

# The Mozart of Madras



Ellam Pugazhum iraiyanukku. He always starts his speeches with this phrase. The name A.R.Rahman needs no introduction. The man who redefined contemporary Indian music and is the pride of the entire Indian nation and an idol for millions all over the world needs no preamble. But if you happen to be one, still among the few unfortunate souls, who is stranger to him and his heavenly music, then it's now or never to know this genius whom we Tamilians have given the name "isai puyal" (music tornado). I always tell my friends that if the God of Music had a human form he would undoubtedly be in the form of AR Rahman.

He is the man who helped South Indian cinema go national in a way that was considered impossible even a decade ago. He bridged the gap between Tamil (and

even Telugu on occasion) and Hindi with that most universal of all languages: music. Predictably Rahman would later say "I hate the discrimination between south, north, Tamil, Hindi. If I represent India that is good enough for me. But we should cross all these barriers." Rahman did more: he made, to use film industry jargon, music a territory in its own right. Thus, the soundtrack of each movie was sold as if it were a separate entity from the film itself. Even though Mani Ratnam latest "Kadal" did not work well at the box-office this did not prevent "Moongil Thottam" or "Nenjukkule" to become big hits.

AR Rahman got his breakthrough in the super Tamil hit film Roja directed by the same Mani Ratnam which Rahman consider as his "guru", in 1992. 'Roja' not only won the heart of millions with its music, it also won every conceivable award in music that year. Rahman also got the Rajat Kamal for best music director at the National Film Awards, the first time ever by a debutant. He was flooded with offers to do more films. He gradually cut down on his work in ads and subsequently moved into film music full time. And there was no looking back for A. R. Rahman. With 'Roja', A. R. Rahman time had finally arrived.

His music and song compositions for Director Bharatbala's Mariyaan were super hits. And his latest music composition for Superstar Rajnikanth much awaited 'Kochaidayaan' is expected to be even better. Each and every AR Rahman's album is addictive. And until he composes new songs you keep on listening to his old ones time and again and it always feel like the first time.

AR Rahman is the first Indian to win an Oscar for the movie Slum dog Millionaire and though he acknowledges his accomplishment, he pointed out that winning the Oscar was a collective Indian victory. And after winning the Oscars, he was asked by the press, "what's left for you to achieve?" He replied in a polite way, "Well, I have not achieved anything. I have not ended poverty level. I have not stopped wars happening. For me these are achievements. And in my opinion, I am just a small musician who has got an award that is it!"

Amidst all this heady success, Rahman remains unchanged. He is as humble, modest, shy, low profile, unassuming, self-effacing, devout and down-to-earth as he was at the beginning of his career. A man of few words he believes in letting his work do all the talking. He prefers to save his energies for his work instead of fighting out numerous controversies. The man has given immense pleasure to millions of music

lovers world-wide with his compositions, music that brings a cheer to one's face and helps in forgetting one's troubles. It is probably these very divine qualities that made him the great man he is and the same will hopefully help him touch greater heights and touch newer glories and keep millions enchanted with his blissful music for years to come. I wish he continues to make our morning more beautiful with his music, turn our sadness into happiness, make us smile; make us dream with that unique voice of his.

To AR Rahman Sir on behalf of all the millions of fans he has around the world, we salute you for being one of the greatest musician and human being ever and for making India and Asia proud for being the first motherland's son to win an Oscar!

**KARUPUDAYYAN Kavinien**