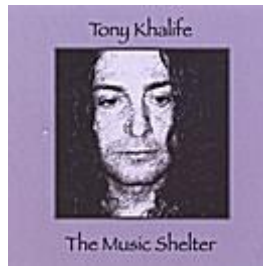


## Mp3 Tony Khalife - The Music Shelter



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Exotic and haunting songs in the singer songwriter style from Lebanese guitarist Tony Khalife. 13 MP3 Songs FOLK: Modern Folk, WORLD: Middle East Details: From the album liner notes... further reviews forthcoming: Tonys music simply strikes you; it hits you with all of the force, spirit, and energy of his amazing story. From the first thumping pulse of his guitar you can hear the reverberations. You can just imagine the boy trying desperately to drown out the blasts rocking the bomb shelters in which he taught himself to play. His story begins in Beirut, a city not so very long ago considered the Paris of the Arab world. Nowadays, pictures of pocked and broken concrete conjure its name. The first shots in Lebanons long civil war rang out in 1975 when Tony was just eleven years old. He was conscripted before he even knew what was going on and found himself sniping in door- ways as part of a local militia. He grew up on the streets marshalled by slightly older boys also playing soldier - no plan, no schooling, no real strategy or sophistication, just perpetuating an ongoing cycle of conflict. His initiation to music, fortunately, started before the war. At age six his father had a party featuring master musicians whose soulful renditions of baladi music awakened his own muse. He begged his older brother for a guitar without knowing exactly which instrument it was. At seven, that instrument was hardly playable, but the allure was there. It was ten years later, while listening to a cutoff snippet of John McLaughlins instrumental masterpiece Lotus Feet, that he truly entranced. An interesting aside - Tony told me that at a later time, while transcribing Lotus Feet, a shell blew apart his room. He came to with his bed on top of him, concrete dust settling in the air, and his left arm outstretched, clutching the guitar, his hand still voicing the songs opening chord! When Tony wasnt protecting his home turf, he was studying music. It offered an outlet for his academic ambitions as surprise bombings made attendance at school too dangerous. He focused his practice and quickly mastered the guitar while carving a style all his own. To this day, Tonys hands move with a

conviction and sureness bred from his long struggle. They display the intensity, depth and soulfulness of someone who has metabolized the poisons of war and achieved true spiritual transformation. Tony's journey to the U.S. began when he was reading a French copy of Guitar Player magazine and a story caught his attention. It mentioned a guitar school in Southern California bent on teaching performance, where neither English, nor a high school degree was required -- music ostensibly being an international language. Toward the end of 1982, as Tony was becoming aware of the political complexities and the militias were falling into disarray, Tony took refuge in a monastery for six months. Shortly after he returned, he pulled together some money from his family and applied for a visa to study at the Guitar Institute of Technology. Tony hid in the back of his father's trunk to swiftly criss-cross the demarcation line and get to the airport in the midst of gunfire. He safely arrived in Hollywood at the age of twenty. He carried with him two guitars, a suitcase full of music gear, another for clothes, and some heavy, heavy emotional baggage. One can only imagine the loneliness - any chance at clear expression with his new peers blocked by insurmountable language, cultural, and experiential gaps. Yet, where language failed, music offered a place to put his mess of frustrations, fears, and dreams. Each stroke on his guitar became a piercing homage to both the steel rain he had left behind and the hope he'd found in America. In 1985 he ventured to Northern California to join a meditation series taught by students of Sri Chinmoy. The ex-warrior now began to study the spiritual side of his multidimensional inspiration. He received an initiation from an Indian singing saint, Saint Keshava Das, at twenty one, and spent the next seven years studying the spiritual epics of India and life and songs of saints at the Vishwa Shanti Ashram (World Peace Temple). While in Oakland, he began performing Vedic rituals and studied tabla with Shakti co-founder Ustad Zakir Hussain. He remained in Northern California teaching guitar, while studying tabla, singing, poetry, and martial arts. I first met Tony as his student during this period. Over the years I became gradually more familiar with the outlines of his story. Tony introduced me to the music-as-spiritual-path philosophy. He led by example, ably demonstrating the discipline, generosity, courage, and love required. The creative process requires the planting of seeds, constant care and nurture, and only when the artist feels ready is anything harvested. It takes taste and restraint to know when the time is ripe. Well, so much the better for us. Tony has dedicated his life to patiently mastering his vehicles: his instruments, his voice, and his poetry. The freedom in his music is truly unique - exotic, beautiful, aggressive at times, yet suffused with the charismatic spirit and playful character of the sacred

clown. His friends know he lives it, exuberance personified, like so many others who have met Deaths gaze head on. Tonys songs remind us that compassion is the key to our freedom in a world where bullies still hold sway. Please, take shelter in it. - Nick Peters March 2006

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