

INTERVIEW | RAHAT FATEH ALI KHAN

Tuning in with Rahat Fateh Ali Khan

The singer's latest Bollywood ballad 'Ishtehaar' in the film, *Welcome To New York* is a detour from how his voice is being utilised in trendy versions

MANISH GAEKWAD

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan has been singing in Bollywood since 2003, when actor-producer Pooja Bhatt introduced him to the Indian audience by including two tracks in performed by Khan in the soundtrack of Paap.

A veteran who has performed over a 100 Hindi film songs, last year his voice was used in a remix Mere Rashq-e-Qamar (Baadshaho) that became a sensation. The craze for remixes extends to re-packaging old qawwalis into new melodies, as can be heard in Sanu Ek Pal Chaen (Raid, 2018), also sung by him.

In an email interview with The Hindu, Khan discussed his latest song, and the hits and misses that have made an impact on his career in Bollywood.

How did your latest song, 'Ishtehaar' in the film *Welcome To New York*, come about?

■ Music director Shamir Tandon brought the song to me. The lyrics are different and the song is especially written according to the plot of the film and depicts the intensity of the situation. My co-singer Dhvani Bhanushali complements the track with her voice.

Last year you had a very big hit in India, 'Mere Rashq-e-Qamar' in the film *Baadshaho*. Do you remember the first time you sang the qawwali with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan?

■ All compositions of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are spellbinding. I was very young when I first sang it with Khansaab. Yes, he trained me on this song as well. I have sweet memories of those days with him.



Heartfelt music: 'Mann Ki Lagan' from Paap (2003) was the singer's foray into Bollywood. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Did music director Tanishk Bagchi ask you to sing it for *Baadshaho*, or did he remix it?

■ No, I did not [lend my voice to] the remixed version.

Looking back, you have had a steady career as a playback

singer in Hindi film music for 15 years. Can you recall how it started with the songs of Paap?

■ In the film Paap, the song 'Mann Ki Lagan' was my introduction into Bollywood. Pooja Bhatt heard the track and included this song in her film. The com-

position was done by Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

The track was initially recorded in Pakistan for an album that was stalled due to the sudden death of the producer. I am grateful to the producers, music directors, composers, the actors and

most importantly the audiences for accepting it in Bollywood.

Is there any difference you find in working in Bollywood and in Lollywood?

■ Not really, but it is easier to work in Bollywood than Lolly-

All compositions of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are spellbinding. I was very young when I first sang it with Khansaab.

RAHAT FATEH ALI KHAN
Singer

wood due to their professionalism. Bollywood has a global reach hence the promotion of Bollywood songs is more. There are also a great number of NRIs who consume Bollywood content. A few Pakistani songs I have sung are also very popular amongst them as well.

Which Bollywood song would you say has been your most memorable till date?

■ The song 'Dil Toh Baccha Hai Ji' from the film *Ishqiya* (2010). It is different and unique in every aspect. It is still a hot favourite in my concerts across the globe.

Is there any song of yours that you feel didn't get the popularity it deserved?

■ The song 'Aye Khuda' in *Rocky Handsome* (2015). It is a great song, the feeling, the range and the energy is just brilliant but it didn't get the recognition.

What are you working on next?

■ A qawwali album with Sufi poetry. We have dedicated this year to qawwali and are doing a world tour with qawwali performances.

Mercifully free of remixes

Welcome to New York's soundtrack has multiple composers churning mostly mediocre fare with just two exceptions



Shooting for the sky: The multi-composer soundtrack leaves listeners wanting more •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

VIPIN NAIR

What appears to be yet another run-of-the-mill brainless Bollywood comedy flick, *Welcome to New York* does not offer much promise going by its trailer – and given the multi-composer line-up, not on the musical front either. Nevertheless, it is the music of the film that has been making the news this week, after singer-turned-politician Babul Supriyo reignited the Pakistani artist ban debate by asking for Rahat Fateh Ali Khan's song from this movie to be re-recorded in somebody else's voice. Well personally, I would prefer to hear a bit less of Khan in films too, but that has nothing to do with his nationality (have always considered a ban on those grounds to be an exercise in silliness). My grouse stems more from the fact that his rendition style has grown highly tedious in recent times, especially with the kind of

songs he mostly gets in Hindi films. Despite the tedium though, Khan's 'Ishtehaar' is one of the better songs from this soundtrack. Composed by Shamir Tandon and written by Charanjeet Charan, the song renders the standard melancholic motions (the only notable aspect being the use of flute), delivered by Khan and Dhvani Bhanushali. Tandon's second composition is called 'Smiley Song', sung by Dhvani with the composer and Boman Irani and is made up largely of laughs in leading Bollywood actors' voices. Good of the makers to include a line in there that says "man oh man I love this song" – I found it excruciating.

Two more songs come from Sajid Wajid, and their first one titled 'Nain Phisal Gaye' is another hummable number. While this one too, lacks any freshness in its sound, the melody is catchy, Kausar Munir's lyrics worth a listen and singer Payal Dev is commen-

TOP RECOS: 'Nain Phisal Gaye', 'Ishtehaar'

dable. The other song called, 'Pant Mein Gun', is a pretty good indicator as to how the song is, lyrically from vocals for this one. The Meet Bros present the final track, 'Meher Hai Rab Di' rendered by Mika Singh and Khushboo Grewal is once again built on a Punjabi folk tune that's made multiple past appearances in Bollywood. The track becomes uninteresting pretty quickly for that reason. This is an unsurprisingly mediocre soundtrack. But hey, no remixes, so just for that the movie's makers have my gratitude.

A Jamaican cowboy in Mumbai

He may have been MIA since 2015, but Omi resurfaces to spread some good cheer in the city this weekend

DEBORAH CORNELIOUS

As the first cowboy over the hill – his words not ours – it's Omi's job to inform his Jamaican brethren whether uncharted terrains appear to be safe or otherwise. Before that inevitable head-scratching commences, the 31-year-old singer, born Omar Pasley, is referring to music in his chat with *The Hindu*. You see, usually a musical export from the Caribbean island brings with them their people's music: reggae, dancehall, dub. It's rare to hear bubblegum Americana pop from a Jamaican artiste. "It's a chance you take when you try to be different or try to introduce something new," says Pasley. "There's always that risk of a colossal failure or a major success. The musician blasted onto everyone's radar in 2015 with the single 'Cheerleader' and then released one album, *Me 4 U* in the same year. Since then, it's been radio silence from him ... that is until now. "I have been spending a lot of time with family, and also honing my craft," he explains.

Growing up in Jamaica, Pasley first started recording music when he was 16 in a friend's bedroom: "It was more like an underground [thing], wasn't anything professional. But it was still my voice being played back to me." It was impossible not to be influenced by the island's musical traditions which has been with folks since they're born. But the singer believes that people all over the world are singing about the same things. "The



Right notes: Omi's makes happy, frothy music. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

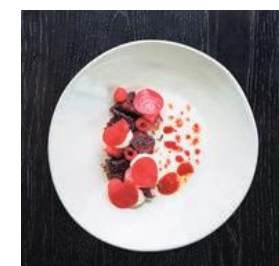
topics never really change if you notice," he points out, "We're not singing about anything that somebody else has not sung about." Instead, it's about individual articulation that counts, after all, even an off-key note though undesirable, has the power to resonate with people. "That's the goal to connect with people and relate to them," says the musician. "That's what I'm reaching for."

At first blush, his music might

seem frothy and feel-good, but it comes from place where Pasley wants to uplift spirits. He's currently working on his sophomore untitled album which he promises will reveal the progress he's made over the last three years. And yes, it also will focus on love and relationships in that same vibrant tropical tingle-inducing flavour.

Omi will perform this evening at Kitty Su, Andheri East. Visit bookmyshow.com for details.

HOT SPOTS



AUSTRALIAN CUISINE

Artisan

Chef Jed Gerrard from Perth will be serving Western Australia's delicacies such as Jerusalem artichoke, salt bush, set sheep's yogurt, carrot dressing; Salt baked pork, white onion, cherry, Davidson plum and mustard; white asparagus, celeriac, black garlic, olive oil poached hen's yolk, parmesan cream; and more. ₹7,500 all inclusive.

TIME: 8 p.m.

VENUE: Artisan, Bandra Kurla Complex
PHONE: 9820698883



STREET FOOD

The Bombay Bronx

The restaurant is putting a spin on classic Mumbai street food with dishes such as baked goat cheese, street kebabs, vada pao, dhokla pakoda, kheema pao, anda bhurji, kadi chawal bowl, and the Indianised version of Burmese khow suey.

VENUE: The Bombay Bronx, Breach Candy
PHONE: 7710044666
TIME: 8 p.m. onwards

4 EVENTS WORTH-YOUR-WHILE



LECTURE

The World Becomes Round

Dr Jenny Rose, professor of Zoroastrian Studies at Claremont Graduate University, will talk about cultural and commercial encounters between Parsis and Yankees in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. She will also touch on 11th early history of American relations with India and offer evidence of the professional relationships between the two sides. Entry is free.

TIME: 6 p.m. onwards

VENUE: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, Fort
PHONE: 22843893



MUSIC

The Diaspora House

Enjoy a night of jazz with original compositions from Udi Shlomo. The performance will bring together Jewish music from Eastern Europe, Spain and Arabia in new arrangements. Shlomo is joined by double bassist David Andersson, saxophonist Christian Cuadra and Vegard Lien Bjerkkan on the piano. Tickets are priced between ₹799 and ₹1,499.

TIME: 9 p.m. onwards

VENUE: The Quarter, Royal Opera House, Girgaum
PHONE: 8329110638



THEATRE

Sahi Jawab

Written and directed by Zubia Shaikh, Sahi Jawab tells the story of Sapna, a victim of domestic violence. When an encounter with an old man offers a solution to her problems. The protagonist reflects on her life until she finds an answer finally breaking free. Tickets are priced at ₹249.

TIME: 7 p.m. onwards

VENUE: The Cuckoo Club, Bandra West
PHONE: 9619962969



TALK AND FILM SCREENING

Sidi Goma meets Capoeira

Dr. Amy Catlin Jairazbhoy will talk about African-rooted traditions and dance culture, and the resultant musical instruments that were created. She will also focus on Capoeira; and instruments like the berimbau and malunga. This is followed by a screening of *The Sidi Malunga Project: Rejuvenating the African Musical Bow in India*. Entry is free.

TIME: 6 p.m. onwards

VENUE: Somaiya Centre for Lifelong Learning, Fort
PHONE: 7045932204