

# The buzz is growing!



**Sanjay Prabhu**

**T**he international music industry in India has come a long way. There is a vast difference in the way international music is perceived in India today when compared to a decade ago.

Let's accept the fact that India quite easily is the second largest English speaking country after the United States, has a tremendous potential for musicians from the west. Although initially the progress was sluggish, the youth in India have been quick to induce a pop culture that is considered cool and now has even caught up with the masses.

This burst of unforeseen popularity of international music has also created a large space for international entertainment acts which is ever growing and has never been so vibrant-like now. Kids see the sun shining through the great wall of Bollywood's dominance and jump onto the bandwagon to create music to achieve the obvious commercial success, but also to satiate their thirst for music and beyond.

Radio Indigo started operations in 2006 and in the last five years, we have charted some of the key changes in people's listening habits. One of our key observations over this period was that people are not satisfied with only retro and old school pop music. Today, they demand the latest and therefore media which have indulged in international music strive to play it first

on their channel. We do too! Quite honestly, our listenership base today has far exceeded what we used to be four years back, besides we have more listeners than everyone else who do play international music or any international content.

This certainly is an exciting time for anyone, for those who have their hands dipped in this jar of honey, but there are issues too. Radio, among other things, is now also competing with illegal internet downloads. Although the industry has made several petitions through mass media to stop piracy, this is not an easy virus to get rid of.

Radio has played and will continue to play an important role in the development of the international music industry in India. Influence of international music in India has given birth to some of the finest artists in the history of music in India. Some of the finest music festivals in Asia are right here in India, namely, *Hornbill Music Fest* in the North East, *Jazz Yatra* in Mumbai and *Indigo Jazz and Blues* in Bangalore. The craze of learning to play a chord on the guitar is now not only limited to the north-east. India is on a roll and there is no stopping this beast.

The frequency with which international artists have visited India has doubled in the last three years. I will not be surprised if India features in itineraries of top bands across the world. India is not only attractive to the western corporate honchos, but the strength of our market is

also very attractive to the musicians to make that quick buck in their off-season.

Unlike the west, India does not look at ticket sales as the primary source of revenue for live acts. In all the previous cases, large sponsorships have been the driving force of live international acts in India. Having said that, India is going through a change, a change where we are more receptive to the west than ever before. And with this trend setting pace, the model in which the business of entertainment is done-will change in many ways.

The point that I am trying to make is that India has transformed into this massive land of opportunity for many in the west and we are still in progress. Yes, we have our own challenges in professional production management and piracy, but India is certainly ready for the West. But is the West ready for the India as yet! ❁

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