

music

Jazz guitarist Fred Hamilton and santoor exponent Pandit Tarun speak about their new album and much more

BY PRAMITA BOSE

CALCUTTA

A blend of guitar riffs and strains of the santoor blissfully ring in the ears when tuned in to. But what is even more exciting is that this melodic melange is seamlessly conjured up by two reputed music icons. World renowned jazz guitarist Fred Hamilton and noted santoor exponent Pandit Tarun Bhattacharya make a great team.

"I recorded a piece with Tarun last year and it included a double CD titled *Positive Music*. Around the concept of aromatherapy, the unique overture infused guitar licks with the harmonious notes of the santoor. And that was the USP of the album, adding a fragrance of freshness in it. Well, in the offing is another joint venture with the tentative title *Transcendence*. The santoor scale involved is not usual to the jazz musicians per se but chords on the guitar add to the *raagas* and take care of the ensuing euphonious symbiosis," Fred informs, talking about his long association with Pandit Bhattacharya.

"Our purpose is to boost soft subtle music, that's soothing to the ears. Music should essentially be easy listening and not jarring on the nerves. We intend to make it a comfortable pastime. Unlike the headbanging rockers 'n' rollers, Fred evokes sensitive and soulful music, which is a clear departure from his jazz-driven disposition,"



Jazz guitarist Fred Hamilton with santoor exponent Pandit Tarun

'Indian music rhythms are CONTAGIOUS'

enlightens Bhattacharya.

The CD under production will feature five tracks out of which, four have already gone on records. "Keeping the santoor tradition alive, I've incorporated a clutch of conventional pieces entwined with soul-stirring *raagas*. Starting off with *raag* Bhairavi, the symphonic sojourn streams ahead with Puriadhyaneshri — a sentimental strain, then meanders along with *raag* Bibhas and finds its outlet in

the smooth-sailing charms of *raag* Hansadhvani, a melody of ecstasy, very cheerful in tone and flows with facile élan to brighten up one's mood. Through music, we aim to beckon peace in times of distress and pray for common good that's been eluding us on earth. The merging of the east with west is a global phenomenon to set up one world into one direction and create a unified voice of amity," he says.

Despite his jazz background, Hamilton swears by the fathomless profundity of Indian classical music.

Professing his love for the richness of *raagas* and *raaga*-based compositions, this seasoned music whiz reveals, "I'm influenced by Indian music since my younger days. And my initial tryst with Hindustani classical music dates back to the late 60s when I played with Pandit Ravi Shankar and the

late tabla maestro Ustad Allah Rakha. It was in 1967 at the Northern Colorado in USA. In fact, Shankarji's association with the Beatles and his influence on George Harrison fascinates me. Plus, I had a commendable collection of Indian classical music albums. Incidentally, many of the westerners — both predecessors and the contemporary musicians alike were highly kicked about the flavour that indigenous Indian music exuded. As a result, music played an instrumental role in erecting bridges to fill in the fissures on the world-wide culturescape. Indian music rhythms are contagious and appeal to the senses of foreign music enthusiasts."

For upcoming aspirants, he gives a word of advice, "When creativity is plugged, jazz can drum up a drastically different dimension other than unleashing a shoddy, peppy dance number."

A harmonious fusion of Indian and Western notes

BY HEMANT ABHISHEK

NEW DELHI

When laying hands on the *Slumdog Millionaire* soundtrack, one is overawed by the sense of euphoria that accompanies it, and also a chance to unravel the hype surrounding the film's award-winning soundtrack. And also the speculations doing the rounds that its most celebrated track *Jai Ho* was reportedly rejected by Subhash Ghai, he thought it didn't quite fit his film *Yuvraj's* mood, so, Rahman handed it over to Danny Boyle and the rest as they say, is history.

The album begins in Laxmikant-Pyarelal's signature style, with an out-and-out *desi* track, *Ringa Ringa*. Alka Yagnik and Ila Arun have done full justice to the song that reminiscences their storm-raiser, *Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai*. Alike the *Khalnayak* teaser, *Ringa Ringa* depicts Bollywood at its raunchiest.

It is followed by *Jai Ho*, the flagbearer of *Slumdog Millionaire*, that deserves everything for its amazing mix of melody and rhythm. Gulzar's lyrics help in exemplifying all that *Slumdog* stands for — the love story, the triumph of human spirit and life. Sukhwinder Singh's effortless rendition triggers one's imagination.

Next from Rahman's repertoire is *O Saya*, a highly energetic background theme, with heavy Afro-chants and slick use of the train's chugging, that reminds you of Mumbai's hustle-bustle. M.I.A.'s peppy rap lends perfect cover to the song that will definitely make it to the top of the charts. Years after giving soulful instrumental pieces like *Bombay Theme* and *Spirit Of Rangeela*, Rahman conducts a similar track, *Riots*. One can easily connect *Riots* to the dark and murky underworld. Following suit is *Mausam & Escape*, a fantabulous fusion of Indian and Western classical, sitar and orchestrated symphony.

