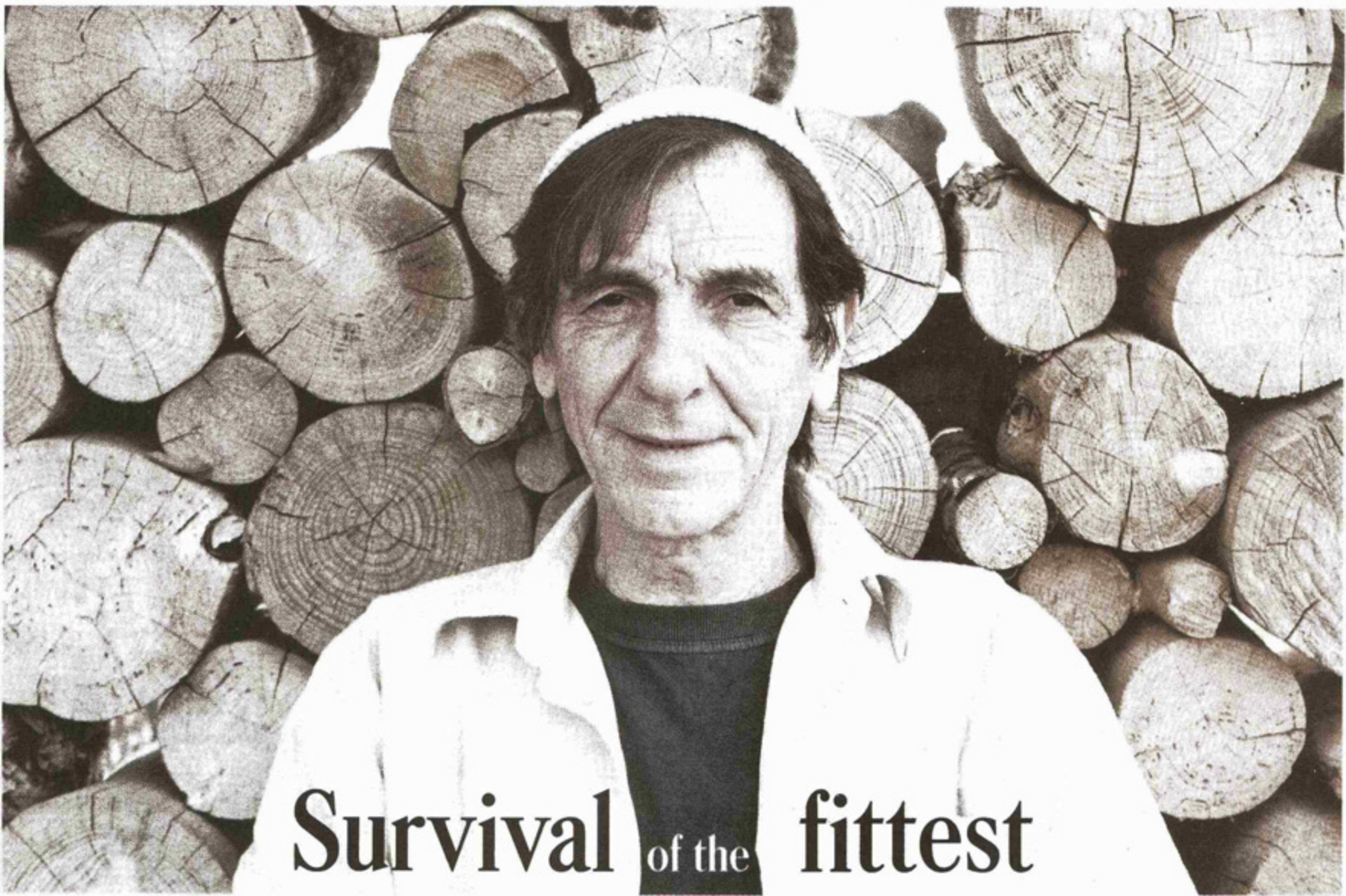
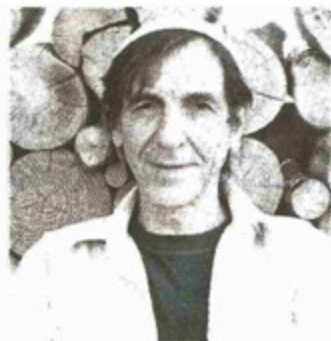


VIVA LA EVOLUTION

Shlomo Bar and his crossover band Habreira Hativit are putting out their 11th album
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SADNESS AND JOY. According to Shlomo Bar, 'As long as you are true to yourself and genuine, both as a person and an artist, it doesn't matter what material you perform.' (Ariel Van Straten)

Shlomo Bar's heady mix of energized 'world music' has served him well over more than 30 years of activity and 11 albums, the latest of which will be launched at a grand gig this Thursday

• By BARRY DAVIS

Even at the age of 67 it would be hard to say that Shlomo Bar is showing too many signs of slowing down, although, it must be stated, the old firebrand has begun to show some softer edges. Bar and his long-running, seminal crossover band, Habreira Hativit, are releasing their eleventh album, *In a Secret of Solitary Prayer*, the launch festivities and grand gig taking place at the Zappa Shuni Amphitheater near Binyamina this Thursday.

Percussionist-vocalist Bar has been a singular voice on the local musical scene for over four decades. He came to prominence as the founder and leader of Habreira Hativit in the late '70s, offering a heady mix of energized "world music" that culled a wide range of influences, from Arabic, Indian and Persian music to rock and pop and liturgical material. *In a Secret of Solitary Prayer* has all that and then some.

One surprising element of the new album is the number of covers. "Yes, that is sort of new departure for me," Bar admits in an interview with *The Jerusalem Post* during a brief break in rehearsals for Thursday's show, "I normally have one, maybe two, in each record."

So what prompted him to offer his own version of some tried and tested favorites? Track 4 on the CD, for example, is "Ima Adama" (Mother Earth) – written by Yankeleh Rotblitt and most readily associated with the 1972 rendition of iconic songster Arik Einstein – and there are lyrics by poet Leah Goldberg elsewhere on the disc.

Bar doesn't appear to have a problem with the seeming shift towards the mainstream. "I am at one with everything," he declares. "As long as you



'IN A SECRET of Solitary Prayer' sees Bar and Habreira Hativit perform several covers of iconic Israeli songs.

are true to yourself and genuine, both as a person and an artist, it doesn't matter what material you perform. For me, it is also very important to safeguard the Hebrew language, and that I think that comes through in all the songs on the CD."

What also comes through loud and clear in all of Bar's work over the last 40-plus years is powerful emotion. "All art, no matter what field you create in, is not about fun or entertainment," he says, "it is about sadness and joy. I don't follow fashions or trends – that's never been my way and I'm not about to change now."

STILL, BAR has come a long way in his close to seven decades on this planet, including becoming a father again after a 26-year gap. Today he is married to fellow band-member, percussionist-vocalist Yael Offenbach, and the couple have three children aged 6-11. Tellingly, one of the numbers on the album written by Offenbach and called "Geveret Rita" (Ms. Rita) addresses the contentious issue of administering ritalin to children with attention disorders.

"I am sure that if I'd been given ritalin as a kid I wouldn't be doing what I do today," says Bar, getting back onto his soapbox. "The scriptures say we should teach children in their own way. The education system can't come to terms with the fact that every child is different. This is a gross intervention in the child's life and development. We almost experienced that ourselves, with one of our kids."

But does he think that "Geveret Rita" will do the trick? "I really hope the song sparks public debate. It's all spelled out in simple terms in the song."

Elsewhere on the album there are plenty of trademark Bar vocals and pounding percussion work, with Menasheh Sasson spinning out his ethereal musical webs on santour and Ilan Ben-Ami putting out a range of vibes on guitar and oud, from Arabic to rock- and pop-inflected sounds to captivating blues. Vocalist Leora Yitzhak, who hails from an Indian family, keeps flying the ethnic flag that was unfurled and displayed with great tenacity and skill for many years by late Habreira Hativit founding-member and violinist Samson Khamkar.

Thursday's show will be beefed up by rock-ethnic guitarist-vocalist Berry Sakharof and pop singer Kobi Aflalo. High-energy world music troupe Hata-puchim, with whom Bar recorded several numbers last year, will be waiting in the wings for future gigs