

# Niyaz 2012 tour comes to Yoshi's San Francisco

• **CONCERT REVIEW** AUGUST 12, 2012 BY: JOHNATHON BAKAN



Niyaz vocalist Azam Ali  
Credits: niyazmusic.com

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On August 5, 2012 [Yoshi's San Francisco](#) presented [Niyaz](#) in concert in the heart of the Fillmore.

Niyaz exhibited exceptional artistry, top-level musicianship and presented masterful compositions throughout the show.

Niyaz is comprised of [Azam Ali](#) vocals, multi-instrumentalist [Loga Ramin Torkian](#), and [Carmen Rizzo](#) on electronics and programming. At the Yoshi's show they were joined by [Naser Musa](#) on Ud and [Habib Meftah Boushehri](#) on percussion.

They played a luscious mix of Persian and Middle-eastern influenced songs that had great feeling. Some music is heard with the ears and others are appreciated with the mind, but the music of Niyaz is deeply heartfelt and begins to take root in the soul level the more one listens.



Video: [Niyaz Live Performance at Yoshi's](#)

This is due in part to the flowing, golden voice of Azam Ali and the profound mystical modes in which the music is set: filled with an impassioned longing a certain yearning that is immediately palpable.

Niyaz really has gotten the formula right between acoustic and electronic paradigms and this was evidenced in the Yoshi's show. The music was very percussive and it was so skillfully mixed that it was hard to tell where the electric beats ended and the acoustic percussion began.

Woven in to the texture was a mix of olde world and modern instrumentation including the turkish long necked lute called "saz", the earthy, shifting sounds of the Ud, and a custom made instrument by luthier [Jonathan Wilson](#) that is played with a bow and is modeled after the guitar viols of antiquity.

There were many interesting solos throughout the evening. It was great in

particular to see Mr. Torkian play a delectable solo on the saz then pick up the guitar viol to play colorful melodic lines christened by exotic ornamentations. The masterful Ud stylings of Naser Musa were also divine, and Azam Ali really stretched out on the Santoor, a Middle-eastern dulcimer.

The evening was a celebration of the latest Niyaz release "Sumud" on the Bay Area [Six Degrees music label](#). "Sumud" can be translated as "steadfastness". During the show vocalist Azam Ali explained:

***We're performing music from our new album called "Sumud". It's an Arabic word that means "steadfastness". It is a beautiful philosophy that emerged from the darkest part of the middle-east in 1967.***

***It's a philosophy of non-violence sort of like Mahatma Ghandi's path of using non-violent methods of resistance to free India, this is a fast growing movement in the middle-east, and since we don't hear much positivity coming out of that part of the world and media, we thought it would be really nice to do music based on this philosophy.***

***The reason we chose it is because we draw inspiration from so many ethnic and minority groups in and around Iran that we wanted to celebrate the spirit of these minority groups who have struggled for so many years in the countries they were born in and have the right to live in freedom and dignity on. In their steadfastness to pursue their freedom***

***and identity they have maintained their cultures. Niyaz thought it would be really nice to celebrate these minority groups.***

***The message of our album "Sumud" is really quite simple: its about humanity. I saw a lot of times in my country of Iran when I was growing up, and I'm sure you can all relate no matter where you are from, that we tend to blame external forces--other countries--for all of our problems. But if we tend to look within our own geographical borders we can often see that injustice begins there.***

***If we are able to find peace within ourselves it is easier to extend it out to the rest of the world. It's really about putting our aligence to our humanity above our cultural and religious identity. That's the message we are here to share through our music and our celebration of these minority groups we love so much.***

***Tonight we'll perform music in Farsi, Urdu, Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic and "Indhari" a Farsi dialect from Afganastan. I know most of you won't understand a word I'm singing but that's not what music is about, it's about feeling. Once again we come around to the idea of humanity. The humanity is what connects us deeper than any culture or religion can. That's what we are here to share tonight.***

The Niyaz concert was a great hit as evidenced by the standing ovation from the crowd and the loud enthusiastic applause that forced the band into doing two encores including a spirited performance of Rayat al Sumud courtesy of Naser Musa replete with a stirring vocal and sizzling Ud solo. Niyaz transformed Yoshi's from a chill-out jazz club into an undulating dance floor!

The excitement level for Niyaz is high and it is hoped that Yoshi's will bring Niyaz back to share their music often.

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