

AUDIO CASSETTE INDUSTRY

Hitting the Right Notes

Audio tape producers are riding the crest of the Indian film industry's music boom and composers are becoming stars in their own right

By ANUPAMA CHANDRA with KAVITHA SHETTY

THERE is a new hero in the Indian film industry: music. Composers and music producers are singing all the way to the bank with country-wide street sales in audio cassettes touching about Rs 500 crore annually. In the music industry today, the stakes are high, the players are many and there is a huge amount of money to be made. Approximately 150 Hindi music titles are released every year, with all-India sales estimated at 10 lakh cassettes a day—inclusive of piracy. In the eastern region alone *Choli ke Peeche* sold over seven lakh cassettes.

Three years ago there were only five companies primarily involved in film music. Today, there are over 30 players in the field. Once monopolised by hmv (turnover Rs 53.84 crore), the profit potential has seen a host of new entrants into the industry including Lara, Red Cat, Crescendo and Time Audio as well as more established ones such as Tips, Venus, T-series and Weston Audio.

The figures tell the story. Market estimates say that Tips invested approximately Rs 1.25 crore, including publicity, in the *Khudiyak* soundtrack, and sold over 50 lakh tapes, making the company a profit of Rs 3 crore. *Aashiqui* sold around one crore tapes, making a Rs 1-crore profit for T-series. Venus was established mainly due to the sales of the music of *Saajan*, their profit being Rs 2 crore.

One result of the increased earnings for music companies is that they are also passed on to producers. In the '60s the producers were giving music rights to hmv and that too only

on royalty. When Polydor, which later became Music India, and cas came in, the going rate was Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000. It walked Gulshan Kumar of T-series in 1985 and everything changed. Kumar had offered Rs 5 lakh for the music of *Mard*. Today, apparently, *Prem Granth*, being made under the R.K. banner, has been bought by hmv for an estimated Rs 70 lakh. *Barsaat* has been bought for Rs 1 crore. Feroz Khan has sold the audio, overseas video and theatrical rights of his forthcoming *Agnikund* to Venus for Rs 2.4 crore.

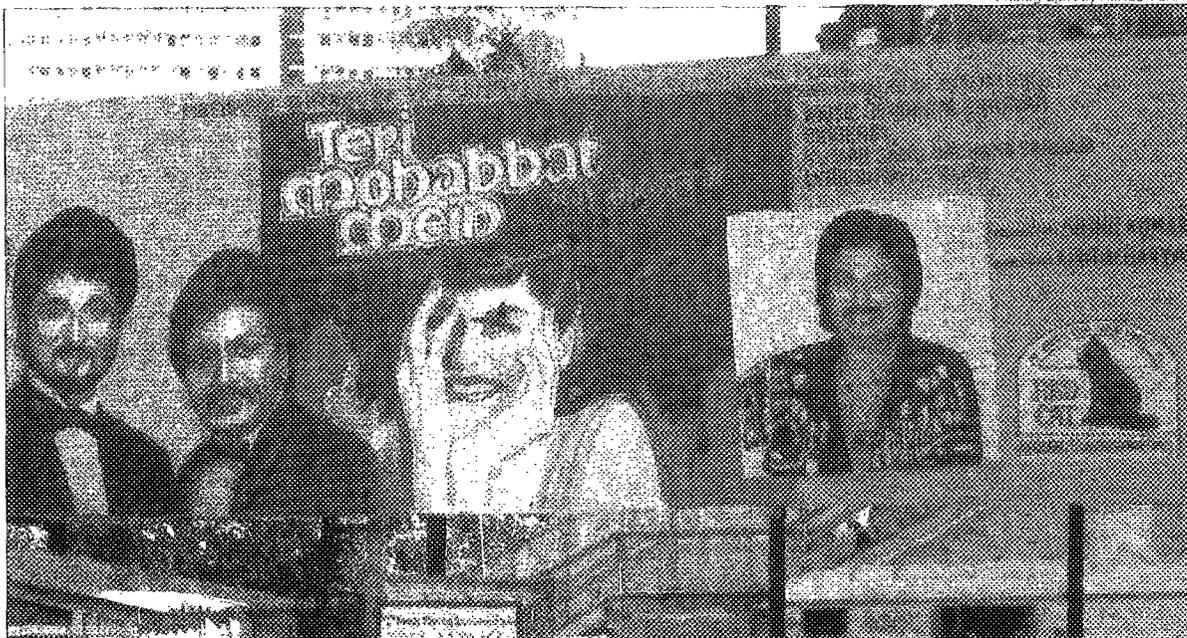
The music boom has also sent prices spiralling upwards in the south. The audio rights for *Major Chandrakant* starring N.T. Rama Rao and Mohan Babu were sold for Rs 21 lakh. Chiranjeevi's new film, *Mechanic Alludu* apparently fetched Rs 30 lakh for the producers. Says Appa Rao, head of LEO, floated in 1986 to cater exclusively to the weeds of the Telugu film industry: "A-grade producers, be it in Hindi or Telugu films, are demanding more money for outright audio rights."

Some companies even buy audio rights before a single track has been recorded. Music broker Kumar Mangad, for instance, has just brokered two Rs 45-lakh plus deals for films which won't even begin to roll until next year. "We are signing movies the day they are announced," says hmv's V.K. Dubey.

With the music industry proving to be such a money-spinner, the leading musical stars are busy. Nadeem-Shravan, despite "cutting down drastically", have 24 films

Nadeem-Shravan: on the fast track to cash

Photographs by ASNEGH SHAH



on hand, and have signed 40 more. Composers Anand-Milind, who were once working on 100 films simultaneously, now at any given time have 20 completed projects, 20 projects already signed, and are in the middle of composing for 40 films. They record an average of 15 songs a month. Lyricist Sameer, who writes almost all the songs that Nadeem-Shravan and Anand-Milind compose, is currently working on a hundred films. And composers Laxmikant-Pyarelal have 35 films on hand.

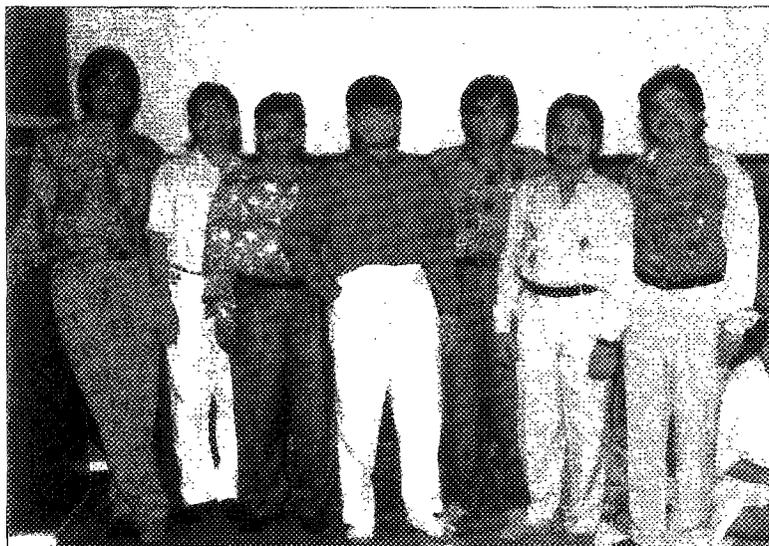
SMALL wonder then that the busier composers have music stocks. Anand-Milind keep about 100 *mukhdas* (choruses) in stock. "There are six to seven song situations in Hindi movies. When a producer narrates a subject to us, we give him a minimum of two *mukhdas* per situation. Usually they take five from the stock and we write one or two for a specific situation." Nadeem says: "We have the largest stock of music in the industry. We have over 10,000 tunes."

Given the current situation, this makes perfect sense. "Ninety-nine point nine per cent of today's songs are happy love duets," says Laxmikant. Former film editor Raju Naik, who has 200 tapes with stock music and has done background music for about 500 films, says the practice really took off in the early '70s when a strike by musicians forced directors to go in for stock. Movies like *Chor Machaye Shor* were hits and using stock music became a norm. Producers prefer this because comparatively it's cheaper. This costs Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000 as against Rs 4 lakh to Rs 5 lakh for an original soundtrack.

Besides technology, what has further changed the colour of the industry is the massive promotion campaigns mounted by the music companies. Radio, print and television publicity begins when a film's music is released, usually at least three months prior to the movie's release. "Promotion costs are sometimes Rs 20 lakh to Rs 30 lakh a movie," says Dubey.

Satellite especially has become a prime medium of publicity. Zee tv has two new music-based programmes, *Gane Anjane* and *Philips Top 10*, as well as two trailer shows, *Ek Nazar* and *Jhalak*, while the Metro Channel, of course, has the block-buster *Superhit Muqabla*. The producer and music company holding a film's audio rights pay Zee to air the songs and trailer. *Gane Anjane* costs Rs 7,500 per song, *Ek Nazar* and *Jhalak* cost Rs 15,000 per trailer each time; *Philips Top 10* has worked out an agreement with the Indian Music Companies Association that Zee is unwilling to disclose; and *Superhit Muqabla* has an agreement with the Film Makers Combine with each song costing Rs 15,000 each time.

Radio spending has also increased. Bihari Mittal of D.S. Mittal & Sons, an advertising agency which compiles *Chitralok*, a highly-rated programme of new film songs, says radio campaigns of A-class films can average Rs 15 lakh. *Maine Pyar Kiya* had Rs 10 lakh of radio publicity, *Anari* had



A still from *Baazigar*; and (above) the Venus brothers: spinning out hits

a Rs 7-lakh publicity campaign, and *Khalnayak's* publicity is touching Rs 8 lakh. A decade ago producers spent only Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 3 lakh on radio publicity.

Music companies are also coming up with other methods to boost their sales. Venus puts spots for forthcoming releases on released audio tapes. So does Tips. For Venus' *Baazigar*, distributor Shringar Films placed a tv set outside Bombay's Dreamland cinema, continuously playing three trailers of the film. "Earlier you could only see trailers inside the hall, here people on the street can see it. It's worked out very well," says Shravan Shroff of Shringar.

Perhaps the slickest and most innovative marketing strategy belongs to Ghanshyam Hemdev of Pyramid Audio in Madras. Convinced that consumer products should be marketed with a Unique Selling Strategy (uss), Hemdev decided to push the tape of *Gentleman*, the Tamil industry's latest talking point. They set targets for dealers and those who met them were given free tickets to Singapore; newspapers were swamped with advertisements; and free tapes were distributed to tea shops and at marriage halls.

The result: at the first show of the movie, the audience were humming the tunes as if they'd heard them for ages, and *Gentleman*, became the highest selling tape in recent times, with a sale of three lakh copies.

HMV for one is extremely confident of the future. "Music is a very inexpensive form of entertainment," says Dubey, "and the market is expanding every year." HMV will increase its manufacturing capacity this January, from 2.5 million

cassettes a month to 4 million.

Today composers are stars in their own right. Nadeem-Shravan have their faces plastered all over the place. Ilaiyaraja was the first music director in Tamil music history to have his face splashed on film posters and hoardings. In addition they are making considerable money, with top music composers said to be taking between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 15 lakh per film and top lyricists

MUSICIANS

The Music Makers

NADEEM-SHRAVAN: Strugglers for almost 12 years before *Aashiqui*, the duo are now composer-superstars. They claim to have generated Rs 150 crore worth of sales. After *Aashiqui*, they've had superhits in *Phool aur Kaante*, *Deewana*, *Sadak*, and *Saajan*. This year, their success stories have been *Rang* and *Hum Hain Raahi Pyar Ke*. But since neither sales match the earlier ones they are planning to release NS, designer music, under their own label, and since everyone is copying them, to change their film music style. "The orchestration and outlook will change," says Nadeem. They have been accused of lifting Pakistani tunes but they deny it.

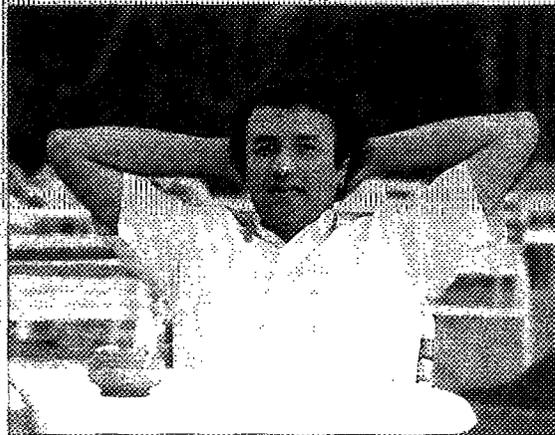
Not one for imitations, Nadeem claims, "We are a national heritage, we are priceless." **ANAND-MILIND:** Sons of music director Chitra-gupt, Anand-Milind did six films before hitting the jackpot with *Qayamat se Qayamat Tak* in 1988. They've had major hits with *Dil*, *Beta*, *Bol Radha Bol* and this year's *Anaari*. They have been accused of, and have admitted to, lifting Ilaiyaraja's tunes. *Dhak Dhak* was a carbon copy. "That was due to pressure," says Milind. "We are big fans of Ilaiyaraja and have been inspired but we will never take the entire tune." Their latest contribution to Hindi film music is the one word-based song: *Tu Tu Tu Tara, Tuna Tuna, Tak Tak Tumna, Dhak Dhak*, and now *Aa E. Oo Oo*, in David Dhawan's *Raja Babu*.

ANU MALIK: With *Baazigar*, *Sir* and *Phir Teri*



Nadeem claims, "We are a national heritage, we are priceless."

LAXMIKANT-PYARELAL: Thirty-two years in the business and they are still going strong. Among their hits: *Ek Do Teen*, then *Jumma*



Sanu (above) and Malik: record breakers

KUMAR SANU: His first film was *Andaz* in 1988 which was never released. But the real break came with the record-breaking music in *Aashiqui*. He has sung over 6,000 songs in 14 languages, gets 40 fan letters a day and is the highest paid male playback singer. He shares equal space on Nadeem-Shravan hoardings. Says he: "I've tried very hard to bring a softness into my music, the kind that brings peace to people."

Kahani Yaad Aayee, Malik is undoubtedly the composer of the year. After two hits like *Jaal* and *Sohni Mahiwal*, it was downhill for him with *Mard*, *Toofan* and *Ganga, Jamuna Saraswati*. Three years ago, he hit the comeback trail, encouraged mostly by Mahesh Bhatt. He has recently signed five big films including Feroz Khan's *Aagnikund* and the ones being made by Shekhar Kapur and Mansoor Khan. Says he: "I'm a natural, tunes just come to me."

ALKA YAGNIK: Trained under Kalyanji-Anandji, she first sang for Rajesh Roshan in *Hamari Bahu Alka*. She also did the *Mere Aangne Mein* number in *Lauwaris* but things really took off after the *Ek Do Teen* number in *Tezaab*. Since then, she's hit the jackpot with movies such as *Saajan*, *Phool aur Kaante*, *Deewana* and now the biggest chart-buster of all times, *Choli ke peechhe*.

between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000 per song.

There remains, of course, an inherent danger, for this is a risky business where everyone will not hit the jackpot. Yet, even though out of the 150 Hindi titles released every year, a mere 5-10 are hits and only 15-20 recover, few are deterred by the odds because if a film is a hit, then the sky is the limit. *Maine Pyar Kiya's* music, for instance, has sold over one crore tapes so far. As HMV's Dubey says: "One super-

hit film can compensate for 10 flops."

And so they keep marching on, to the studio, and of course, to the bank. Who cares if the songs are similar, the music aimless, the lyrics tasteless. After all, there are a million plus people who are willing to buy anything they offer. These music hacks know only too well that if their music is top of the charts, so are they.

—With M.A. MANNAN and bureau reports

A&R MANAGERS

The Music Tasters

TWO months ago Zahir Ahmed, manager, Artiste and Repertoire (A&R), of Weston Components Limited was given a simple brief. He was asked to prepare about half a dozen albums of Rajasthani folk music. For the next few weeks Ahmed—who worked with HMV for 27 years before he joined the Rs 16-crore music company in 1987—toured towns and villages of the state, meeting and auditioning folk singers. By the time he finished his trip, he had selected about a dozen singers and knew how to categorise the music. He then recorded 60 folk songs in Jaipur, which will be released as five separate albums in December.

It's not Weston alone just about every music company in the country has an A&R manager. An A&R manager is to the music industry what a wine taster is to the wine business. His job: to identify the latest trends in music, select vocalists and musicians and finally package them into a saleable commodity. In a competitive world where the music stakes are worth crores of rupees, the selection of the right kind of music is directly linked to the bottomline. As a result, the A&R work—done informally until a few years ago—has become crucial to a company.

The manager for Promotion and Artiste Management of Crescendo Music and Marketing, Greg Dias, who recently released an album by the Bangalore-based band Pulse, says: "Nowadays concepts sell, not music alone." Dias should know. His ability to identify popular trends was developed in the years when he worked with CBS and Magnasound before joining Crescendo.

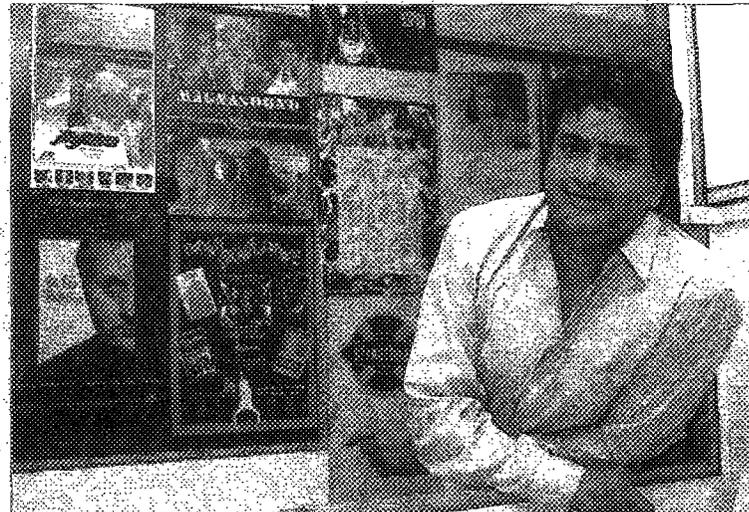
To create and sell concepts, it becomes essential to know your notes. There are those like Weston's Ahmed who has been trained as a

vocalist in the Rampur Gharana style of classical Indian music. But according to Deepak Shourie, general manager, Music Today, an academic understanding of music is not essential. "A music taster combines an ear for the music with a feel for the market," he says. Music Today is a good example of concept selling. Its entire range of classical music is thematically categorised

album of Hindi funky street music, as well as Sanjay Raina of Punjabi rap.

New trends in the music industry have altered the job profile of the A&R manager. Most music companies now co-produce Hindi movies and own the music rights. To make the most of their investments—which is at least Rs 1 crore per movie—the companies use the movie tracks for other purposes. Weston Components, for example, has recorded religious songs on the track of some of its movies like *Jaan Tere Naam*. Here, the A&R manager's job is to find a lyric writer and fit the new words

FAWZAN HUSAIN



Magnasound's Madhav Das: selecting saleable music

and branded.

Most A&R managers, therefore, have little to show for music degrees. Take Madhav Das, executive director, A&R, Magnasound. Like Crescendo's Dias, he has no formal training in music. His credentials are that he spent 17 years in the Indian Navy and is the brother-in-law of Magnasound's Managing Director Shashi Gopal. When he was launching the company Gopal told Das: "Get into music—you've bought more records than me." Das agreed. Today he is developing new talent like Jai Menon, who will release an

over the existing tune.

The video age has brought in another job. The music taster today not only has to find the right vocal chord, but has to ensure that they are presented to the public in an attractive package. Magnasound's Das, for instance, expects newcomers to sing and act before a camera. Good playback singing alone is not enough. Singers are also required to do live performances. For the music tasters no effort is enough to hit the right notes which will make the cash registers ring.

—FRANJAL SHARMA and ARUNKATHYAR