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Good music can come from any genre, believes Pete Lockett

- Kenneth Saldanha



Pete started studying Indian music at 24

Amy Winehouse, Robert Plant, Peter Gabriel, The Verve, Primal Scream, Bjork, Jeff Beck, the London Philharmonic Orchestra. These are just some of the many big names that multi-percussionist Pete Lockett has worked with.

He has also worked on the soundtracks on five Bond films. Despite all the 'western' experience, one of Pete Lockett's main passions is Indian music, which he has studied for the past 20 years.

We caught up with him in Mumbai to talk about *Pete Lockett's Journey with the master percussionists of India*, his latest release on the Music Today label, the position of music in Indian culture, and making classical music more accessible.

When did you get to Mumbai?

Two days ago.

You aren't here to play a show, are you?

No, I'm not. I'm actually here to star in a Bandish video. I worked with them on a new album and now we're filming the first video.

What do you think of their music?

It's very good. They make good use of Indian grooves in their rock music.

Have you had any formal training in Indian music?

Yes, of course; a lot of it, in fact. I first studied Indian music in London for about six years when I was 24. Since then, I've gone deeper into it and studied under many reputed ustads.

Had you visited India before learning Indian music?

No. I visited India for the first time nearly 10 years ago. But I've been very regular since.

Yes, you've been releasing very frequently in the past couple of years. You're probably working with Indian musicians all the time. When do you say, 'Okay, I've got an idea for an album.' How do you decide?

It's different with each album. Like, with this one, I'll tell you how it all happened. I played at a memorial concert for Vikku Vinayakram's father. And one of the gurus present there asked me whether I'd be interested in recording an album with them. That's how it began. So we got into a studio and just started playing. We had no material, but we recorded everything. Then I took it back to England to edit, and now it's ready.

You still spend a lot of time in England, don't you?

Yes, but I'm traveling constantly. I just played in Argentina and Brazil, and now I'm here.

Yes, one can tell from the number of people you've collaborated with that you travel a lot.

Laughs.

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		01	02	03	04	05
06	07	08	09	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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But, seeing how much work you put into Indian music, it seems as if your Hollywood work is work, and you come to India to play?

That's only half true. In truth, all of my work is play. I enjoy all of it. Sure, I prefer the live setting to the studio, which has its own rewards, but it's always fun. I'm lucky that way. I'm constantly doing what I love. If you ask me to list what I enjoy doing, my work would be on top of the list.

You've been spending a lot of time here, nonetheless. I know you won't accept that you've fully explored Indian music, but, any other countries in mind?

Well, yes. I'm always looking for new experiences. I think Cuban and African music are the two kinds I'd like to study further. The reason why I've picked these three regions is that music is rooted in their cultures. Indian music is such a big part of its culture that it is unimaginable without it. It's very important.

True, but at least in the metros, a lot of the youth is moving away from Indian music. Do you think this will be a setback for the culture?

Well, actually, there's no problem with western musical forms, but yes, the country stands to lose a lot if indigenous instruments become unfashionable. The problem really is that music - through reality music shows on TV - is being used as the fast route to fame. When, in reality, India has a tradition of doing things the right way - learning from a guru for many years, though not everyone can find the time for this.

Is there a solution?

Well, there's two ways. One is, the ustads and pandits decide to promote music among the youth, maybe by making it more accessible. However, what they're probably thinking is, 'How do I condense something I've studied for 20 years into three minutes?' Like the video I'm going to be doing today has to be under three-odd minutes. We've been told that the music channels will just cut off the rest. The companies feel that people can't concentrate longer than that. So, the second option is to increase people's attention spans by making longer videos. How else will they learn?

« September »

2009

How do you make your music more accessible?

I see to it that my music can be appreciated by everyone. Music, is of course, for everyone. A while ago, I played a concert in Croatia. It was for about 50 music students, but there were people from a nearby village as well. So we played for the crowd and the response was excellent. I try to stick to this in my albums as well - it's for the intellectual as well as the layman.

I'm not being pretentious or anything. I mean, even I listen to pop music (Lockett lists Sex Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks* as one of his favourite albums). I listen to Linkin' Park and Beethoven in the same day. I think all kinds of music can co-exist - and good music can come from any genre.

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		01	02	03	04	05
06	07	08	09	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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