



KEEPING TRADITIONS ALIVE

Jaipur-based folk fusion band, Swaraag, talk about how traditional artistes do not get the recognition they deserve

Sanskrita Bharadwaj

Formed in 2014, Swaraag explores the possibilities of Rajasthani folk renditions when it is mixed with modern instruments. From tabla to drums, sitar to acoustic guitar, traditional Rajasthani morchang to saxophone, the band tries to make a fusion out of Indian and Western elements.

The band features Pratap Singh Nirwan (founder and team coach), Asif Khan (lead singer), Arif Khan (sitar player), Tasruf Ali (saxophone), Rishab Rozar (guitar), Arif Khan (khartal and morchang player), Sajid Khan (drummer) and Saif Ali Khan (tabla player).

Over the years, from being part of films to owning the stage in international and national events, folk musicians have come a long way. We spoke to Pratap, Asif, and Arif from the band to understand more about their music.

How was Swaraag formed?

Arif: Pratap (Singh Nirwan) and I met sometime in 2014. We started working with a small instrumental band, and

as time passed, we realised that we had to include more instruments, even vocals. We included Asif Khan, who is my younger brother, and he is fond of Sufi music and is a devout follower of the late Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. As we are from Rajasthan, we added Rajasthani folk music and instruments like the morchang, too. We have three flavours going on in the band — Rajasthani, Sufi and instrumental. Over time, as we started performing at weddings and corporate events, we realised that to connect with a larger base of people, we should include Bollywood numbers, and we have done that, too! When we started, we didn't want to go with fusion. It was simply an instrumental band. Now, we perform on Padharo Mhare Dosh with the zitar and the saxophone and everyone loves that rendition.

How do you think has music evolved over the years?

Asif: A decade ago, when we listened to a song, we tried to connect ourselves with its lyrics and music. A song was popular via word of mouth or publicity. Times have changed now, as the value of a song, depends on the number of

I know a lot of folk artistes who have performed worldwide. They live outside the country for months on end. But their family's living conditions have not become any better. They are not educated enough to understand how to manage themselves and their families.

PRATAP SINGH NIRWAN, FOUNDER AND BAND COACH

viewers and subscribers.

What is your vision of the band considering how music has been changing?

Pratap: There are a lot of instrumental and fusion bands in the market. But they're there for sometime and then, they disappear. But on a bigger stage, instrumental bands don't get enough exposure. There are differences in the earnings of a commercial artiste and a classical and folk artiste. These are the things, we are keen to understand and accordingly, we're trying to place ourselves in the market.

Arif: We also want to standardise Rajasthani folk music. We want to make its presence felt. Rajasthani music has always been of prominence. But, I don't think

it's as popular as Gujarati Garbha, for instance.

Do you think folk artistes get the kind of recognition they deserve?

Pratap: No, I don't. Their value is rather low, and when it comes to how their value could be worth more, nobody is really interested in that. This needs to be brought to the fore. I know a lot of folk artistes who have performed worldwide. They live outside the country for months on end. But their family's living conditions have not become any better. They are not educated enough to understand how to manage themselves and their families. They earn money and don't know where it disappears. We need to work towards making their lives better.

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A tribute to the Gurus

Gayathri Menon

The bond between a teacher and a student has been honoured and celebrated since time immemorial. Keeping this in mind, the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) is all set to begin the 30th Pt Durgalal Festival, which will provide a stage to many experienced, as well as upcoming artistes. The show in collaboration with Samved Society for Performing Arts, is slated for February 29, 6pm at the Tata Theatre, NCPA. The evening will host a grand performance of Kuchipudi by Sreelakshmy Govardhanan, Odissi by Bijayini Satpathy and Bharatanatyam by Vaibhav Arekar.

Talking about her association, Uma Dogra, founder and managing trustee, Samved Society for Performing Arts, says, "For me, it's a big 30. Sam Ved was born with the foundation of grief and loss. In 1990, I lost my guru, Pt Durga Lal ji, the doyen of Kathak. He was 42 when he suffered a stroke after a recital. I felt a deep sense of void. There was anger, there was disbelief, there was confusion, but there was also a clear perspective regarding what to do. In 1991, we hosted the first Pt Durga Lal festival and the mission was to ensure that my Guru's legacy is preserved. Also, we wanted to welcome stalwarts of performing arts to grace the festival. With its own share of difficulties and plus points, I am very proud to say that it has been successful for the past 29 years."

Expressing her pleasure for this collaboration, Swapnokalpa Dasgupta, programming head of dance, NCPA, says, "It is our honour to partner with senior Kathak exponent Umaji and her Samved. She has been consistently building audiences for Indian dance in the city through this festival for many years, and has been presenting works of exceptional local artistes. We are happy that we are part of her journey of promoting and effectively preserving our dance heritage through this festival."

Sharing her experience and her association with NCPA, Dogra says, "I am really happy that Sam Ved's 30 years — the 30th Pt Durgalal Festival, is

the penultimate event of NCPA's 50 years celebration. I am grateful to NCPA, our sponsors, and all our partners in this artistic endeavour," adding, "the best part about this festival is that I

am bringing the next generation of gurus and seasoned leading dancers of India, from different classical dance styles together on stage."

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Uma Dogra



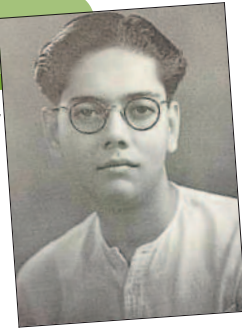
MORE INFO

What: 30th Pt Durgalal Festival
Where: Tata Theatre, NCPA, Nariman point
When: February 29, 6pm.

AROUND TOWN

ONE FOR THE LEGACY

What: This is a performative reading and discussion on the legacy of the Bose family
When: Tata Garden, NCPA, Nariman Point
Where: February 29, at 7.30pm.



MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

What: Shubh Saran, a New York-based composer and Sungazer, an international duo featuring Adam Neely and Shawn Crowder will perform a blend of jazz, rock and future fusion

Where: G5A Foundation for Contemporary Culture, Mahalaxmi (W)
When: March 2, at 9pm.



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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MULK & ARTICLE 15

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ANUBHAV SINHA HAS RENDERED HIS CAREER'S BEST

-THE TIMES OF INDIA

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL FILMS TO COME OUT THIS YEAR

-HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE FILM IS BRAVE AND LIFTS THE LID OFF REPRESSED FEMALE DREAMS

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THE FILM IS NOT ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; IT'S ABOUT ENTITLEMENT. THAPPAD IS ONE OF THE BEST FILMS I'VE SEEN RECENTLY. SO POWERFUL

-RAJEEV MASAND

GULSHAN KUMAR T-SERIES & BENARAS MEDIAWORKS PRESENT

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PRODUCED BY BHUSHAN SUDESH KUMAR KRISHAN KRISHNA KUMAR ANUBHAV SUSHILA SINHA

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