

Sing, memory

Noise Pop 09: Lingerin looks backward and forward with Sholi

By Kimberly Chun

How to push misty, watercolored memories of home and a past forged on the other side of the globe through the filter of today and still hold onto the mirror shards of identity? There's a bittersweet irony to the idea that now, with the release of Sholi's evocative, impressively detailed self-titled album on Quarterstick, the Davis-born Bay Area band might be forever known in some parts of the Iranian American community for its take on Iranian pop icon Googoosh's "Hejrat (Migration)," a song of mourning to a departed lover.

"We kind of reinterpreted the song and framed it as being about the Iranians who left Iran and that whole migration," vocalist-guitarist Payam Bavafa. He grew up listening to Persian music with family at home and to Western sounds among friends. "When some of my relatives heard it, they said, 'Omigod, when I heard this I started crying. This is the song of our migration.' I was like, 'Really? That's how you think about it, too?'"



The quickie recording — tracked to tape by Greg Ashley in his home, made in response to the anti-Iranian rhetoric of November 2007, and eventually included on a *Believer* comp — stands in contrast to the careful, lengthy process Bavafa, drummer Jonathon Bafus, and bassist-vocalist Eric Ruud undertook in creating their first full-length. The graceful, ever-growing, and seamless-seeming full-length was assembled in part at Eli Crews' New and Improved Studios in Oakland and in part at various members' homes, with the help of co-producer Greg Saunier, who began his contributions to *Sholi* in 2006 via e-mail while on tour with Deerhoof. Much like "Hejrat," the album revolves around memory and the way we construct it, a focus of Bavafa's work as an engineer in a neuroscience lab.

Songs like "Spy in the House of Memories" embody the disc's overall "spirit of fragmented recordings and recycled ideas," as Bavafa puts it, though others such as "November Through June" play with the "idea of wanting to be where you're not currently. This idea of wanting to be somewhere else or someone else — and essentially everything is right in front of you."

All of which sounds like no small amount of the immigrant experience of Bavafa's parents is making its way into the music of *Sholi*, a moniker taken from the vocalist's childhood nickname. Elements of an exiled culture also pop up in the puckishly po-mo "Hejrat" cover art, which depicts Bavafa's parents watching a hulking, fireplace-like TV appearing to air a YouTube video of Googoosh. "Our parents look at Iranian TV and radio — they have their own portal," muses Bavafa, "and I have mine."

SHOLI

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