

Room with a Tune ... 12/05/2002

The Salt Lake Tribune

Date: 12/05/2002 **Edition:** Final **Section:** Thursday **Page:** D1

Keywords: UT; Youth; Pop Culture

Subject: Arts, Culture and Entertainment **Matter:** Music

Photo Credit: Paul Fraughton/The Salt Lake Tribune

Photo Caption: Hemen Barzangy, 17, works on a recording project at Intel Computer Clubhouse. The clubhouse's music room, in Salt Lake City's Glendale neighborhood, attracts a string of musically inclined teens.; Hemen Barzangy, a music-room regular, has produced a CD of Kurdish rap that will be released on a Swedish label.

Room with a Tune

Computer clubhouse gives teens jump-start at recording careers; Music Room Turns Teens On to Tunes

BY BROOKE ADAMS THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

The latest artist to hit the world music stage laid down his tracks in a cubicle-size music room at the Intel Computer Clubhouse at a Salt Lake City recreation center.

His name is Hemen Barzangy, and his first CD of Kurdish rap is being released this winter by a Swedish record label.

Barzangy's creative endeavor is exactly the sort of inspiration the Glendale-neighborhood clubhouse hoped to kindle when it opened the music room last November. The clubhouse, adjacent to the Sorenson Multi-cultural Center at 855 W. California Ave., is funded by a grant from Intel.

The room, set back in a corner of the clubhouse, is equipped with high-grade microphones, an electronic keyboard, guitar, drum machine, maracas, a mixing board and a computer loaded with a recordable CD drive and music-editing software. Egg cartons tacked to the sky-blue and lilac walls keep the room soundproof.

"It's not kiddie stuff," said Dante Bertelli, a clubhouse assistant and a mechanical-engineering student at the University of Utah.

And that has attracted a string of teens, most between the ages of 15 and 18, with musical ambition but no access to equipment. The sign-up sheet for the room is sometimes booked up to two weeks in advance.

"Most of the kids are into doing rap," said Kiril Boyadjieff, 24, an assistant, musician and art major at the U. "We have everything they need to produce full albums in there. Some of these kids, just give them the opportunity and they really go far."

Under Boyadjieff's tutelage, several teens have recorded songs and posted them on music Web

sites, such as mp3.com. And several kids have enough material now for a "solid album," he said.

Barzangy, or Hama Doshka as he is known professionally, is one of them.

When he was about 8, Barzangy would roam the streets of the Kurdistan region of Iraq like many kids his age, staying out until the wee hours of the morning singing and making street music with drums made out of tomato cans.

It was an inauspicious start to a musical career, one that didn't really take root until he landed in Utah and found his way to the clubhouse's music room.

"It feels weird. I never thought about being a singer. I always wanted to be a basketball player," said Barzangy, 17.

Music took center stage after he and a cousin heard Tupac Shakur rapping a few years ago. Cool, Barzangy thought. He started making tapes the next day, working in his family's basement with a cheap piano keyboard and microphone.

"It was fun, but it was nothing like this," Barzangy said, his eyes sweeping the clubhouse's music room.

Still, he managed to get a few songs uploaded to a Kurd Web site and "they loved it," he said. Among his fans was a representative of Starn Music Records, a Swedish label that produces Kurdish music, who encouraged Barzangy to make a studio-quality demo CD.

He couldn't afford studio time, however. At that point, a friend introduced him to the clubhouse, and Barzangy has been a regular there ever since. He sent the finished CD, titled "Zhian Parwary Kurds" (roughly, "Die for Our Land"), to Starn in early November.

All but two songs he has written are in Kurdish, and he plans to keep recording primarily in his native tongue.

"The songs I write are about what I've been through," he said. "You could just say it's about freedom. Put it that way."

The Barzangys -- two parents and five children -- left Iraq in December 1996 after Saddam Hussein vowed to kill those who had worked for the U.S. government. His father had been a CIA bodyguard.

"It was crazy at home," said Barzangy. "There is always a war going on about something, and you never know why. There's always fighting, killing."

After two months in Guam, the Barzangys came to Utah, where a cousin had settled. Barzangy's dad worked as a carpenter for a little more than four years before the promise of a good job lured them to Detroit in November 2001. But the job fell short of its billing, so the Barzangys returned to Utah last June.

"Everything I do is about not giving up," said Barzangy, clutching a spiral notebook full of songs he has written.

Several other teens also are working on or have just finished CDs, and some say access to the music room is helping to keep them out of trouble.

"I'd rather be in the studio than anywhere else," said Marcus Alvarez, 16, who calls his rap group The Fam.

The studio also attracts younger kids in the clubhouse's after-school program -- including some with "American Idol" aspirations.

"I've always been kind of leery about corporations and their different kinds of scams they throw out to reel kids in at an early age," Boyadjieff said. "But I think this is really a good thing from Intel. The purpose is probably a little higher, at least from our point of view."

