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Music sans barriers

Bringing in a wave of music without boundaries that tugs at the heartstrings, Mrigya - the world music band was in town recently. They talk about their music and philosophy behind the notes.



JAMMIN' ON: Sachin Gupta(lead guitar) and Indra Neel Hariharan (bass).

MELLIFLOUS MUSIC that has no boundaries is the USP of the band that stands for *Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*, uniting the whole world into a family with musical chords.

Sprung from the land of Parikrama, Silk Route, Euphoria and Indian Ocean, a.k.a New Delhi, Mrigya has gone global with their style of music, which is a synthesis of world music with a Hindustani base -- almost all band members have a Hindustani tutelage.

Violinist Sharat Chandra Srivastava comes from a family of classical music, so does Kadir Niazi who has 700 years of lineage in the Qawali tradition.

Gyan Singh on the tabla, Rajat Kakkar on the drums, Sachin Kapoor on the keyboard, Sachin Gupta on the guitar, Indra Neel Hariharan on the bass, vocalists Tara Baswani on the Western scores and Sukriti Sen on the Hindustani classical make the band complete.

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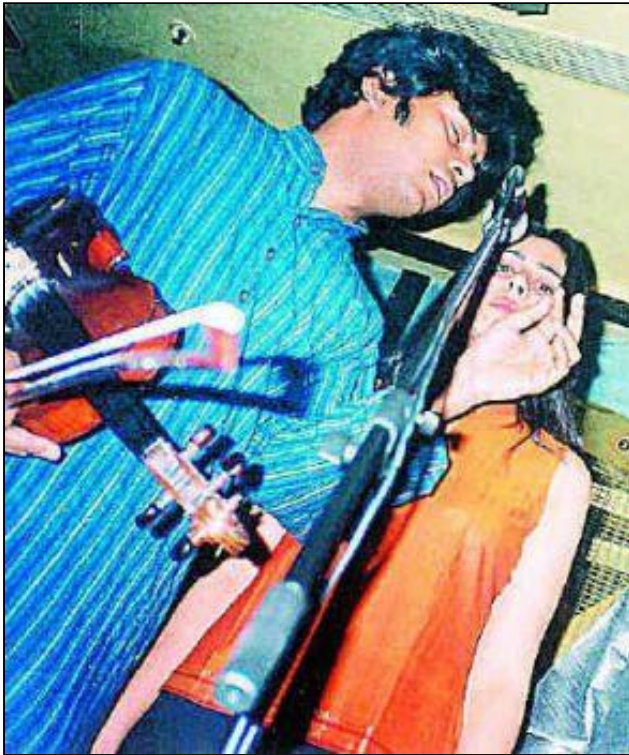
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SOULFUL RENDITION: Crooner Tara Baswani provides the Western vocals.

"It is very difficult to jam at the Hindustani tradition because it is based on *khayal* with which each of the artists is performing," says Indra Neel. And they present original compositions at the concerts as well as cover versions of other artists.

With a core funk element and jazz, rock, blues and other genres thrown in, the compositions derived from the *ragas* come as soul lifting and soothing.

"We borrow from the 200 year old Indian compositions than looking at Western themes for inspiration," says Sharat.

For instance *Rock the raga* is based on *raag yaman* while *Samay* talks about the fast paced life and the need to take it easy, with a leaning towards the Indian spiritual philosophy yet very contemporary fusing in the Western elements of thought and music.



PERCUSSION POWER: Gyan Singh lends rhythm at the tabla.

"Any music from techno to hip-hop can find place in our compositions," says Tara very much in the spirit of the name of the band, which stands for quest, of music from different parts of the global village that they in turn take across the world.

In fact their overseas gigs account for half of the 100 shows that they have done so far.

<167>The band has been conferred with the coveted Herald Angel Award, presented by the *Herald Newspaper* for the excellence in music, dance, drama and theatre apart from a Five Star rating at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, U.K. 2002. "It was a tough competition with music groups coming in with rare instruments from Africa to the popular street performers in Scotland. As for the audience, it had 80 per cent foreign spectators apart from the Indians abroad. And the response was amazing," says Sharat. It was a repeat success at the *Jazz Majlis 2002* at the Dubai Jazz Festival, jamming with American and European bands, the famed Jumerah beach forming the backdrop and a frenzied crowd in the front.

And again they get ready to rock the West as they will shortly embark on the UK nine-city tour..As a promise to their fans, they would be cutting an album that will be on for the shelves soon. Here's looking for some good music that cuts across barriers and tugs at the heartstrings.

SYEDA FARIDA

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