

MEMBERS OF CACTUS; BENGALI ROCK/FOLK/POP MUSIC

SIDDHARTHA SANKAR RAY

Dr. Siddhartha Sankar Ray has been composing music and singing since 1985 while maintaining a career in medicine, which he ultimately gave up in 2003 for the sake of his love for music. He is one of the original founder-members of Cactus who worked tirelessly in the 1990s to create and establish a market for Bengali rock, which was non-existent at the time. He is today considered to be one of the pioneers of the Bengali rock industry.

Siddhartha has recorded three commercial albums with Cactus, one of which is a Bengali film named 'Nil Nirjone' in which he has also acted with star Raima Sen as co-artist. One of the songs from this film, 'Telephone' is a baul-folk number which has received similar appreciation as 'Bondhu re,' another hit baul-folk number composed by Siddhartha and performed by Cactus. Another love ballad from this film, "Mon," also composed by Siddhartha, is considered to be one of the greatest hits of Bengali cinema of recent times. This song was recently rendered into Hindi and performed as "Dil" for a Hindi serial "Love Story" currently running on Sony-Sab TV and directed by eminent Bollywood director Anurag Basu. This song has become a superhit in India and has extended Cactus' popularity beyond Bengal.

Siddhartha has worked with eminent music directors like Mr. Debojyoti Misra for both corporate and commercial films and has hosted at least one hundred quiz shows on several Indian television channels including the national television station "Doordarshan". He has appeared as a guest celebrity on numerous reality shows on television. Most recently, he is serving as a judge on 39 consecutive episodes of "Mirakkal," a very popular stand-up comedy show currently on air.

Siddhartha has directed 2 music videos for Cactus, one of which (Pokkhiraaj, "The Pegasus") is the first Indian video to speak out for gay rights and has gained significant appreciation all over the country and overseas. It was selected for screening at the LGBT Film Festival Frameline 30, in San Francisco USA in May 2006.

Siddhartha and the other members of Cactus participated along with many of India's leading singers, actors and celebrities in the video "Tsunami," created in memory of the Tsunami victims of December 2006. This song was directed by eminent singer Usha Uthup, and was released as part of the album "We Believe in Now" (Saregama) by the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in July 2006. Siddhartha was also invited as part of an elite group of performers of this video for a private meeting with the Indian Prime Minister at his residence in New Delhi, India.

Siddhartha, individually and along with the other members of Cactus has judged & mentored many upcoming young Bangla bands of West Bengal during multiple reality shows on TV channels- some of them include Band-E-Mataram, KBL Rock League, and more recently Airtel Bandwagon, which featured the eminent Bollywood music director A.R. Rehman on the finals.

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SAYAK BANDYOPADHYAY

Sayak Bandyopadhyay has learned Indian classical vocal music from the acclaimed singers Pandit Ajoy Chakroborty and Mr. Kumar Mukherjee. He is presently following the lessons of Mr. Jim Jillet. He has also been mentored by the Father of Bengali rock, the late Mr. Gautam Chattopadhyay of Mohiner Ghoraguli fame.

Sayak has released CD albums with the group Lakkhichara, has performed for several television series title music recordings with Cactus, and has performed on radio, television and live shows throughout India with Cactus. He was also part of the group which toured the United States in September-October 2006 and India in October 2007 for two very successful series of shows. He is also currently part of a music project called 'Five Little Indians' which attempts to fuse contemporary alternative music with Hindustani Classical and folk music. This project has recently performed at the inaugural Eastwind Festival, 2008 in New Delhi.

Sayak works to fuse the rich archive of folk music of Bengal and the rest of India, western and Indian classical music with rock. He has introduced classical “alaaps” in a few of Cactus’s softer rock numbers, creating a remarkable fusion. He is currently working on a classical-folk-rock fusion album with contemporary music and arrangements with Cactus.

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SANDIP ROY

Sandip Roy has been playing bass guitar since 1990 under the training of Mr. Bikramjit Chatterjee. Sandip has played guitar with the renowned Bengali singer Mr. Anjan Dutt for a many years, assisting in composing music for his television shows and films and performed with him throughout Bengal.

Sandip has worked on a folk project called “Kolkata” and has two released albums from this project. He was part of one of the first all-original bands in India, 'Wise' which has performed at various prestigious events across the country. Along with Allan and Sayak of Cactus, Sandip is also currently part of a music project called 'Five Little Indians' which attempts to fuse contemporary alternative music with Hindustani Classical and folk music. This project has performed at the inaugural Eastwind Festival, 2008 in New Delhi.

Sandip joined Cactus in 2004, contributing bass guitar and vocals and released the CD ‘Rajar Raja’. He performs throughout India frequently. He was also part of the group which toured the United States in September-October 2006 and India in October 2007 for two very successful series of shows.

Sandip's wish is to take 'Bondhu re' (based on a folk composition of the "baul" musicians of West Bengal) and similar numbers to the rest of the world, as they are already very popular throughout Bengal. The successful response among listeners has initiated in him the idea of coming up with a self composed folk-rock album sooner or later.

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SUDIPTO BANERJEE

Sudipto Banerjee started his career as a keyboardist and joined 'Cactus' in 2004. He has performed with Cactus on the album 'Rajar Raja' and helped create superhit compositions like 'Buddha'. Along with the rest of the band, Sudipto tries to fuse melodies and inspirations from Indian folk instruments into rock, which is a very challenging approach to creating contemporary music.

After joining Cactus Sudipto has been part of the judging panel on major showcase events like 'KBL band showcase' and 'Airtel Bandwagon' which has also featured Mr. A.R. Rahman on the judging panel. He has also been featured with Cactus regularly on various regional TV channels. Along with the other members of Cactus and many of India's leading singers, actors and celebrities, Sudipto has performed in the video "Tsunami," created in memory of the Tsunami victims of December 2006, directed by eminent singer Usha Uthup, and released by the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in July 2006.

Sudipto was also part of the group which toured the United States in September-October 2006 for a very successful series of shows.

Sudipto is also involved in creating and performing jingles for radio and television. He is currently working on a classical-folk-rock fusion album with contemporary music and arrangements with Cactus.

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ALLAN AO

Allan Ao began his career in music under the tutelage of Mr. Vikramjit Banerjee, learning the 6-string guitar, as well as music composition and arrangements.

He has been part of one of the first all-original bands in India, 'Wise' which has performed at various prestigious events across the country. His contemporary folk composition 'Ab Tere Bin' with Wise was featured on Doordarshan National's 'Time Out' and Star Plus' Amul India Show in 1999.

Allan was a member of one of the most popular groups in Bengal, 'Fossils' in 2001. He performed in and co-produced Fossils' debut album which continues to be a best seller. After joining 'Cactus' in 2007 as guitar player, he has been part of the judging panel on major showcase events like 'KBL band showcase' and 'Airtel Bandwagon' which has also featured Mr. A.R. Rahman on the judging panel. He has also been featured with Cactus regularly on various regional TV channels.

He is also currently part of a music project called 'Five Little Indians' which attempts to fuse contemporary alternative music with Hindustani Classical and folk music. This project has performed at the inaugural Eastwind Festival, 2008 in New Delhi.

Allan composed the background score for Parijat Productions, Hyderabad's animated pilot series 'Boris, Desmond and Hubert' and 'Bob and the Machine' which was showcased at MIPCOM Junior, Cannes, France, 2003.

Allan is a former employee of Genpact (formerly GE Capital) where the last position he held was of IT Operations Manager.

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SIBAJI PAUL

Sibaji Paul is a drummer-percussionist and the manager of Cactus. His strong creative inspiration and performance charisma has made him a popular figure in Bengal's modern song movement.

He has taken lessons from Mr Dave Weckle, Mr Omar Hakim, Mr Chuk Kerrigan and Mr Craig Lauritsen and has chosen music as a profession since 1993.

Sibaji is a regular artist for HMV record label and has recorded several albums as an accompanist for popular solo artists such as Mr. Anjan Dutt and Mr. Srikanta Acharya. He has also toured India and Bangladesh with Mr. Anjan Dutt.

Sibaji has performed with Cactus since its professional debut on 6th March 1993. He has recorded and released three albums one of which was the movie 'Nil Nirjane' where he had the honor of costarring with the acclaimed actor Raima Sen.

He has frequently composed and performed ad jingles, songs for telefilms on Etv and music for corporate films. He often performs concerts with the 'bauls', one of the most prominent existing forms of folk music of Bengal.

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