening Session: Seeing Through Flames:
Palestinian Sound Archive by Mo'min Swaitat**

Mo'min Swaitat 29:02

Okay, hello, hi everyone, thank you for coming. My name is Mo'min Swaitat and I was born in Jenin in the North of the West Bank

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and I recently established this project which is focused on the Palestinian archive, sound archive. So, in this video that you watching now this is my uncle's wedding in 19, early, early 1990s. Actually this is two of those guys are my uncle. This is my uncle from my dad's side. This is my uncle from my mom's side, and so, this the first tracks that I played, it was also my family's band. This is a sound of the Palestinian Bedouin. So I come from a Palestinian Bedouin family and the sound of the Palestinian Bedouin is based on a bamboo flute, handmade bamboo flute and make the noise as if it was electronic so I'm going to play another track now from this wedding but we have sampled this track and we have released it on vinyl and this is we called Hadiyah mean like challenge when there's two MC in the, in the space and they sort of battling each other on a spoken word basis and this is came from very deep tradition and the Palestinian Bedouin history. So basically the Hadiyah is mean when when the Bedouin move from one place to another place and journey while they moving there will be a leader in the front and the leader in the back if the leader in the front saw something that look not normal, they will start he will start or she will start in a spoken word and then the one on the back have to understand what's happening in and he will also respond on a spoken word and that and

Transcript

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that will give an indication for all the families and babies who traveling of what's happening okay let's go as we say this is a sample so we sample it as a regained Palestinian Bedouin.

35:04

As you could hear people who are responding in the back as the collective response of what's happening.

36:41

Okay so basically the story was that in this in this track, it was the front guy have seen a deer. Gazelle deer running in the desert while they're moving house during the spring, and, then and then the front guy have shouted, he's saw a deer. and this mean, that must be a hunter in the area and the back guy response, my money and my belonging and then the rest of the people in the front was responding all the way through the back and forth between the front person and the back person all the way through, they were saying my money and my belonging. So this is a little glimpse into the Palestinian Bedouin sound and the idea behind and what's actually behind it and what they actually sang and how the songwriting come about in the Palestinian Bedouin heritage. The second round, we're going to go all the way to 1948 and this is a sci fi story have been written by the founder of the Palestinian Communist Party in the in the in after 48 and Mahmoud Darwish, himself and Saliba Khamis, Tawfiq Ziad so this is an epic tale was written by three political Palestinian leaders, and they was the founder of the Palestinian Communist Party and in this track, is called Ahmad Al-Zaatar. It is a one hour track, I'm not going to play it all. I'm just going to play the opening of it and it's a one hour track, and it's an epic tale of a little boy called Ahmad. And they called him Ahmad Al-Zaatar. Do you know that za'atar, the herbs that, you know, you dip in the olive oil, and then za'atar and then you eat it, it's the best of breakfast. And so this little boy during the Israeli invasion, in 1948, with the help of the British can only on that time, they this little boy was going to collect this herb from the Al Carmel mountain in Haifa and, while he was away, I used to do this when I was a kids. That's mean it's like a, it's the whole day out from sunrise to sunset. We as a kids, we go out in the mountain to collect herbs and so while he was away by himself, everything has happened. So all of his neighbor all of his family had been kicked out to out of neighboring country and

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he came back and he found out all the whole city have been shift have been dramatically shift and so this is where the story was coming from actually on effect and then they smuggle this poetry or this story to Khaled El-Habre. Khaled El-Habre is a Lebanese communist artist one of my favorites who are based in the South of Lebanon and he support of Hezbollah and that's because his village was completely destroyed in 1982. Oh no in 1962 and and then he took they smuggle the poetry to him and then he went to Beirut and then he compose it with Ilyas Rabbani sorry was the Ziad Rahbani which is also my favorite jazz composer Let's go

40:57

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hey so that was this album actually I found in Jenin during the lockdown alongside almost 7000 Palestinian tape and an abandoned tape label that was founded in the 70s and it was shut down in 2000 when the Second Intifada started and I was with an amazing artwork and and I got really like immediately attract to the to the artwork first and then when I looked at it and I found out that the co-writing in this album was Saliba Khamis and Mahmoud Darwish and Tawfiq Ziad and I saw the composer and I knew that it's going to be an epic album and it's called when the singer goes silent and it's a it's got two tracks on it one track called Ahmad Al Aali and the other track called Ahmad Al-Zaatar. So now we're gonna move to our next album that we also found but this time is was in vinyl and it was in seven inch and this album actually was produced by the PLO in 1972 and it was the only reason that we have this album in our hand now because there was an Israeli artist that she was doing a PhD about Palestinian archive that was taken by the Israelis during the 48 and 67. And and then she went to the Israeli army archive and then she found this vinyl alongside 16 millimeter film and together in one box and then she she took them and then she digitize them and then she published them in her exhibition in the Jerusalem museum and then and then we got to know about this music and the album, basically. So this is by Zeinab Shaath we actually issuing this next month we're going to announce it and this is actually the first Palestinian album to be sung in English so you guys got to understand what happening now Okay, lets

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run it

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so, yeah, basically it's amazing to find this album that was sung in English in such a good quality in 1970 and speaking with the English audience. In this point, I want to just raise the issue of immigration because there's a second side in this album, Zeinab Shaath which is the singer and guitarist and its a solo album basically is 4 track album and is a solo album and in the second side and she's speaking about her story being an American born as an immigrant and you know in the case of the Palestinian immigration is a completely reverse of the story than other immigration so the Palestinian actually doesn't want to be immigrated and doesn't want to be a refugee somewhere else. They actually want to be home they want to go back home so this thing very important to raise and whether you're whether you are against immigration or with with immigration The point is not here the point is actually there is a whole entire population we talking about almost 10 million Palestinian doesn't want to be outside of Palestine they want to go back to Palestine but but because of the global politics, and it's completely forbidden them to go back to Palestine I would love if someone meet me in the street and tell me to go home I'll be like please Okay, let's hear it

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Okay, that was the Urgent Call of Palestine. We only played 2 track out of 4 its going to be re issued in our Majazz Project, Palestine sound archive next month. You can pre order it. Okay, so now, we're gonna move to an album we just actually re issued 3 weeks ago. So we still in the immigration area here. So this band called The Dawn, The Dawn Yeah, right. Correct. Okay, so The Dawn it was formed in the 60's. In Kuwait, you know, in the 60's. There was 400,000 Palestinian immigrants in Kuwait. The largest number in that time, it was in Kuwait and and this band came together as a teenager, and they started this band and they recorded half of their album in Kuwait and then the Iraqi invasion. Do you know about the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait when the Iraq invaded Kuwait in the late 80s, early 90s. So they could not finish recording the album so they have to go to Berlin. Okay, so they emigrated twice. So first from Palestine to Kuwait and then from Kuwait to Germany and then in Germany they finished the album and they never publish it. So

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this is the first time we have published this album and this song called the Stubborn and it's funny that most of the Palestinian band is actually female lead weird I don't know why thoughoh yeah let's play Stubborn. So this album was actually recorded live for the first time in Germany in Berlin in the Freedom Voice Festival just before the fall down of the Berlin Wall and that was the last edition of this festival. I'm going to play one more track of this and and then next, we're going to move to two more album of our reissue and then we're going to move to we're going to play some of our modern samples from those archives. So you got a sense of how the sound in a modern sound. So this is called About the Human and it was also from the same band The Dawn. Okay so this is The Dawn it's one of my favorites album I have found from the Palestinian sound archive and I can't wait for the physical copy to arrive

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and the nice thing is that I recently have convinced the band actually to come back and perform live. So fingers crossed to get them back into perform maybe we'll get them to perform live in this room here when they okay so we're going to move to our first release that we have ever done and and is called the Intifada 1987 78 and this is basically our first ever physical we have a few copies here for sale if you guys love the sound and could I ask if we could play the the one the video with a translation so I'm gonna play only one track from this album and you guys gonna see can we time it together so people can see because there's a translation of the track is called I am from Jerusalem okay let's go

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So, basically, this album was completely disappeared and so Riad Awwad is from Jerusalem, the composer and the singer of this album and when he first this is this is a nice story and I would love to say tonight so, distribution in Palestine is a completely different industry than normal distribution music distribution. So, the people the way that people distribute in Palestine in that time in 1980s, during the second Intifada was basically that someone will pretend to be in the, in the main central station of any city in the West Bank and it will be pretend to be selling nuts and have a boombox and have a tape playing in the boombox and then people will come to him and say like, oh, nice music.

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He'll be like, Oh, okay, well, if you want to buy it, give me the money and go to the falafel place, they will give it to you. So this is the only way that they were distributing in Palestine because otherwise they're gonna get arrested. If if the Israeli army stop your car, stretch your car and found a cassette that singing for the Palestinian revolution in that time, you will definitely get arrested. So Riad studied in Iraq in the 70s and he studied music engineering and then by the time he finished his a study in Iraq, in Baghdad, he came back to Jerusalem to find out that Jerusalem is in a hot plate. It was completely taken over by military soldiers and young Palestinian taking the street with a cocktail molotov cocktails and stones and big clashes and then he decided to take his three sisters and compose and write this album within 2 weeks and distributed in the West Bank. Within 3 weeks, and then the palace, the Israeli have found out about it and then they came in, they arrested him and they took 3000 copy of this album. So this album have never been distributed and this is the first time actually, we have distributed on vinyl and reissue it and it's such an amazing retro sort of retro acid, disco and lyric is completely celebrating the Palestinian poetic language and Palestinian landscape and we have Yeah, I mean, you can read about it. It's all over. Like there's a lot of news about this album now. So you can read about it. Okay, so our last original album for tonight, before we move to samples. It's a very fascinating story and this guy called George Qurmuz and he released this album in 1962. Right after he went out of the Israeli jail, George Qurmuz has now completely disappear. No one knows anything about him. If you know anything about George Qurmuz, please let us know because we really deeply want to issue his album. We have won permission to reissue this album he have four album and we got it all in tapes 4 album on tapes, 1 album on vinyl. This album is called From Ansar to Ashkelon, From Ansar to Ashkelon, Ashkelon is a Hebrew word. So because I grew up in Jenin and I have to speak Hebrew. So this is he come he written this album, partly written this album, and sort of composed in the jail and as soon as he went outside the jail, he recorded it immediately and distributed last time George Qurmuz was was seen in early 90s in Michigan and that that's that's the last information we have no, we have been trying to track him for the last three years and zero information. George Qurmuz is one of the first Palestinian musician to take the music into community work in he was workshopping his, his his work in music with Palestinian villages in in, in the West Bank and

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during the lockdown what I mean lockdown as Palestinian lockdown we we had lockdown all our life. So I mean during the lockdown during a military lockdown or curfew, which means people are not allowed to move not allowed to go out. I grew up in Jenin, during the second Intifada I remember there's at least at least within 7 years, at least maybe 2 years I was not allowed to even walk normally in the house, I have to be crawling in my knees and an elbow. So I don't my shadow doesn't be doesn't seen on the on the window from the sniper and I have 7 years not been going out to school because school was shut down that time. So yeah, so he will go to a village by himself walking through a mountain and then and then he will meet community, people inside this village and He will gather them in someone a salon and then they will sort of jam together and this is how he composed and written all of his album based on a community collaboration. We have released this album, the story of our release of this album online because George Qurmuz himself have given us permission that this album is specifically a part of the other album is for any Palestinian who wanted to use and this is give us a space to release it. So but the way that we released it, because this album was dedicated for the Palestinian prisoner and the way we released it actually, we have collaborated with the local Palestinian radio station and we asked them to hijack a signal last April to hijack a signal into the Israeli jail where 7000 Palestinian prisoner could hear the premiere and we did actually hijack a signal inside the Israeli jail and we managed to stream it and premiere it across 24 radio station or through the West Bank and 48 and then we got a lot of messages from Palestinian prisoner. We also send like a secret messages with with with a mobile phone or with the family who going to visit their sibling who are in the Israeli jail that we're going to be premiered this album in this time. Ask your son or daughter who are in the Israeli jail to tune in, in that time in this signal. So we did manage to do that and this is how we released it and this strike called From Ansar to Ashkelon. Ansar in Ashkelon is the most large Israeli jail that hosts Palestinian prisoner. Okay, let's run it, it's my favorite jazz album by the way

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okay so that was George Qurmuz I really love this album. I mean he has an amazing fantastic 4 album jazz album have not been released. They are not anywhere. Okay so because we speaking about sampling so

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we have sampled some of his work and we're going to start off his work samples Let's go. Okay so that was one of our samples of this album. Now we're going to play a sample of an interview archive of Juliano Mer-Khamis, Juliano Mer-Khamis is the founder of the Freedom Theatre. I don't know if anyone knows the Freedom Theatre in here. Yeah, because it's really popular. Yeah. So Juliano Mer-Khamis was my teacher and I studied with Juliano for 5 years and he was politically assassinated because of his theater political work engineering camp with us as kids and there was no further investigation has been taking place about his assassination. This this samples is called The Fragments

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Okay, that was Juliano and our last track for tonight. I believe it will be by the legend Ghassan Kanafani the famous Palestinian playwright and novelist who were also assassinated in 1982 and there was no investigation has taken place. This I got a real tape of this, him and Edward Said was working in Beirut and Lebanon that time and it was Edward Said had this idea that he he gave a prisoner a recorder and a recording machine and he this Palestinian prisoner have recorded himself in the same time there was an English journalists making interview with Edward Said and Ghassan Kanafani that time just before Ghassan Kanafani were assassinated is my favorites and this is our sample by the way the first strike of Juliano sample we have released it on tape you can pre order it on tape in Majazz Project Palestine sound archive and this is our last track for tonight called Gaza Sea Minor of Ghassan Kanafani thank you so much for being here tonight. I really if you have any question we meant to have conversation as the night goes seem to be there's no one having any issue and an echo chamber if you have any question I think I'll be hanging out here I'm going to be playing if you like spinning a few Egyptian Lebanese vinyl that I really love and and then we're going to go and grab a drink I think yes please

Mo'min Swaitat 1:49:03

Yeah, so that would be our last track for tonight and thank you so much. I really hope you guys enjoying your time lying down on the floor. I love listening session is my favorite. It's better than nightclub because at least we get out with something here.