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Anti-Muslim rhetoric, once confined to the fringe elements of American society, is increasingly finding room in mainstream discourse. Is this the bogeyman of the new century?

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# Ancient Future, Ageless Fusion

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Ancient Future is one of the rare bands whose genesis is in world fusion, specifically to create a unified many-genre sound. Says founder Matthew Montfort, "I coined the term 'world fusion music' in the late 1970s because I wanted to create music that would show how ideas from different cultures could be complimentary. The name Ancient Future came about because we are studying ancient traditions and bringing musical knowledge from them into the music of the future."

Media outlets have described Ancient Future presentations as "electric dervish of music" (JAZZIZ), "world music pioneers" (San Francisco Chronicle), and "marvelous rhythmic patterns" (San Francisco Examiner).

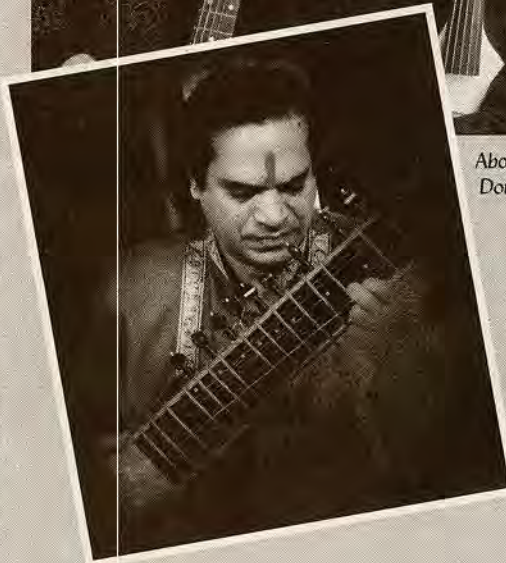
A dedicated guitarist in his high school years, Montfort looked for non-Western traditions, and was introduced to the Diga Rhythm Band featuring Zakir Hussain and Mickey Hart, which opened his eyes to the potential of Indian music. He enrolled full time at the Ali Akbar College of Music to learn the sitar. He devised a scalloped modification to his own fretboard guitar, so he could get some of the note-bends that are more characteristic of the sitar. "Studying with Ali Akbar Khan completely changed my life and my music," says Montfort.

When Ancient Future formed, the mission was simple—to fuse music from all over the world. It started with sound from India but along the years, Ancient Future's recordings have included influence from other world music traditions, including Andean, African, Middle Eastern, and Chinese. Playing with international master musicians such as Russian vocalist Irina Mikhailova, Nepali flautist Manose, and Arabic violist Georges Lammam fostered the mission of creating world fusion music. The composition of the band too changed, to match with the music lineup of the season.

The upcoming concert will reunite



Above, left to right, Matthew Montfort, Jim Hurley, Doug McKeenan, and Ian Dogole. Left, Haibib Khan.



Montfort on scalloped fretboard guitar, Jim Hurley on violin, Doug McKeenan on keyboards, Ian Dogole on percussion, and master musician Habib Khan on sitar. The connection with Khan too goes back a long way, spanning more than 15 years. Montfort was first hired to perform with Khan on several fusion recordings in the '90s, featuring musicians such as tabla master Swapan Chaudhuri and saxophonist Georges Brooks. Since then, the two have collaborated and performed at jugalbandhis (musical face-offs) at numerous venues, including several in India.

Khan plans to play his eclectic song "Socha Socha." "I remember, I was thinking why is a man unhappy," says Khan. "Is he worried for somebody or because of them? On that thought, I set my hand to the sitar, and the whole song took birth right then. The lyr-

ics are in Hindi and go, 'I think of you day and night.' That's where the name comes from," elaborates Khan.

"Every man has his own emotional ethos, and as a musician, I convey mine through music. When you hear the song, you don't just hear the notes, you relate to them, and you identify with my own emotions as well. That is when music comes to life—the process touches me."

Interestingly, the band will be playing a teaser version of the same lineup at the same venue almost two decades later. The last time they played at Todos Santos Plaza in Concord was in 1992. The concert in San Francisco will have the full lineup, with the sound reminiscent of the silk-smooth Shakti by Zakir Hussain and group, especially in Hurley's "Lakshmi Rocks Me." Montfort's "GamaRock" has whiffs of India and flower-power. Dogole's "Mezgoof" is based on the qawwali style. McKeenan's drama in "Turkish Taffy" will appeal to the Bollywood soul. Song samples available at [www.ancient-future.com](http://www.ancient-future.com). ■—Priya Das

Lunch-hour "teaser" show, Tuesday, June 7, 12 p.m. Todos Santos Plaza, Concord.

Feature show, Tuesday, June 7, 8 p.m., Yoshi's San Francisco, 1330 Fillmore St., San Francisco. \$16 advance, \$20 at door. (415) 655-5600. [www.yoshis.com/sanfrancisco](http://www.yoshis.com/sanfrancisco).



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PRIYA DAS, Apr 27, 2011

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of the season.

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