

'Sufi music is devotional, not a hot-selling trend'

Ahead of the release of his new album, *Back 2 Love*, Pakistani musician Rahat Fateh Ali Khan talks about being selective in Bollywood and Sufi music

SANKHAYAN GHOSH

Tell us about your new album *Back 2 Love*.

It's an easy listen with 10 romantic songs. Shreya Ghoshal has sung one and Salim-Sulaiman have arranged a few of the tracks. We have reworked some old bandishes and I have composed a few songs. Sahir Ali Bagga and Mian Yousaf Sallahuddin are the other producers on the album.

You have recorded very few songs in India over the past two years. Have you become selective?

I was getting too many song offers and I had to start being selective. All through my career I have consistently released one good song a year — *Mann ki lagan* (2004), *Jiya dhadak* (2005), *Naina thag lenge* (2006), *Main jahaan rahoon* (2007) and now this year's *Dil ka mizaaj* from *Dedh*

Ishqiya. You can't produce a *Dil toh bachcha hai jee* every time, so there have been a few average compositions I have done. But the kind of music I was doing was being repeated. Also, I give a lot of importance to the *lafz* (words) and the quality of lyrics was deteriorating. The moment that struck me in 2012, I decided to become selective.

You haven't visited India in a long time. Is it because of issues with the Enforcement Directorate in 2011, where they charged you for violating foreign exchange rules?

There are absolutely no problems with the Enforcement Directorate. You can ask them. It was a misunderstanding. We artists are sensitive, and people of integrity. I have not come to India in a while because I have been busy travelling for shows across the world. Hopefully, I will be



there by the end of this year. We are expecting good things from the Narendra Modi government —

love, friendship and brotherhood between the two nations. That's what Pakistan wants.



(Above) Gulzar with Rahat Fateh Ali Khan when he visited Lahore last year; Khan

Pakistani actor Shaan Shahid recently called Pakistani artists who work in India as "unpatriotic sell-outs". The comment is absolutely ridicu-

lous. Artists should think and speak. There is so much hard work and soul that goes into our work. We are trying to be peacemakers through our art and such comments are undesirable. And music anyway doesn't have to be confined to a geographical boundary.

Do you think there is an overkill of Sufi in popular music in the subcontinent?

Yes, having *maula* in your song lyrics doesn't make it Sufi. Half the creators don't even have a proper idea of what Sufi is. Junoon (the band) started this trend. They call themselves Sufis but they have no clue about its spiritual depth. Sufi is devotional, and the *malang* that the *fakirs* possess, is not a hot-selling trend.

What are you working on next?

I have sung for Sajid Wajid for Arbaaz Khan's next production, *Dolly Ki Doli*. Last year, Gulzar and Vishal Bhardwaj both came to meet me in Lahore when we recorded the *Dedh Ishqiya* song.

You famously gave voice to the score of *Apocalypse* by Oscar-winning composer James Horner in 2006. Any more projects in the West?

I just recorded for the Sonic Peacemakers, a global peace movement that aims to spread peace in Pakistan through music and creativity. Other artists such as Roger Waters, Eddie Vedder and Peter Gabriel are also a part of it. The track should be out around September.

Two exhibitions across South Africa — one capturing the lives of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, and the other on Indo-South African cricketing ties — look closely at cultural bonds between the two countries



The Africa Connect

Photos courtesy: MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GOVT OF INDIA



(Clockwise from top) Mandela with his wife; photographs of Gandhi in South Africa; Alan Donald and Sachin Tendulkar at a one-day international match in Calcutta in 1991

DIVYA A

LATE last year, the Ministry of Culture decided to resuscitate its flagship Festivals of India initiative. Starting July 18, there will be a mega multi-city edition in South Africa — being tipped as one of the biggest events under the initiative. The date assumes more significance as it falls on the birthday of anti-apartheid revolutionary, and former South African President Nelson Mandela, who passed away in December last year. Besides events related to food, dance, films and Hindi literature, the highlights of the 45-day carnival are two travelling art exhibitions — one documenting the lives of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, called "Soul Mates", and the other on Indo-South African cricketing ties.

"Soul Mates" has been curated by Prashant Kidambi, who teaches Colonial Urban History at the University of Leicester, UK.

Besides photographs documenting the life of Gandhi and Mandela, "Soul Mates" will also have some priceless archival matter on display such as Gandhi's life in South Africa where he practised as a lawyer, his Class X marksheet, and even the FIR registered in South Africa upon his assassination. The material has been sourced from the National Archives of India, and its counterpart in Pretoria, National Archives of South Africa. Some material has also been sourced from the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Johannesburg, and Peace Truth Ahimsa Museum, Hyderabad.



"The core of this exhibition is to present the similarities between the two leaders, trace their path and plot the trajectory. The viewer would be surprised at the number of times they are run parallel to each other," says V Srinivas, Director-General, National Archives of India.

To highlight this, an interactive 20x7 ft Mandela-Gandhi wall will be erected, similar to the Gandhi-Martin Luther King wall at Howard University, Washington (USA). This wall will engage visitors to learn more about the two leaders, using smartphones, tablets and index cards. Besides, there are three other sections

— *The Making of Mahatma and Madiba*, documenting the first 30 years of their lives, family and education; *A Legacy of 144 Years*, traversing the years from 1869 to 2013, putting the two leaders in context to the histories of India and South Africa; and *The Transformation*, major events that shaped their lives between the age of 30 and 60 years.

On display are a list of the Junagarh and Jethpur Scholarships awarded to him; correspondence related to his work at the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa, and the evolution of his *satyagraha* philosophy between 1909 and 1946. As for Mandela, 16 photographs taken during his multiple visits to India between 1990 and 2001 are also being put up for public viewing.

The exhibition will start at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg on July 18, and will continue to be on display there till August 10. It will then travel to Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein and Nelspruit for a fortnight each, culminating in November.

The cricket exhibition on the other hand, begins on July 26, at the Wanderers stadium, in Johannesburg. On August 15, it shifts to Kingsmead Sahara Stadium in Durban, and continues there till August 31, to coincide with the finale of the Festival of India. Besides showcasing 175 significant cricketing moments captured on camera, between 1991 and 2012, there will also be some cricket-related memorabilia on display. A cricket workshop for youngsters is also being worked out.

Real Time

THE DESIRE to document their surrounding is what unites this group of artists from Bengal. If Chittaprosad Bhattacharya sketched the victims of the Bengal famine, poor peasants and labourers, Somnath Hore's prints reflected the political turbulence of the times through anguished human figures. Haren Das captured rural, pastoral Bengal where man lived in perfect harmony with nature.

The trio is being displayed together in the exhibition "Print: Three Masters" that is on at Art Indus gallery. "This is to give the Bengal artists their due. The three of them are excellent printmakers working on subjects of everyday life," says gallerist Vijay Lakshmi about the display featuring 20 works. Selected from the personal collection of a Kolkata-based collector, the works of each master is symbolic of his oeuvre. So among others, Hore's 1978 lithograph has a skeletal figure on the ground, and Das has a couple on the river bed with their fishing net. Bhattacharya's works offer a glimpse of a Bengal that no longer exists — from woodcuts depicting tribal



dance to the forest greens and children playing in stagnant water. "This is an appropriate time for the exhibition. With not many good shows in summer, it will get the attention it deserves," adds Lakshmi.

The exhibition at Art Indus, 37, Santushti Shopping Complex, Chanakyaपुरi, is on till June 28. Contact: 26883738

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(Clockwise from top) After the Rain by Haren Das; a tribal dance scene by Chittaprosad; Somnath Hore's untitled lithograph

Going Bananas

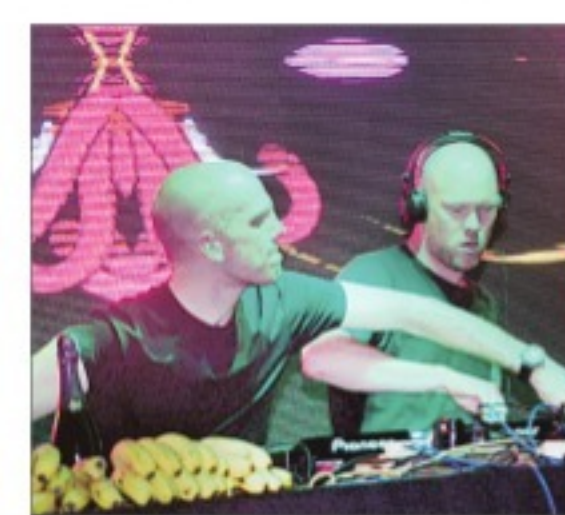
That's how everyone felt at Swedish EDM duo Dada Life's first India tour

PHOTOS: AARAV

SUYASH GABRIEL

SWEDISH DJ-duo Dada Life provided a perfect antidote to the scorching summer heat with their concert at I-Kandy, Gurgaon, over the weekend. Screaming out to an excited, scantily clad audience of revellers, the producer Olle Corneer asked with mock authority "Are you ready to accept the higher state of Dada Land?". The Swedish DJ duo of Corneer-Stefan Engblom, who were in the city as part of their India tour, unleashed a dynamically well-balanced set which, while not long-lasting, turned the venue into a throbbing bass station of Progressive House and Electro-Dance Music.

The opening acts, DJ Mash and Progressive Brothers set the mood with high octane sets and constant reminders that Dada Life was yet to play. Dada's set was filled with ups and downs in terms of tempo keeping the set sound fresh. The transitions between each track were smooth, with extended stutter build-ups between certain numbers, which allowed the DJs to interact with the audience. The duo indulged in antics that they are famous for, which include spraying the front row of the audience with vapour guns, throwing giant, inflatable bananas into the crowd and periodically showering fans with Dada Life merchandise.



(Above) The audience at the concert; Dada Life duo

mood of the audience. The concert was both an aural as well as a visual treat with the stage antics of the DJ duo being complimented by well-designed graphics along with lyrics and catch phrases of the songs.

After an exhausting set, Corneer said, "India has been really welcoming. Everything from the hospitality and the fans, to all the people we've met. Happiness, that's what Dada Life is about. To come to a new country and have the crowd sing along to your songs is an amazing feeling." Will they come back for another tour? "We would love to do that. We can tell you that straight away. We would love to do a proper Dada Land Compound event. Let's make it happen," he added.

The hour-and-a half long set kicked off with their remix of Major Lazer's famous tune *Bubble butt*, and continued into some of their most well-known tracks including *This machine kills ravens*, *Rolling stones t-shirt* and *Feed the Dada* to name a few. They ended the set with their newest single *Born to rage*, introducing a slight twist to the lyrics by adding, "India you were *Born to rage*", which surely uplifted the