



MUSIC

# Voice inside her head

After a decade of playing the spirited Shaa'ir, **MONICA DOGRA** cuts loose with her candid solo album, *Spit*, out this month. BY MEGHA MAHINDRU

By now, Monica Dogra could be confused for someone with a multiple personality disorder. As one half of electronica duo, Shaa'ir+Func (S+F), she personifies a dishevelled, stick-her-tongue-out Kali on stage. As the host of television series *The Dewarists*, she's a wandering minstrel. As an actor, she's capricious to say the

least—at times playing a true-to-life NRI girl (*Dhobi Ghat*, 2010), and at other times a rebel (*David*, 2013). On her time off, she's a PETA activist; by night she's out to reclaim Mumbai's party scene with her underground event called Grime Riot Disco. In May, the 31-year-old, known for her daring approach to dressing, also launched her own fashion line

with the website Stylista. And she's balancing all this as she prepares for her solo outing!

With all of this on her plate, it's hard to sit her down for an interview. When we finally speak, she's in Los Angeles. After an 18-hour video shoot for her upcoming solo album, *Spit*, on which she's devoted three years already, Dogra

says: "I've realised now is my time to push the limits and do more than I've ever done... better than I've ever done it. I was writing for others' albums, and having written five records with S+F, I felt like defining myself alone... At this juncture, I'm strong enough to do that. I know exactly who I am and exactly what that looks and sounds like." After a decade of delivering banging, dance floor-friendly music with S+F she's now ready to open her heart out. The year started on a big note: with her band performing at the Glastonbury Festival. She shares that her nine-track album, recorded in Delhi, Mumbai, Manali and UK, talks about her journey in love.

"The album's about love. For me, everything is love. Failure, pain, politics, sex, rejection, passion—all shades of being are manifestations of love." On *Spit*, the sound is stripped down and the lyrics are intensely personal. "I was in Goa, forlorn and fresh out of a break-up, but the sea cradled me like a mother's womb. I started to sing, wade in the water and think of lyrics... spiritual, meditative and soothing. It was as comforting as a friend hugging me, and the song 'Pockets' was born," she adds.

BOOKS

## HOT TYPE

Eimear McBride's debut novel, *A Girl Is A Half-Formed Thing*, won this year's Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction and is on its way to publishing stardom. Need more reasons to read it? We'll give you three

### She beat Donna

**Tartt:** The novel was in competition with literary favourite Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*. Other writers on the list included Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Pulitzer-winner Jhumpa Lahiri!

**It's her labour of love:** McBride wrote the book in six months in her mid-twenties. She's now 36—it took her nine years to get it published.

**She's being compared to James Joyce:** Like most writers, reading *Ulysses* had a marked impression on McBride's writing. With shared themes like Catholicism, the two Irish writers have a common link.



SHOEB MASHADI

WORD OF THE MONTH

*Breakover* (noun): The brand-new and better-than-ever look you rock right after a breakup. A complete reinvention of sorts.

ART

SILENCE SPEAKS

If you're visiting New York soon, don't miss the VS Gaitonde exhibition at the Guggenheim

Sandhini Poddar



Achieving silence was constitutive in Indian modern painter VS Gaitonde's creative process. Gaitonde (1924-2001) equated the circle—which often appears in his canvases—with silence, speech with the splitting of the circle in half, and Zen with a dot: "Everything starts from silence. The silence of the brush. The silence of the canvas. The painter starts by absorbing these silences..."

Next month, the Guggenheim will host a mammoth exhibition of his works, comprising 45 major paintings drawn from 30 leading

public institutions and private collections across Asia, Europe and the United States. For this retrospective, VS Gaitonde: *Painting As Process, Painting As Life*, curator Sandhini Poddar will look at Gaitonde's oeuvre within the wider context of international postwar art, drawing parallels to movements such as Art Informel, Tachisme and Abstract Expressionism.

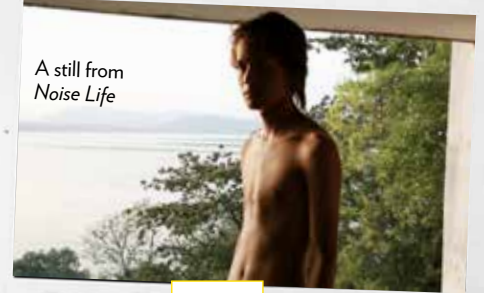
On view from October 24, 2014–February 11, 2015. [Guggenheim.org](http://Guggenheim.org)

TO READ OUR INTERVIEW WITH SANDHINI PODDAR, ADJUNCT CURATOR, SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, VISIT [vogue.in](http://vogue.in)

Untitled (1975) by VS Gaitonde



A still from Noise Life



ART

LOOK OUT, LOOK IN

This young artist duo's experiments with autoethnography will teach you about yourself

If you're unable to make it to the Guwahati-based artist duo Desire Machine Collective's "laboratory in flux for generating hybrid practices"—a ferry docked on the Brahmaputra!—fret not; Project 88 and Max Mueller Bhavan have just brought their works to Mumbai.

While Mriganka Madhukailya and Sonal Jain have had the privilege of being part of the first

Indian pavilion at the 2011 Venice Biennale, this is their first solo exhibition in India. The centrepiece of the exhibition is *Noise Life*, a video installation, which aims to sketch out a history of the different ways in which we develop knowledge about ourselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine and penology.

*Noise Life* opened on August 28 and is on till October; [Project88.in](http://Project88.in)

THEATRE

Pierce the veil

Two worlds find a common platform in *Burq Off!*, NADIA MANZOOR's hilarious yet provocative play, finds AARTI VIRANI

Bikinis and burqas; flirting and fundamentalism; Mecca and Majorca—they're just a handful of the juxtapositions dissected in *Burq Off!*, actor Nadia Manzoor's ambitious one-woman show, which has commanded the attention of everyone from alt-guru Deepak Chopra to activist Irshad Manji.

In the performance, the Brooklyn-based artist takes on 21

characters, ranging from her dictatorial father to a mullah. The result is a no-holds-barred performance that dips into her conflicted autobiography—Manzoor spent the majority of her childhood in a close-knit Muslim community in North London—to portray a cultural collision course.

"I didn't intend to write this show, it really found me," admits

Manzoor, 31, who studied social work at Boston University. "I was always an entertainer growing up, doing voices and faces, but it was always like, '*Beta*, you're such a crackpot, you're going to make your husband very happy one day,'" she explains, momentarily lapsing into her father's thunderous baritone. "It was never considered a real talent."

It's men that the performer-playwright especially loves playing, she adds with an impish grin. "A man with his legs out. When else do I get to be like that? Maybe at home, in my sweats," she says.

"I might belch, but even if I was by myself I'd be like 'oh, sorry.'" After New York, *Burq Off!* is currently enjoying a successful run in London. Manzoor is on a quest to take it to Dubai and India, among other destinations in 2015.

"Hate, anger, jealousy—there's no cultural lens to view these [emotions]," she says. "And because my show is so personal, it's also universal." Visit [Nadiapmanzoor.com](http://Nadiapmanzoor.com) for schedule and dates ■



Nadia Manzoor

LESUE VAN STELTEN