

INTERVIEW

The Legend of Punjabi Music

GURDAAS MANN

By Preeti Thandi

The Ace of Punjabi music, 'Manna da Mann' - the pride of the Manns, Gurdaas Mann simply describes himself as a Guru ka daas, a humble follower of the Guru. The singer, actor, songwriter and the truly versatile star hit the popularity charts with his all time favourite song 'Dil da Mamla' from his superhit movie 'Mamla Gadbada Hai'.

The image of the 'Dafli-wala' Gurdaas Mann and the beats from his Dafli became the throbs of every Indian household. The legend of Punjabi music has taken music to new waves and lengths. He still is a class unto himself. His latest album 'Pyaar kar le' is set to trendy tunes but people still love his old melodies.

Gurdaas Mann has acted in well known Punjabi films like Long Da Lishkara, Ucha Dar Babe Nanak Da, Ki Ban Duniya Da, Shaheed-E-Mohabbat, Shaheed Udham Singh. His new production in Bollywood is titled, Zindagi Khoobsurat Hai starring Tabu, Divya Dutt Ashish Vidyarthi and Gurdaas himself.

In Toronto, the stage is all set for Gurdaas Mann's live show on Saturday, August 18th at the Brampton Sports Centre. The city is ablaze with excitement and raving about the record audience turnout for his recent show in Vancouver. The singer himself is composed, relaxed and reflective as he speaks with Preeti Thandi in an exclusive interview for the *Weekly Voice*:

GURDAAS MANN LIVE:

He rambles off Mirza Ghalib's poetry with as much alacrity as his very realistic self-composed lyrics. Gurdaas Mann is one of the few artists who sing and write their

own songs. His music has richness and an original flavour, which adds to the charm. Fully recuperated from his recent road accident in Chandigarh, Gurdaas Mann feels that the accident has given him a new perspective.

On recovery...

The accident has given me a new perspective to what life is. I have been thinking about life and have been touched by the response of people. It is heartfelt to get the love of people, to be the receiver of their duas and ardaas.

About the praise...

God has scattered around so many vivid colors in this world. I just try to gather a few of the colorful strokes on my canvas. Other than that I know nothing. The big thing is that people accept me and shower me with love.

How would you describe yourself and your inspiration...

Je Gurdaas nu tu maar jaana kehndi, mar jaane di kaudi kimat paindi... Every mother lovingly calls her son, mar jaana, it is a very common expression. The mother is the first school that the child goes to. The words not only form the basis for the little life lessons but also inspire. This line is actually part of my new song and it captures the nostalgia of the village streets.

How did you start writing songs?

Every young man in his youth is either a 'shayar' (a poet), 'an inqalabi (a revolutionary) or a communist. Behind every notebook there are a few lines scribbled here and there - the popular one like 'Roshni chand se hoti hai sitaron se

nahin...' I guess I did the same, I had a little of everything. In our youthful Mehfil, I used to sing my poetry and people used to praise and encourage me. That praise and encouragement (the 'wah wah') has made me a kalakar - the artist I am today.

Your favourite writers and poets...

Shiv Kumar Batalwi, Amrita Pritam, the Sufi poets and Baba Waris Shah. I have read almost all the love legends and kissas -the Heer of Waris cannot be created again.

About acting in films like Shaheed Udham Singh...

Before anything else I asked for forgiveness from the martyrs - the 'Shaheeds' who sacrificed so much for the country. It is critical that no mistakes are made in the way the roles are played and portrayed. It was an honor to play the role of Shaheed Bhagat Singh. A lot of research went into it.

How is it like acting with Tabu in your first Hindi film - Zindagi Khoobsurat Hai?

It is a privilege to work with an actress like Tabu. She has been very nice to work with right from day one. She has a lot of focus on the character she plays. In the film, my role is about a man from the state of Himachal Pradesh who arrives in Bombay and the struggle he goes through, in the process he meets Tabu. The film also focuses on kids with abnormalities.

About the new trends and the pop culture...

'Waqt di nazaqat' - It is important to change with the trends in time otherwise



time goes ahead and you are left behind. It is all time's play.

How do you manage performing solo concerts with so much vigour?

Like they say -gold needs to endure extreme degree of heat, so it is with the body. I have a sports background and the training makes it a little easier. Live performances require a lot of physical agility, stamina and flexibility and after all the audience doesn't just want to see you sing, they also want the dance.

What would you encourage your children to do?

First and foremost I would like them to be good citizens, the rest follows.

Do you have any aspirations for the future?

"Hazon khwaishen aisi ki har khwaish pe dum nikle, bahut nikle mere arman, lekin phir bhi kam nikale..." I am yet to discover more.

What is music to Gurdaas Mann...

For me it is beyond description, it cannot be expressed in a few words...will probably need volumes.

Gurdaas Mann will surely say it all on Saturday, August 18th. The singer will perform some of his latest numbers from his newly released album, 'Pyaar kar le' and the evergreen classics in his very original style to keep the feet tapping.

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