

**Review of "Anatomy of a Coup", Robin Sukhadia @ SAMAR Magazine
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Sacha Silva's Anatomy of a Coup conveys the heroic and tragic nature of humanity's struggle against circumstance through north and south Indian musical influences, flamenco guitar traditions, and western classical music.

Anatomy of a Coup, Sacha Silva's latest album, is a sonic examination of humanity and its complex relationship to oppression. The album's human message is conveyed through the crucible of the 2006 military coup of Fiji. It is a message that is not conveyed overtly. Rather, it emerges subtly through a beautiful interplay of historical audio artifacts, vocals, cello, flamenco guitar and hand drumming. With these very organic elements, Sacha Silva is able to achieve a simple yet richly textured musical landscape that is at times both delicate and intense. North and South Indian musical influences, flamenco guitar traditions, and western classical music converge deftly to magnify the trio's two-year experience traveling through the South Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Listening to *Anatomy of a Coup*, it becomes clear that the trio, comprised of Sacha Silva on guitar, Munya B on vocals, and Drew Morgan on percussion and cello, were not merely vacationing on these travels. Their time was spent in deep dialogue with those most affected by military, economic and political oppression across multiple national boundaries and has resulted in an album that attempts to convey the heroic and tragic nature of humanity's struggle against circumstance. I say heroic, because the beautifully produced and presented album celebrates the resilience of the human spirit in the midst of unimaginable tragedy.

Sacha Silva (the flamenco guitarist who leads the group) has been intensifying his study of Hindustani music and Flamenco music in both Delhi and Spain. A Canadian of Sri Lankan and Bulgarian blood, the musical studies have followed stints working as a development economist. The hard work combined with global work and travel is paying off, as evidenced by his graceful arrangements of musical and political elements in each of the songs in *Anatomy of a Coup*. Regarding the development of *Anatomy of a Coup*, Sacha explains how "...it was a time of a lot of racial tension, a lot of letters back and forth in the paper about the colonial heritage, much talk about the usefulness (or uselessness) of democracy, and a very difficult time for the Indo-Fijians. After I left Fiji, I traveled through Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and South America and kept seeing the same tensions over and over again." In this album, Sacha Silva is making world music literally travel around the world.

There is a theatrical quality to the entire album, beginning with the opening track of the album, "nostalgia (i)", which instantly transports the listener into the world the album portrays. It is our world, we realize, when we hear a radio sample describing the brutality of a military coup. Complex layering of more street recordings, people chanting, and radio commentary are grounded by Munya B's delicate yet powerful Hindi invocation of history as a river from which we must all drink. The trio enters

in full force with "The Circle", presenting the listener with a relentless percussive arrangement rooted by Drew Morgan's drum kit, frame drum and doumbek. The track evolves harmonically with Sacha Silva's flamenco guitar and Munya B's impressive vocal range and control. There exists a clear creative synchronicity between these three musicians, as evidenced by the circle, one of the most lyrical and poignant tracks on the album. Here, we learn from the liner notes, traditional flamenco poetry has been translated into Hindi and then rendered into song. This kind of intelligent cross-pollination of cultures appears everywhere throughout the melodic arrangement of the album. When combined with finely executed percussion, cello and guitar elements, the universally human message of the album becomes even more compelling.

Sacha Silva's approach to crafting "world" music is one obviously rooted in deep respect and understanding of musical traditions. Each member of the trio has approached their study of their instrument with true deference and rigor. This, ultimately, is the only way to understand how to sensitively merge world musical traditions together. "There is fusion and con-fusion in world music," as the great Sarode Maestro Ali Akbar Khan is known to repeatedly say. *Anatomy of a Coup* is a clear achievement of fusion, in the most successful sense of the word.

Sacha Silva, with *Anatomy of a Coup*, joins a very special group of world musicians like Nitin Sawhney, Oliver Rajamani, Word & Violin, and Rupa and the April Fishes, who successfully marry masterful musicianship with insightful examinations of the human condition.

Recently completing a Master in Fine Arts at the California Institute of the Arts, Robin has been studying tabla (classical south Asian drums) under Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri at CalArts and the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, California for the past eight years. For the past 5 years, Robin has traveled internationally on behalf of Project Ahimsa, an organization committed to empowering impoverished youth through music education.