



TASTE THE WORLD

BEDOUIN JERRY CAN BAND - COFFEE TIME

(NB - band is bringing coffee with them)

Semi-nomadic musicians Bedouin Jerry Can band present a fascinating insight into life in the Egyptian Sinai desert through music and interviews, storytelling and a traditional Bedouin coffee making ceremony in which the band's resident Coffee grinder Ayman Hassane will demonstrate how the band roast and serve their signature black coffee.

Bedouin Jerry Can Band (BJB) are an extraordinary collective of semi-nomadic musicians, dancers, poets, storytellers and coffee grinders from the Egyptian Sinai desert.

Blending ancient Simsimiyyia songs and melodies about camels, coffee and unrequited love with desert flutes and reed pipes, the band perform hypnotic Arabian rhythms played on a cacophony of junk percussion, including clay jugs, rusty ammunition boxes and jerry cans salvaged from former battle grounds in Sinai.

In this *Taste the World* session BJB present a fascinating insight into life in the Egyptian Sinai desert through music and interviews, storytelling & a traditional Bedouin coffee making ceremony in which the band's resident Coffee grinder Ayman Hassane will demonstrate how the band roast and serve their signature black coffee.

Historically, aside from being offered to weary guests travelling the desert, Coffee has acted as mediator between different Bedouin tribes. Sheiks and leaders would gather to discuss and resolve sensitive territorial issues relating to grazing pastures and camel raids over freshly prepared black coffee.

Although the coffee tree is widely thought to have its origins in Ethiopia, coffee houses and commercial cultivation of the bean originated in Mecca, where the beverage was known as the Wine of Araby. Europeans were initially cautious about the new beverage with the clergy condemning the drink at the "bitter invention of Satan." The first British coffee house opened in Oxford in 1651. By 1700 there were 3000 coffee houses in London, including Jonathan's Coffee House in Change Alley, which would later become The London Stock Exchange.

Bedouins in Sinai still grind their own coffee, although in addition to exchanging gossip and songs round a campfire it is increasing common to also enjoy the latest Egyptian soaps on battery powered TVs and exchange ring tones. In stark contrast to other desert dwelling people, the music found in the Sinai desert is strictly Stratocaster-free zone. The only likely use for an electric guitar in Sinai is smoldering on a fire underneath a pot of freshly roasted black coffee.

A succession of Turkish, British and Egyptian rulers have all brought many changes to Sinai since the end of the 19th century and the romantic image of a desert-dwelling people

wandering under the stars now looks quite antiquated, not least because Egyptian skies are becoming increasingly obscured by light pollution and traffic fumes. New songs and poems continue to circulate between Bedouin communities, paradoxically aided by the trappings of modern times in the form mobile phones and cheap MP3 players imported into the area via the Suez Canal. While the transmission and dissemination of storytelling traditions and music is evolving, contemporary Sinai Bedouin culture is still firmly underpinned by the same proud tribal values of honesty, loyalty and hospitality as practised by their nomadic ancestors travelling the Arabian plains.