

**E**ven though its a tiny island, Bahrain is teeming with superbly talented artists. Today Weekender chats with Mohd Abdulla, Mo, of MR Productions. MR Productions is a musical platform where artists from different cultures or just music from different cultures blend to form the perfect harmony. Read on to know what Mo had to say about his journey and experiences.

**W. To begin with a cliché, who or what was your inspiration to pursue fusion music and subsequently become a music producer?**

**Mo.** Well, in the beginning, I was in a band, we started a band in 1993, '94. We started playing live in 1995. We played a lot of gigs, entered competitions, opened for bands. In 2004 I opened a studio along with my friend. We do recordings for bands, jingles, radio ads, clients. Mainly recording. The more people we had coming in, the better we got and enjoyed the process more. I used to work in a recording studio before I opened my own. The one thing I noticed was that the majority of the productions were focused on middle eastern music, though some dealt with English songs too. Bahrain had a variety of artists, many flavors to offer, though. This is where the idea for fusion came from. I listen to various kinds of music, from Indian classical to European classical. Most of the bands that came to us belonged to the rock genre, if not Arabic music. In 2011, My partner Ryan and I tried mixing it up a little by ourselves. The initial idea was to start a YouTube channel and promote our fusion efforts, because music is an international language, and I think that is how everything comes together. We completed a composition, and shot it in the desert, with a tabla and electric guitar and drums, with vocals lent by an Indian classical singer Padmini Rao. I am a percussionist, I play the rhythm, drums, and tabla.

**W. What's the your favorite part of the process, from the moment the first note comes to you, till you are basking in the accolade?**

**Mo.** My favourite part is that it is an absolute blessing to be a musician because the world becomes so small, and you get to bump into wonderfully talented people, professional or amateur artists, international or local. I never imagined that I'd be fortunate enough to have had these associations. So the past eight years have been an amazing journey. Every time we have a new project and we are introduced to someone new, it is a whole new experience. It may look the same or sound the same, but the experience is always a world apart and the take away from it is amazing. The fact that it is not a routine, that it is always different and new, is a big part of me enjoying the process, and all of these are my favorite parts.

**W. What are the best experiences you've had, working with Bahrain-based artists?**

**Mo.** Bahrain is a smorgasbord of artists from all over the world, be it jazz or pop music or Indian music, or anything. People here tend to experiment with music that may not be traditional to where they are from, which is a beautiful thing in itself. We have had the offspring of legendary musicians of Bahrain come to us for recordings to try their hand at fusion, though they would have easy access to the best studios in the region. I have worked with school students and a few others who don't usually sing in public but would be interested in recording. They bring their ideas and their music, and we work with them. Before 2011, we had a band and we played gigs, but we couldn't record. We didn't know where to go or how it worked, and we didn't have the money to pay for it. This made me want to make the process of production more accessible to people.

**W. What is the goal in sight, at the moment?**

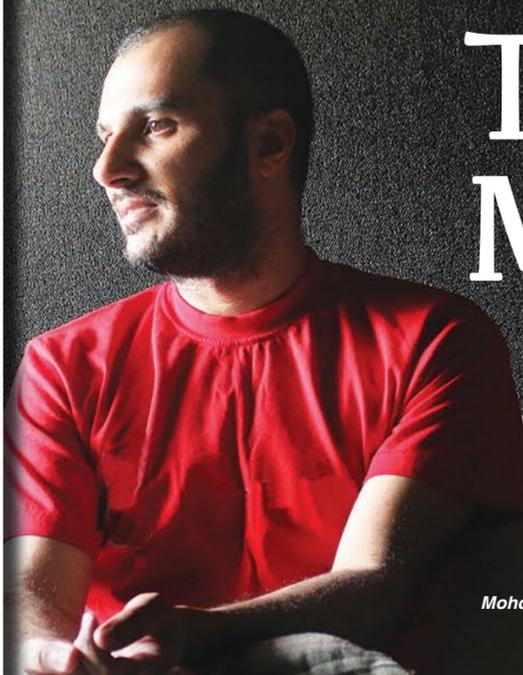
**Mo.** My goal at the moment, and every moment, is just to keep doing better. When you love what you are doing, and it is your passion and your baby, you want to keep doing more and more with it. My partner Ryan is not based out of Bahrain any longer, but we work online, and share our projects. I want to give this my best, it's a never-ending experience. When it is something you love, nothing will stop you. I'm always looking forward to interesting projects and experiences.

**W. Do you have a word of advice for the youth looking at following in your path?**

**Mo.** My advice to the youth is that don't let anybody stereotype you or tell you that this field is just a hobby or something you do for fun, and won't earn you your bread and butter. This is a gift, and its never too late to pursue a gift you are blessed with. Work will never feel like work if it is your passion, so don't let anybody tell you otherwise.

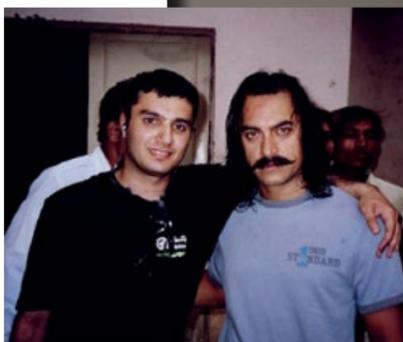
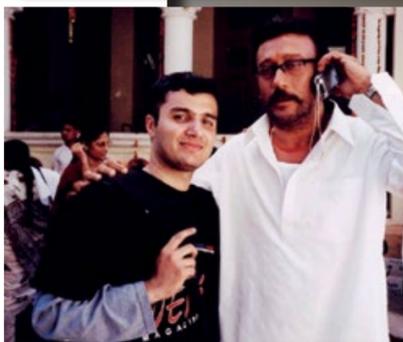
**W. Here's a tough one – tell us your top 5 fusion favorites!**

**Mo.** There are many, but here' the top 5. A tough but memorable one was Shah Rukh Khan's project, the song Lovely. Another one was the first project I did online with an artist from Russia who I haven't met in person, but was a follower of my work. That was a new experience, I didn't think I'd be able to do the project online. A hotel client wanted us to do a project where the staff sang a popular song, but a fusion version because the staff hailed from various nationalities. We did a fusion project with a cello, tabla, and a Russian fusion singer on a Russian operatic song. The fifth one on the list would be where we mashed a south Indian song with a Selena Gomez hit, where the singing was in two different languages. It was a tough project, but a cool one.



Mohd Abdulla

# Magic Through Music



# Shish Tawook

Tania Rebello

**M**y heart skips a beat every time someone mentions 'chicken' because chicken is one of my favorite things to eat. When I was younger, my parents would often pull my legs by telling me that I should marry a chicken seller.

So, today being 'World Chicken Day', I decided to share one of my easy go-to recipes for Shish Tawook which is perfect as a mid-week meal or even to grill on an outdoor barbeque at a picnic since the weather is so fine now.

There are endless possibilities of what one can prepare with chicken but this is one that can be enjoyed by people of all age groups and at any time of the day.

Shish Tawook is a very popular Lebanese dish loved by people from all nations. Did you know that the name 'Shish Tawook' is actually Turkish as Shish means 'skewers' and Tawook means 'chicken'? Well, now you do.

Toum or the Lebanese garlic sauce served with this delicious chicken dish rounds up the meal to perfection. Toum is prepared by emulsifying garlic paste with olive oil. Toum is easily available at hypermarkets in Bahrain so I used store-bought toum to serve up my shish tawook.



**SHISH TAWOOK**

Ingredients:

- 1 kg chicken breasts cut into 2" cubes
- 1 cup yogurt
- Juice of one large lemon
- 6 tbsps Olive oil
- 8 cloves of garlic minced
- 1 tsp paprika powder
- ½ tsp cinnamon powder
- ¼ tsp black pepper
- Salt to taste- about 1.5 level tsp.
- 1 tsp chopped parsley
- 1 onion cut into smaller chunks for skewing.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Mix all the above-mentioned ingredients (except chicken) in a large bowl to make a marinade.
2. Marinate chicken and onions in the marinade for at least 2 hours or overnight.
3. Soak skewers in water for half an hour.
4. Tread the chicken and onion onto skewers.
5. Grill in an oven preheated to 200C for about 20 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.
6. (Do not overcook or you will get rubbery chicken which is an absolute NO).
7. Serve with store-bought toum, extra parsley, grilled tomato, grilled large green chillies, few wedges of lemon, and Lebanese bread served up in a platter.



For mouthwatering recipes for homecooks, follow Tania @taniainthekitchen on Facebook and Instagram.