



As far as Yusuf Misdag was concerned, the time had come to release this record. After making beats and writing rhymes since 1995, the Brighton born hiphop producer- better known as Yoshi found himself spurred on by world events post 9-11. He was directly affected by those events- as he was living in Washington DC at the time, not to mention the fact that he is the child of an Afghan-psychotherapist and an Afghan journalist, and as a result perhaps, fiercely proud of his heritage- however whilst it's an album that is notably anti-war in much of it's content, it's still not strictly/solely 'anti-war' in its conclusions.

Many will have already been introduced to Yoshi from his now infamous 'No more Bush-fires' remix of DJ Shadow's '[Blood on the motorway](#)' - featured on the [solesides.com](#) website, and thankfully for fans of that understated moment of magic, the music on his debut album is strikingly similar in terms of its emotional resonance, and deft production. Amongst many other things 'From a Western Box' is an interesting look into this liberal, British-Muslim's mind, made all the more credible by his skills as an MC, poet and primarily, producer.

His views can only be described as different, he sets out his agenda like a passionate politician; introducing himself and his policies on the microphone, although thankfully, he often does so with a sharp sense of irony and wit,

*"It's tough for me, I be a renaissance-paki,
deep in thought, I got no time for batties."*



However, what makes it deeper than the more straightforward tales of city life, and life as a British Muslim today, are the instrumental pieces interspersed throughout. They are true songs in their own right, and deliver messages through vocal samples that are so simultaneously explicit and abstract that they'll have you scratching your head as well as nodding it. The rhythms are righteous, but the meanings are always open-ended.



Either way, the political message does seem to filter through. Take the title track for example, after a vicious arsenal of Eastern vibes and tabla breaks, he samples -and apparently manipulates- the voice of what sounds like your average American politician merely mumbling and hesitating without actually managing to say anything other than "Iraq..." Cryptic, but satisfyingly so.

The rhythms and beats are fairly reminiscent of [DJ Shadow](#), [Aphex Twin](#), and perhaps the late electro percussionist Brynn Jones aka [Muslimgauze](#), as they pound away relentlessly and hypnotically, freeing the listeners mind in the process.

As for the lyrics, they are as direct as they are poetic. In terms solely of their accessibility and straightforward nature, they are often reminiscent of [Dizzy Rascal](#) or [The Streets](#). Having said that though, Yoshi is not 'from the streets' nor does he pretend to be, he portrays himself as he is, a middle-class student living in what he sees as a beautiful city, who's passionate about the issues of modern-Britain, whether that involves rapping about social-class conflicts, paedophiles, old friends who change

with time, life on the seaside- or just about anything else under the social-sun. He rarely seems to hold himself back, which makes it all the more engaging to listen to.

*“I seen too many old friends who’ve since stopped evolving
too many people who got shallow and involved in
fashion, or trendy friends and cool circles
spend half their lives jumping meaningless hurdles.”*



Whilst his lyrics have a (refreshingly) noticeable lack of ‘punch-lines’ / macho-braggadocio rhymes or explicit/boastful sex stories - something which might alienate him from many of the more narrow-minded hip-hop heads - it’s the sense of purpose on the more real subjects that he *does* rap about that allow him to stand up as a performer. It certainly isn’t what people are used to hearing, but then again- nobody ever thought they’d hear a UK hip-hop artist brave enough to reference 'cheese on toast' until Roots Manuva came along, norms and rules are made to be broken. This is hip-hop for an audience that doesn't have to pretend to know about inner-city life, street-references or a certain type of ‘cool’ to have credibility. This is inclusive, intelligent music, or as I like to see it- hip-hop evolving.