

KHUN NARIN'S ELECTRIC PHIN BAND



It all started over a year ago with the caption “MINDBLOWING PSYCHEDELIA FROM THAILAND”—the Youtube video that accompanied this headline on the Dangerous Minds Blog was exactly that. Here was a group of Thai musicians being filmed parading through a remote village hundreds of miles away from Bangkok playing some of the heaviest Psych known to mankind out of a crazy homemade soundsystem. Who were these men and how on earth was this not some unearthed archived footage from the ‘60s or ‘70s?! The Youtube clip quickly made its rounds amongst music enthusiasts leaving many in the Western hemisphere to question who this group of contemporary Thai villagers (loosely named Khun Narin’s Electric Phin Band) was.

Six months after that first encounter with Khun Narin’s Electric Phin Band, a Los Angeles music producer named Josh Marcy used Facebook and some unlikely interpreters at his local Thai restaurant to get in contact with the band and inquire whether they’d be interested in having him travel to their town to record their music for a global audience. At first the band was naturally suspicious, but through subsequent interactions the group’s leader and namesake Khun Narin (also known simply as “Rin”) warmed to the idea of having Marcy come visit. And so began the journey of uncovering who these mysterious men from an obscure blog post actually were.

Khun Narin’s Electric Phin Band’s membership is always in rotation and spans several generations, from high school kids to men well into their 60s. A standard engagement has the band setting up at the hosting household during the morning rituals, playing several low-key sets from the comfort of plastic lawn chairs occasionally working in a cover version of a foreign classic (The Cranberries ‘Zombie’ is a recent favorite) while the beer and whiskey flow freely. After a mid-day banquet, they start up the generator and lead a parade through the community to the local temple, picking up more and more partiers along the way.

The music they play is called phin prayuk. The first word refers to the lead instrument, a 3-stringed lute known as the phin. Beer, the phin player, uses a string of Boss effects pedals, including a phaser, distortion and digital delay to get his sound. He also builds his own instruments, installing Fender pickups into hand-carved hardwood bodies, with elaborate mythical serpents adorning the headstock. The band takes pride in their custom PA system, as well as an imposing tower of 8 loudspeaker horns atop a huge bass cabinet. To capture the essence of the group and their sound, Marcy recorded them in their natural environment by doing a proper field recording, literally in a field outside the city of Lom Sak, in the valley of mountains that form a rough border between Thailand’s North and Northeast. The result was 40 minutes of hypnotizing psychedelia filled with heavy drum breaks that sounds like something RZA would sample for a Quentin Tarantino film.

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