

Rise of the Lower Mainland: A Punjabi Music Revolution

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Abstract: "Rise of the Lower Mainland" is a fifteen-minute documentary film exploring the remarkable transformation of Punjabi music, shifting its production epicentre from traditional hubs in India and the UK to the vibrant Lower Mainland of British Columbia, Canada. This film delves into the stories of the artists, producers, and industry figures who spearheaded this cultural phenomenon, tracing their journeys and highlighting the collaborative spirit that fueled this musical revolution.

From the early influences of UK Bhangra to the emergence of prominent artists like Elly Mangat, Karan Aujla, Sidhu Moose Wala, and Chani Nattan, the documentary examines the unique fusion of traditional Punjabi sounds with contemporary influences that define this new wave. The narrative centers around Chani Nattan, a leading lyricist and artist, whose journey from early musical explorations to his recent signing with Warner Music's 91 North Records is a compelling thread throughout the film (Sangha, 2024).

"Rise of the Lower Mainland" introduces viewers to the key players in this dynamic scene, including influential producers like Harj Nagra and Mad Mix, rising artists like Raman Bains, and pivotal figures like DJ Jeezy and Inderpal Moga. The film showcases the collaborative power of this community, exemplified by the creation of viral hits like "Daku," a collaboration between Chani Nattan, Inderpal Moga, and Mad Mix, which boasts over 278 million YouTube views and 300 million Spotify streams, demonstrating the global reach of this music. The film also highlights the continued growth of the scene, showcasing recent successes like "8 Asle" by Sukha & Chani Nattan, a top Canadian YouTube hit in 2024, and Chani Nattan's landmark signing with Warner Music, signifying increasing industry recognition and investment (Decter, 2024).

Through intimate interviews, archival footage, and dynamic performance clips, "Rise of the Lower Mainland" captures the energy and innovation of this vibrant scene. It explores how these artists, many of whom immigrated to Canada or are second-generation Canadians, have achieved international acclaim and established the Lower Mainland as a global hub for Punjabi music production. Beyond celebrating musical achievement, the film explores the power of cultural expression, community building, and the evolving identity of the Punjabi diaspora in Canada.

Critically, the documentary also examines the complex social context surrounding this musical movement, including the controversies surrounding the rise of guns in South Asian gangster rap and the accusations that Punjabi music glorifies violence. The film will explore these claims, providing a platform for diverse perspectives and fostering a nuanced discussion about the relationship between music, culture, and social responsibility.

"Rise of the Lower Mainland" is significant because it documents a pivotal moment in music history, preserving the stories of the individuals who shaped this cultural shift for future generations. Its exploration of cultural identity, artistic innovation, and the global reach of music makes it compelling for a broad audience interested in music, cultural studies, and the immigrant

experience. This film offers a unique perspective on the evolution of a musical genre, showcasing how a community's cultural expression can resonate globally, transforming the landscape of music and solidifying the Lower Mainland as a vital center for Punjabi artistic creation.

Treatment: "Rise of the Lower Mainland" unfolds chronologically, opening with a brief historical overview of Punjabi music, from its folk origins in India to the UK Bhangra explosion. The narrative then transitions to the Lower Mainland, introducing Elly Mangat as a key figure in the mid-2010s, whose collaborations with producer Deep Jandu ignited the local scene. The film interweaves artists' journeys like Karan Aujla, Sidhu Moose Wala, and Chani Nattan, showcasing their struggles, creative processes, and the collaborative spirit that binds them. Interviews with these artists, producers like Harj Nagra and Mad Mix, and industry figures like DJ Jeezy offer insights into the scene's evolution, challenges, and unique sound.

Dynamic performance footage, studio sessions, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into the artists' lives bring the music to life. The film highlights the current vibrancy of the scene, showcasing the success of tracks like "8 Asle" by Sukha & Chani Nattan, a 2024 Canadian YouTube hit, and the growing industry recognition, exemplified by Chani Nattan's signing with Warner Music's 91 North Records (Decter, 2024).

Crucially, the documentary confronts the controversy surrounding gun violence in South Asian gangster rap, examining accusations that Punjabi music glorifies violence. Interviews with artists, critics, and community members explore the complexities of this issue, considering the social and economic factors contributing to gang violence and the music's potential role. The narrative follows the rise of Sidhu Moose Wala, exploring his impact and the tragic circumstances of his death, not shying away from the complex issue of violence and addressing the accusations against some forms of Punjabi music with nuance and diverse perspectives.

The film also explores the cultural significance of this music, its connection to the Punjabi diaspora, and its growing global influence. The climax showcases the international success of these artists, culminating in recognition of their achievements, such as Karan Aujla's Juno Award and Diljit Dosanjh's historic BC Place concert featuring Chani Nattan's songwriting (Derdeyn, 2024). The film concludes by reflecting on the movement's lasting impact and future potential, while acknowledging the ongoing dialogue surrounding the music's social impact and the need for responsible artistic expression.

Project History: My connection to Punjabi music is deeply personal. Growing up in Kamloops, BC, a relatively small Punjabi community, music was my primary link to my cultural heritage. Through these songs, I connected with my mother tongue, traditions, and a sense of belonging. Witnessing the rise of the Lower Mainland as the epicentre of Punjabi music production was a revelation. It was no longer just about consuming music created elsewhere; these artists, many second-generation Canadians, were defining the sound, pushing creative boundaries, and taking ownership of their narrative. This shift, from passive consumers to active creators of a global music phenomenon, ignited my curiosity.

I became fascinated by the stories of these artists, their journeys, and the unique fusion of influences that shaped their music. I wanted to understand the genesis of this vibrant scene, the challenges these artists faced, and how they were using their platform to express their cultural identity. The idea for this documentary stemmed from a deep desire to document this pivotal moment in music history, to amplify the voices of these artists, and to showcase the profound impact of Canadian Punjabi music on the global stage. This project is not just a film; it's a personal exploration of my cultural connection to this music, a celebration of the artistic innovation blossoming in our backyard, and an opportunity to share the untold stories of the Canadian Punjabi artists who are reshaping the sound of global music.

Audience: The target audience for "Rise of the Lower Mainland" is twofold. First, it will resonate with fans of Punjabi music globally, offering an intimate glimpse into the artists, producers, and cultural forces shaping the music they love. This includes the existing, dedicated fanbase of artists like Chani Nattan, Karan Aujla, and the late Sidhu Moose Wala. Second, the film will appeal to a broader audience interested in music documentaries, cultural studies, and stories of immigration and diaspora. Viewers interested in the evolution of music genres, the impact of cultural identity on artistic expression, and the power of music to connect communities will find this film compelling.

While films like "AP Dhillon: First of a Kind" focus on a single artist's journey, "Rise of the Lower Mainland" takes a wider lens. It explores the interconnected stories of multiple artists and producers, showcasing the collaborative ecosystem that fueled this musical revolution. Our film uniquely examines the pre-pandemic rise of the Lower Mainland scene, exploring the foundations laid by earlier artists and the specific cultural context of the Canadian Punjabi diaspora. It delves deeper into the social and cultural factors influencing this music, including the complex issue of violence and its portrayal in certain segments of the genre, offering a more nuanced and comprehensive portrait of this dynamic music scene.

Style and Approach: "Rise of the Lower Mainland" will employ a dynamic blend of observational documentary, intimate interviews, and electrifying performance footage. The cinematography will be vibrant and energetic, mirroring the music's pulse and the artists' dynamism. The editing will be rhythmic and fast-paced, reflecting the energy of the scene, while also allowing for quieter, reflective moments as artists share their personal stories.

The film will utilize a variety of narrative techniques. Archival footage will illustrate the evolution of Punjabi music, while behind-the-scenes glimpses into studio sessions and live performances will offer intimate access to the creative process. News clips, both celebratory (like Diljit Dosanjh's BC Place performance) and critical (addressing the complex issue of violence), will be incorporated to provide context and diverse perspectives. The film will adopt a balanced approach to the controversy surrounding violence, avoiding sensationalism and aiming for a nuanced understanding of the social issues at play.

Performance footage will be captured with handheld and static shots, immersing the viewer in the live experience. Interviews will be filmed in intimate settings, fostering a connection with the artists. The pacing will be energetic yet thoughtful, reflecting the vibrant music scene while allowing space for reflection on the music's cultural impact and the artists' journeys.

Principal Participants and Advisors:

Chani Nattan (Lyricist/Artist): A prominent Punjabi-Canadian lyricist and artist whose journey from early musical explorations to signing with Warner Music's 91 North Records forms the central narrative thread of the documentary (Sangha, 2024). His insights into the creative process, the challenges faced by Canadian Punjabi artists, and his perspective on the evolution of the music scene will be invaluable. His success, including the viral hit "Daku," makes him a compelling figure in the film.

Inderpal Moga (Artist): A collaborator with Chani Nattan and Mad Mix on the viral hit "Daku," Inderpal Moga's insights into the collaborative process and the creation of this influential track will be essential to the film's narrative. His perspective as a fellow artist in the scene will also be valuable, offering a broader view of the collaborative spirit of the Lower Mainland music community.

Mad Mix (Recording Engineer/Producer): A highly skilled recording engineer and producer who has worked with numerous Canadian Punjabi artists, including Chani Nattan, on the viral hit "Daku." His technical expertise and understanding of the recording process, coupled with his close collaboration with artists, offer a unique perspective on the creation of this music.

Harj Nagra (Producer): A Surrey-based music producer instrumental in the early development of the Lower Mainland Punjabi music scene. He worked with Karan Aujla in the formative stages of his career and produced the hit song "Badfella" with Sidhu Moose Wala. Nagra's insights into the scene's genesis and his experience working with key artists make him an invaluable contributor to the film.

DJ Jeezy (DJ): A well-known and respected DJ in the Canadian music scene, DJ Jeezy's deep understanding of music trends, audience preferences, and the role of DJs in promoting artists will provide valuable context to the film's exploration of the industry. His experience in shaping the soundscape of the scene makes him a key voice in the narrative.

Raman Bains (Artist): An emerging Punjabi artist representing the next generation of musicians in the Lower Mainland. His perspective on the current state of the scene, the challenges and opportunities facing young artists, and his musical aspirations will add another layer to the narrative, showcasing the future of this vibrant music genre.

Plan of Work:

Pre-Production (January 2025 - February 13, 2025): Extensive research on the history of Punjabi music in Canada, key artists, and industry trends. Development of interview questions and securing interviewees. Location scouting and securing necessary permissions.

Production (February 14-16, 2025 & March 7-9, 2025): Principal photography, including interviews with Chani Nattan, Harj Nagra, Mad Mix, Raman Bains, and potentially DJ Jeezy and Inderpal Moga. Capture of performance footage, studio sessions, and B-roll.

Scriptwriting (February 17, 2025 - March 22, 2025): Based on research and initial interviews, a detailed script will be developed, outlining the narrative structure and key story beats of the documentary.

Post-Production (February 15, 2025 - April 10, 2025): Concurrent with shooting, initial editing will begin to assemble interview footage and establish the narrative flow. Music composition and sound mixing will take place alongside the editing process. Final editing, colour correction, and mastering will be completed by April 10th. This timeline allows for flexibility and ensures a polished final product.

Budget:

Phase	Item	Estimated Cost	Notes
Production	Travel & Accommodation (Interviews) (Airbnb)	\$304.46	Airbnb booking Feb 14-16.
	Travel & Accommodation (Interviews) (Other)	\$300.00	Estimated costs for other travel during interview trips.
	Fuel Costs (800km, \$1.73/L, 91L tank x2)	\$315.00	Two trips to Lower Mainland, approx. 800km total.
	Studio Rental (6 hours x \$86/hour)	\$516.00	6 hours total across all interviews, including setup/teardown. (Source: Peerspace)
	Camera Rental (3 days x \$200/day)	\$600.00	DJI Ronin-S, Sony Alpha a7 IV, lens, battery. (Source: EFE Langley)
	Microphone Rental (Shotgun - 3 days x \$20)	\$60.00	Apex 176 Shotgun Microphone. (Source: EFE Langley)
	Microphone Rental (Wireless - 3 days x \$40)	\$120.00	Sennheiser ew 100 ENG G3. (Source: EFE Langley)

	Additional B-Roll/Footage Acquisition	\$500	Costs for acquiring stock footage or other necessary visuals.
Post-Production	Final Cut Pro	\$400.00	Purchase cost of Final Cut Pro software.
	Logic Pro	\$250.00	Purchase cost of Logic Pro software.
	Music & Archival Footage Licensing	~\$2,500	Approximate cost - can vary significantly.
	Marketing & Distribution	~\$1,000	Approximate cost - can vary depending on strategy.
Contingency	Unexpected Expenses	\$1,000	A buffer for unforeseen costs that may arise.
Total		\$7,865.46	

"Rise of the Lower Mainland" is more than just a music documentary; it's a testament to the power of cultural expression, the resilience of the community, and the evolution of identity within the Punjabi diaspora. This fifteen-minute film offers a unique window into a pivotal moment in music history, capturing the energy, innovation, and collaborative spirit that has propelled the Lower Mainland to the forefront of the global Punjabi music scene. From the intimate stories of individual artists to the exploration of complex social issues, "Rise of the Lower Mainland" paints a vibrant and nuanced portrait of a musical revolution, leaving audiences with a deeper appreciation for the transformative power of music and its ability to connect communities across cultures and generations. This film not only documents the past and present but also offers a glimpse into the exciting future of Punjabi music, solidifying the Lower Mainland's place as a vital hub of artistic creation and cultural innovation.

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