

Brass music by way of India
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Red Baraat will bring its mix of Indian culture and brass music to New Orleans' Voodoo Music Festival this year.

Written by

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"Dhol and Brass" band Red Baraat

» 8 p.m. today

» Acadiana Center for the Arts

» Tickets are \$10-\$14

If you're from Louisiana and you find yourself listening to Red Baraat, you might think the band hails from Lafayette or even New Orleans.

The band mixes brass, percussive flair and rousing call and response vocals — elements that wouldn't sound out of place around Festival International or Bourbon Street.

However, Red Baraat isn't from Louisiana.

The band's music, while rooted in [celebration](#), comes from a deep background in Indian heritage and features an emphasis on the dhol, a drum found in popular Punjabi music.

The Brooklyn-based, nine-piece band will perform at 8 p.m. today at the Acadiana Center for the Arts. Tickets are now on sale, ranging from \$10-\$14.

The band comes from the mind of noted jazz musician Sunny Jain. For a few years, he circled around the idea of a "dhol and brass" band.

"I was navigating towards creating a band where the dhol was the central instrument," Jain said. "It's a unique, outdoor drum; because of that, it has a very loud presence. There's a certain energy and primal sound that it brings to the band." He was cautious at first because of his jazz name. One of the performer's many highlights in the genre came in 2002 when the U.S. State Department and The Kennedy Center named Jain a "Jazz Ambassador."

"People know me as a jazz player," he said. "However, I've always kept my mind open in types of music I like to play. I really enjoy playing and listening to all types of music. It informs my process and playing."

To say music is 24/7 for Jain is an understatement.

Though Jain was born in America, he has strong ties to Indian culture and traditions. He grew up with British rock and Eastern sounds. He studied the riffs of classic rock giants but then had his mind blown by jazz.

"I'm up all night with it," he laughed. "I remember reading an interview with (electronic act) Squarepusher, and he said he doesn't listen to anybody because he doesn't want to mess up his own vision and ideas. I can't fathom that. I'm part of a lineage. I've been informed by my society and sounds coming into my ears."

Jain said this band is an expression of his "musical [journey](#)." And that journey isn't tied to one specific genre.

"The music we're trying to put out there, it's not trying to fit into one genre," Jain said. "We're not trying to invent a new genre. We're trying to create a sound that encompasses all personalities in the band and make more world fusion sounds."

The sounds are taking flight, thanks largely in part to the group of [musicians](#) surrounding Jain.

"I've known a lot of these folks through musical circles in New York," he said. "I knew what instruments and what player I was looking for. I wasn't just looking for this guy. I wanted players from all different types of backgrounds."

However, this isn't just a band of "hired guns," Jain said.

"Everyone took to the project," he said. "I knew it was going to be a collective process. In that collective strength, we were going to be stronger than me, the individual leader."

As for the band sounding like it's from the cultural melting pot that is Southern Louisiana, Jain said he doesn't get that response too much, but he does get a warm response.

"It's a new sound," he said. "We're latching on to new sounds — funk, go-go"»there's a little bit of something for everyone."