

Aurat

Roll Call

Azeka Kamal : Vocals

Gil Talbot : Bass/Production

Nathalie Martin : Guitar

Victor Andrade : Drums

When did the band get started and what was the original intention of the band?

Aurat inadvertently started late 2017 by Azeka and Gil in a bedroom with compact equipment. Attending various shows and seeing an array of different artists, it never crossed our minds to make music that represented us as individuals. The original intention of the band was to bring something different to the current scene. We were so used to seeing the norm and decided to break down cultural and emotional barriers.

Tell us more about your name: how does it communicate the sound or vibe of the band?

Aurat means “women” in Urdu. Don’t be fooled: Aurat is not an aesthetic but a form of representation that is open to any background, gender and sexuality. Aurat creates an experience that is equally open to anyone. It is a platform that allows individuals to vibe with the music even if they don’t understand the language. This is what music is supposed to sound like/do, emotionally captivating you even if you don’t understand the language; you feel it in ways that are indescribable.

How would you describe your music to someone who has not yet checked you out?

Aurat embraces the Urdu language with lyrics of its native tongue and non-traditional sounds. We’re different compared to the music scene where we’re labeled as goth, post punk or darkwave in general. Every song we’ve created sounds ideally different in some ways. Eno to darkwave. Aurat is a mashup of the holy trinity of influences: the father is Xmal Deutschland, the son is classic Bollywood, and the holy ghost are the numerous punk bands that we love and which existed before we were even born. This is music to walk to at 3 a.m. down an empty street. Although the band is inspired in part by classic electronic music, post punk, industrial, goth, and just about any wave related genre you can cite, the sounds are living personalities that can only be dissected on a song-to-song basis. We have a plethora of musical influences that shape the way we play and apply our sound to each song. Aurat arouses a sense of anticipation. The instrumentals range from bright, soft and pretty to dark, ominous and frantic. Azeka’s vocals have a tendency to summon and coerce the listener’s emotions like a hypnotist, sometimes to the extent that her melodies have leaked into my dreams after repetitive listening. She has the ability to transcend the Urdu language into a universal language with the way she utilizes her voice: it ranges from stark and climactic, to soft and deadpanned.

What inspires you to create this style of music?

Azeka Kamal : Singing for Aurat has made me realize that I can use my voice as a powerful tool. I was born in California, but Urdu was my first language and I have my parents to thank for that. I remember growing up and watching classic Bollywood films. That’s what would be on the majority of the time and it just really resonated with me growing up. Pakistan also has such a rich history in music that

also inspires me like the great Nazia Hassan. Also, local organizations like Arwah Collective that bring awareness in the community and Discostan inspire me. The most rewarding part of creating Aurat is having other Desi folks walking up to me after shows and telling me that they’ve never seen anything like this before. I love that I can represent my community and those who can connect otherwise. Being a South Asian woman inspires me to create music for an underrepresented community. In an industry that often challenges people of color, it is a radical form of love and action to continue to make music that is representative of us in a genuine way.

Gil Talbot : Coming from a heavy musically influenced upbringing I’ve always had music to listen to or learn about. My dad was a DJ in the 90s who had crates of records and my mom has a library of 80s style music. My main attraction was bass guitar and big pounding beats of old techno sounds. Aurat is my outlet to express these influences. Mike Watt of The Minutemen is a huge influence on my bass playing. My music for the day can go from Dock Boggs to Cocteau Twins to No Trend in a second. I think this is where Aurat is created, in those few seconds in between.

Nathalie Martin : Listening to rancheras and boleros with my dad is where the start of the journey for my guitar influences blossomed before I’ve entered to the others I listen to today. I still remember the euphoric episode when I heard that guitar style. Playing for Aurat as a guitarist was the first time I’ve experimented with sounds, other than just playing classic punk power chords for my first band Katatonic. I’m able to mesh my childhood influences with my favorite bands that put together who I am as a musician. Sonic Youth, David Bowie and Pere Ubu were some of the few that opened a new world for me when it came to creating music. It all depends what I’ve been listening to before we get together to jam. For our newest song “Waiting For You”, it was Rudimentary Peni’s *Death Church*, Bauhaus’ *The Sky’s Gone Out*, and Rikk Agnew’s *All By Myself*.

Victor Andrade : As a drummer, I’ve played many styles of music. One thing that attracted me to Aurat was the opportunity to play on an electric drum set, which is capable of producing a myriad of different drum sounds. This has given me a chance to finally try to mimic the cold and danceable patterns of a drum machine. On a less technical note, Aurat is a non-traditional take on some of my favorite styles of music. It’s not every day you get to experience a band this sonically and culturally diverse in the LA postpunk circuit, let alone get asked to join. Not only did their music blow me away, but so did their imagery and their stage presence. I have never firsthand witnessed a contemporary band that inspired me the way Aurat does.

What influences in fashion, literature and culture impact your creativity?

Wearing traditional Pakistani attire like the sari, bindis, and bangles and combining it with exaggerated eye makeup that is reminiscent of the punk and goth subculture. Getting makeup inspiration from Siouxsie Sioux, Steve Strange and Anne Marie Hurst (to name a few) and even Alessandro Michele of Gucci. Creating minimal style looks and weaving classic goth style with influences from South Asian culture paves a new road for this emerging style. Draping my saris before shows is done with special care and every outfit is specially planned. A lot of pride is taken when assembling my outfits along with my candles. Embodying the grace of the late Bollywood actress Meena Kumari yet packing the punch of Poly Styrene at shows communicates who I am as an artist. Other members who grab influence from John Doe and Dave Alvin have recently led me to venture into bolo ties and western Wrangler button ups. Tomata du Plenty of the Screamers inspired a lot of my padded coat selection. Along with the love of David Bowie’s personas throughout his years, especially the clown makeup from his 1980 album *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*. You can tell by the brightness, geometry, coordination, and era inspiration from the different outfits.

What other bands are inspiring you right now?

Azeka Kamal : Fee Lion, Depeche Mode, Oppenheimer Analysis, Elisa Waut, Annika Wolf, Selofan, Red Lorry Yellow Lorry, Sisters of Mercy, Dona Pacha, VOWWS.

Gil Talbot : DAF, Kontravoid, S.Product, Panther Modern, and Schwefelgelb.

Nathalie Martin : Rudimentary Peni, Teenage Jesus & The Jerks, Magazine, Wipers, Gun Club, No Trend, Brian Eno, Psychic TV, Girls at Our Best!, and The Fall. Along with some of my fave locals: Slaughterhouse, The Freakkees, Terminal A, Twin Schism, Pure Shit, and Todavia. You can find them all on Bandcamp! Victor Andrade : The Standells, Sparks, Decima Victoria, The Nuns, Ruth, Beta Evers, Pauk, Size, Carambolage. Also, I’m addicted to those 50s/60s Halloween Rockabilly tapes, 60s Japanese surf comps, lost and found Spanish New Wave comps, and early 90s arcade music scores. Local artists that I’ve been listening to this month: Twin Schism, S. Product, Niis, Mo Dotti, Dock Hellis, Terminal A.

How would you describe the current alternative music scene where you live?

Our current alternative music scene is thriving... even with the pandemic we see an array of artists utilize virtual platforms to keep the music scene alive. The Los Angeles and San Diego scenes are vigorously growing with bands popping up left and right but it’s good that people can bring their flavor or style to the scene. Bands from other countries can easily come down here and get a full packed room.

What are your favorite tour or stage stories? Share ‘em here.

This is a difficult question to answer since there are so many experiences that hold a special place in our hearts. Having the honor to play at Part Time Punks hosted by Michael Stock allowed us to get a feel for the LA crowd and their love for music. Our San Diego shows are always a blast and they treat us like family (big thank you to DJ Disorder and DJFNI for always taking care of us). Also, our trip to Costa Rica was pretty much a life changing experience. We never thought we would be playing some music we made in a room in Costa Rica and for that we are extremely thankful. Shout out to our Costa Rican family Marima and Felix. We played at a 40-year-old German bar in San Jose, Costa Rica which was amazing;

the locals loved it. It was an overwhelming feeling of happiness to hear people at the show yelling out the lyrics in Urdu even though they didn’t speak the language.

Tell us about your latest release.

Joined on this release with two additional members (Nathalie on guitar and Victor on drums), we explore, through great energy, the smell of L.A. nights, varying from pure new wave (“Waiting For You”, “Rehem”, “Aana”) to minimal wave (“Nasha”), industrial (“Saapn”), and thrilling noise (a powerful opening named “Aaghaz”). Nonetheless, the overwhelming “Raat” (“Night” in Urdu) will transform you into an ominous trance and “Suno Na” (literally “Listen Up!”) will get your blood pumping.

What’s next for your band?

We’ve self-released and recorded all of our music from home. As of recently we got into an actual studio and had a whole different experience. The Cave (a recording studio in LA ran by Josiah Mazzaschi) allowed us to integrate our talents as a whole band. We want to continue to make music and someday go on tour.

Where can people find out more about your band and any other projects members are involved in?

Instagram @auratband, Bandcamp www.aurat.bandcamp.com, and on Spotify and YouTube. You will find a variety of videos from recent live performances on our YouTube. Victor and Nathalie both play for Katatonic as well, Instagram @katatonic_band and Bandcamp www.katatonic.bandcamp.com. Victor is a curator of the infamous Slash Dance a night that embraces the spirit of the Los Angeles facade through those who spawn and thrive from its beautiful decay, Instagram @slash.dance.la.



Photo by David Vera.