

# GÜLISTAN

## ORIENTAL GROOVE



### G Ü L I S T A N

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GÜLISTAN bedeutet soviel wie "Land der Rosen" oder "Wunderbares Land".

"Swinging through the Orient" ist das Motto von GÜLISTAN. Die Gruppe besteht seit 1984 und setzt sich trotz ihres orientalischem anmutenden Namens vorwiegend aus Österreichern zusammen. Nur Mehmet Emir, der Darbuka und Saz spielt, ist Türke, alle anderen Gruppenmitglieder sind "nur" eingefleischte Türkeikenner und - fans, und spielen in einer typisch orientalischem Art.

Josef Olt spielt Querflöte, alle Saxophonarten und Percussion, Adullah Ibn Quadr, ein geborener Wiener mit orientalischem Künstlernamen spielt die Violine, Bratsche und bei einigen Stücken auch Gitarre. Robert Schaar, der Elektroniker der Band, spielt alle Arten von Tasteninstrumenten. Alfred Stütz ist am Baß zu hören und Heimo Tauscher an den Drums und Percussion. Das Debut der Gruppe war im Jahr 1984 noch von lautmalerscher Musik geprägt, die lediglich der Aufputz für türkische Gedichte war. Erst als sich herausstellte, daß die Zuhörer weniger an den Gedichten, mehr aber an den Volksliedbearbeitungen interessiert waren, wurde das Konzept der Gruppe geändert und die Musik in den Vordergrund gestellt. Die Gruppe bezeichnet ihre Musik als Oriental Jazz, der auch von Rock- und Latinmusik beeinflusst ist.

Die Band ist in den Wiener Clubs gern gesehener Gast und trat immer vor vollem Haus auf. Zur Präsentation ihrer ersten Langspielplatte im März 1987, stellte sich bereits eine eingeschworene Fangemeinde ein. Die Erstauflage der LP war binnen kürzester Zeit verkauft und die Nachpressung sofort in Auftrag gegeben. Mittlerweile verkauft sich die LP wie von selbst, die Fans der Band haben eine erfreuliche Eigendynamik entwickelt und die erste größere Tournee ist für den Herbst dieses Jahres geplant, ehe sich die Band wieder ins Studio zurückziehen wird, um an ihrer zweiten LP zu arbeiten.

LP "Oriental Groove - Jazz meets the Orient"



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Mehmet Emir  
Geb. 5 Juni 1964 in Çigirli-Hozat-Tunceli, Türkei  
Musikalische Ausbildung: Autodidakt  
- Darbuka, Saz

Josef Olt  
Geb. 13 November 1956 in Wien  
Musikalische Ausbildung: 3 Jahre Konservatorium der Stadt Wien  
Fach Klavier, Flöte und Komposition  
Gründungsmitglied von GÜLISTAN  
- Flöte, Saxophon, Percussion, Synthesizer

Adullah ibn Quadr  
Geb. 16 Juli 1959 in Wien  
Musikalische Ausbildung: Violine am Konservatorium der Stadt Wien  
- Violine, Bratsche und Gitarre

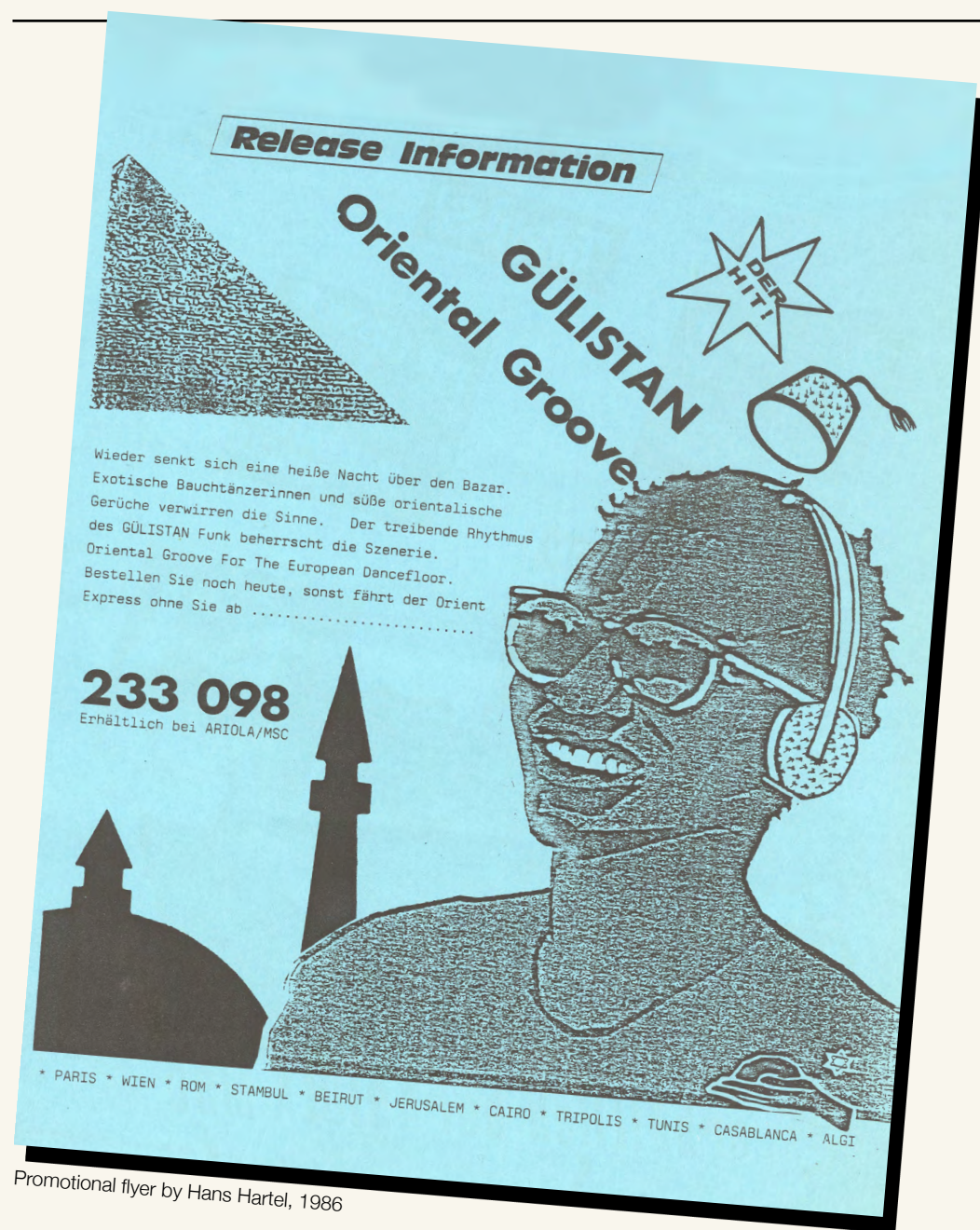
Robert Schaar  
Geb. 31 Mai 1959 in Villach/Kärnten  
Musikalische Ausbildung: 10 Jahre Klavier im Privatunterricht  
Studium der Elektroakustischen Musik  
Gründungsmitglied von GÜLISTAN  
- Tasteninstrumente

Alfred Stütz  
Geb. 11 Oktober 1959 in Gmünd/Niederösterreich  
Musikalische Ausbildung: 6 Jahre Klavier im Privatunterricht  
Baß Autodidakt  
- Baß

Heimo Tauscher  
Geb. 17 September 1957 in Wien  
Musikalische Ausbildung: 6 Jahre Klavier im Privatunterricht  
Drums Autodidakt  
- Drums und Percussion

The first time I saw this record was back in 2015 at my friend Ece Duzgit's place. The cover took my attention instantly but we never got round to listening to it. It became one of those familiar record sleeves that you never actually heard. Around two years later we were DJing together and she took it out of the bag and I thought "finally I get to hear this record!" It ended up being the song of the day and has remained a favourite ever since. Later, Louis from Hot Mule Records came over to London with a copy of the record for me. One of the best record gifts ever and hasn't left the bag since!

Even after so many listens I still find myself deeply lost and taken. First comes the traditional eastern melodies, which I can never tire of, but very quickly take you down another path and then another. The easiest way for me to describe a record like this would be fusion, a sound that has been interesting to me for a while now. One which has certainly proved challenging on dance floors from time to time but I just can't get enough! *Oriental Groove* combines classic scales with funk bass lines, dramatic arrangements and breaks, driving rhythms and energy in some places then more mysterious and melancholic in others. The music in this album gets my body and brain spinning in a whirlwind. I find myself both racing and floating along to it, sometimes within the same track.



Promotional flyer by Hans Hartel, 1986

Gülistan (the land of roses) was a project put together by Josef Olt after his first trip to Turkey in the early 80s. The band took different shapes during the very few years of its (first) life, mostly through rehearsals and live shows, with different musicians coming in and out. *Oriental Groove* was the product of these sessions and here's the story told by band members Josef Olt, Robert Schaar, Alfred Stütz, Mike Fitsch and executive producer Hans Hartel.



Josef Olt, Konzerthall Villach, May 1982

#### JOSEF OLT

The story of Gülistan started in 1981 after my first vacation in Turkey. I decided to study the language but I also was interested in the country's musical heritage (I would later broaden my interest to the whole Middle East). I bought LPs, cassettes and started diving deep into the music. Little by little I became familiar with the different types and styles in Turkish music. Finding out about the classical tradition, which derives from the music performed at the Ottoman court, but also about folk and pop music.

From roughly 1982 to 1985, I developed a computer program enabling me to play sequences as backing tracks for improvisations. Then I met Karl Wilhelm Krbavac (viola da gamba and self-made e-gamba player) who was excited by this idea, so we started playing together. One of our first appearances with this set up was a disaster. We experienced a black-out during one concert and it was hard to start again after the power had returned. Imagine a simple Commodore 64 computer on which you had to load the operating system first, then the software and last but not least the data!

So I decided to switch to a tape recorder (Revox B77) to play the backing tracks. The main advantage was that I could mix the rhythm parts with the organic sounds from a darbuka or cymbals with the synthesizer sounds. This was a wonderful base for a number of concerts, mostly held in clubs.



Robert Schaar, Konzerthall Villach, May 1982

Around that time I met Robert Schaar (keyboards) who became a member of this early formation of Gülistan. We played together for a while and tried some other musicians, as well as a singer, but it didn't work so well with them.

Around 1985 we decided to stop using backing tracks. Karl Wilhelm Krbavac left the group and founded his own solo-orchestra. Robert and I started playing with Adula Ibn Quadr (violin), Heimo Tauscher (drums), Alfred Stütz (bass) and Mehmet Emir (percussion).

I remember a particular concert in Villach (Carinthia). At one point, when I was in the middle of a saxophone solo, the venue's technicians turned a smoke machine on, and I simply wasn't prepared for this. No one told me about that beforehand and while playing I started noticing the smoke, thinking the stage was on fire. I froze, in a state of shock. Luckily the band kept on going and I think it was Adula who jumped in and played a violin solo while I was still paralysed!



Heimo Tauscher, Konzerthall Villach, May 1982

In our little room where we held rehearsals, we also started working on demos. I believe it was Robert who introduced us to Mike Fitsch (sound engineer and 7<sup>th</sup> member of Gülistan). It was becoming necessary to have a technician on our side for live shows. He supported us very well in that regard and he is the one who initiated the contact with Hans Hartel, who would later release *Oriental Groove*. The idea to compose a record quickly sprouted. We put our money together and our first and only album became reality.

#### ROBERT SCHAAR

I met Josef Olt for the first time in the spring of 1982. There was a band project with Alfred Stütz, Heimo Tauscher, Josef Olt and others, called EKPYROSIS. We played a lot of funky jazz-rock tunes, some covers of the Brecker Brothers. This band only existed for a handful of gigs, until the other members left.

Alfred, Josef, Heimo and I had been playing together for a while, for around a year if I'm correct. In the summer of 1983 Josef and I went on holiday to Turkey, where we heard some Turkish music which sounded particularly interesting to us. So Josef suggested the idea to use



Karl Krbavac, Robert Schaar, Josef Olt, Band's rehearsal room, 1984

traditional Turkish songs and find a way to adapt them to our instruments and our European feel. It was interesting to learn all those different scales and odd rhythms.

At that time Karl Krbavac joined the band and in the beginning of 1984 we started performing as a trio and played many concerts. We named the band GÜLISTAN, (meaning «the land of roses» or «paradise»).

At the end of 1984 some new band members joined GÜLISTAN. Mehmet Emir, a percussionist from Kurdistan and a Turkish singer called Nilifer. She only played with us for a few months though. In the midst of 1985, Alfred Stütz, Heimo Tauscher, Adula Ibn Quadr and Mike Fitsch joined the band.

The line up finally felt right and GÜLISTAN's sound came alive.



Alfred Stütz, Konzerthall Villach, May 1982

### MEHMET EMIR

My father and I immigrated from Kurdistan to Vienna and moved to one modest room where we lived with another man. It was barely 15 square meters.

I started building roads when I was 16 years old, but I did come to Austria with the dream to play soccer professionally. I would work during the day and take German courses in the evening.

My love for folk music started growing from the age of 8, when I bought a shepherd's flute (also called Ney) and learned to play the instrument by myself. I also started dabbling with the Saz during that period. Every year we would go on summer pasture to the mountains and build ourselves drums. Some sort of little Davuls that we would carry around and play everywhere we could.

I learned to play the Darabuka in Vienna, but I also worked with other other kind of percussions.

Before joining Gülistan, I performed with other bands consisting of immigrant workers. After the split, I asked Adula if he wanted to keep going. We stayed together for 6 years after that, in a band called Lakis and Achwach (the repertoire was mostly Rebetiko). My other musical ventures allowed me to play Balkan music with Wiener Tschuschenkapelle or Sephardic music with Lena Rothstein.

### ALFRED STÜTZ

My musical influences came from the Woodstock era, blues, rock and later on jazz (from old school jazz up to George Benson). All of that stuff was entirely Western-oriented, and I had absolutely no knowledge on any music coming from the east or south of Vienna.

I met Josef and Heimo in private circles. Josef and I tried to play some jazz standards together as a duet, in a small café (flute and bass, must have been weird!).

I was using a cheap Japanese bass (a Gibson eb3-copy) that I converted into a fretless bass after

discovering Jaco Pastorius, Alphonse Mouzon and listening to artists like Weather Report, Miles Davis, The Brecker Brothers. One of my favourite bass players and inspiration was Paul Jackson, from Herbie Hancock's Headhunters.

And then Josef and Robert came to us with the idea of integrating Turkish folk and jazz elements in our music. It was original, exciting and we practiced many hours until it finally started to take shape.

In those days on the Viennese scene, we had the opportunity to meet a few immigrant musicians. Keep in mind that the Austrian chancellor Kreisky started bringing foreign workers from Turkey and Yugoslavia to Austria in the 70s and 80s. One of them was Mehmet's father and later Mehmet himself.

After Gülistan I was asked to cover for the bass player in the rising band Wiener Tschuschenkapelle (who recently celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary). I would later become a full time member, up until 2002. It is during that time that I really mastered all of the odd musical scales and intervals you needed to play Balkan and Turkish music (5/4, 7/4, 9/4, 11/4).

I also joined a Greek couple, Marios & Julie, with whom I performed Rebetiko music (a genre that surfaced in Greece at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, combining different styles of the region, with lyrics describing the joy, sorrow and difficulties of an urban underworld composed by the less reputable elements of society).

My stint with Gülistan always proved to be useful.

### MIKE FITSCH

We recorded *Oriental Groove* in the band's rehearsal room in Vienna's 5<sup>th</sup> district. It was a very small space, but we had no real time restriction. Most of the band members were doing this on the side of their day jobs, some were students. Adula was the only professional musician in those days. A few years later, Alfred and Mehmet also became full time musicians.

We used a 16 channel Soundcraft console, a TASCAM 8-track tape recorder and a Studer Revox 2 channel machine. As far as I can remember, we recorded drums and bass (maybe keys as well) to 8 tracks, mixed drums and percussions back to 2 tracks in stereo and had 6 tracks left for the rest of the instruments. We also used a Lexicon reverb, a Yamaha SPX90 effects processor and a DAT machine for the final mix.

Most of the equipment belonged to the musicians, but some stuff was bought specially for the recording. Some equipment was lent to us by Heimo's father who was a radio engineer. Particularly some AKG mics to record the drums and the Studer Revox Machine.

Gülistan, Vienna, Autumn 1986



**The main concept for Gülistan**  
Using songs from East Mediterranean and the Middle East as a vehicle for improvisations based on scales and odd rhythms. A very strong influence came from the gypsies from Turkey and the Balkan region.

**Tunes based on tradition**  
*Nazmiye, Ahtarma Meni - Don't Search Me*  
*Ayrılık - Separation*  
*Cano, Cano - Darling, Darling*  
*Kervan - Caravan* (known as "Misirlou")

**Compositions influenced by traditional music**  
*Plajda - On The Beach*  
*Deli Horoz - The Crazy Cock*

**Where the most significant influences came from:**  
Duke Ellington: *Caravan*  
John Coltrane: *Naima*  
Paul Desmond: *Take Five*  
Dave Brubeck Quartet: *Blue Rondo A La Turk*  
Edna Sutrin Rano: *Ibro Lolvo* (Bulgarian Gypsy Music)  
Mustafa Kandirali: *Oyun Havalari* (Turkish Gypsy Music)



Mike Fitsch, Gülistan's rehearsal room, summer 1986  
© Hubert Schatzl

It was very expensive to get 8-track tapes at the time, and we couldn't record as much as we wanted for that reason.

Besides working in a big concert agency as production manager I was studying sound engineering. Hans Hartel, who was my teacher at school, also had a music label called Ha Ha Soundwave. None of us had real contacts



Gülistani the soprano player from the cover artwork

in the industry, so naturally I asked him if he would be interested in releasing our album. I think we might have been 15 years too early for this kind of music and Hans didn't have much interest in jazz and fusion, but he finally accepted. We made the final mix with our set up, Hans wasn't involved during that part, but he later used our master on DAT for the final mastering phase and to cut the lacquer.

I ended up presenting *Oriental Groove* as the project for my final exam at sound engineering school, and it was pretty well received.

#### ROBERT SCHAAR

When the recording ended, we needed to create the artwork. My old friend Albert Winkler helped me with his artistic mind and skills to shape my ideas into graphics.

Instead of calling both sides «A» and «B», we decided to call them «red» and «green». Therefore, the artwork had to be composed of these two colours.

Our goal was to design a cover that would express the tension between the Orient and Occident. For this reason we decided to draw skyscrapers, the dome of a mosque and to include all of the elements of the Turkish flag. The moon crescent, the star and the colour red. Albert Winkler synthesized these ideas in his graphic style, adding the soprano saxophone player wearing a fez and a red tie.

#### HANS HARTEL

Gülistan's music was interesting, but I wasn't sure how I could promote the record and get some airplay on the radio. The project was pretty

odd compared to what was coming out of Vienna at that time.

One day I had this idea: I scratched the labels on one of the records to erase my logo, and brought it to one of my contacts at the radio station. I told him I'd met a Turkish truck driver who gave me this incredible album that he had brought to Austria with him. The DJ loved the music and started putting it on rotation.

The band even made an appearance on national TV before they split up.

#### JOSEF

After the success experienced with the record and some really wild gigs, I suddenly started to feel extremely exhausted. Later on I understood that I was experiencing a deep depression. The fact that we had trouble finding time to rehearse was also a source of stress. Adula being a professional musician, he had to play with a number of other bands and it was becoming difficult for him to spend time on Gülistan. I remember that he and Mehmet, who was also quite busy with other projects, couldn't attend some of our rehearsals several times. Some of the other band members had day jobs. All of this was getting a little bit frustrating. Then Robert received an offer for us to perform in France (in Antibes' Jazz-à-Juan). To my bandmates surprise, I turned it down, being convinced that we couldn't go there under these circumstances. My depression was getting stronger and I felt there would be no chance we could do well in Antibes. This is the reason why I decided to leave the band and focus on other things.



Gülistan reunion, Stadtpark Vienna, Spring 2019

Over thirty years later the band were contacted with the intention to discuss the idea of a reissue. It wasn't easy to get a hold of some of the members and took a long time to get everybody together. It was clear from their first responses that they had lost touch with each other over the years and things had been left a little unsettled. It seemed as though some of the band members were disappointed not to be able to continue the Gülistan project, especially after the interest from Jazz-à-Juan.

For some, it seemed as though this was the first time the memories from Gülistan had been in their thoughts since they split. It was almost as if they had forgotten it even happened and described it as if it had "re-opened an old wound". But after a bit of time and back and forth they agreed "it was time to make peace!" A band meeting was held in Vienna and all members were present. This was a great accomplishment, not only for the sake of the new release of the record, but for the band themselves to reconnect after all these years.

I couldn't have been happier to hear this was getting a reissue. Not only am I excited for its new life and hopeful new fans, but also for the quality of the remaster.

*Donna Leake,*  
London 2019



Gülistan, Vienna,  
Autumn 1986

#### CRÉDITS:

Originally released in 1986 on Ha Ha Soundwave

**Audio mastering:** Nicolas Thelliez

**Lacquer cut:** André Perriat

**Artwork restoration & additional design:**

Erwan Coutellier

**Liner notes:** Donna Leake

**Project management:** Louis Hautemulle

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