

Rhythm Rage: Indian Music Wiz Is Jazz Ambassador Of The US



Nishiraj Baruah

AMAZING WHAT tins and tables can do if you have restless fingers. Sunny Jain, 28, started off with these household items when he was five, till his dad bought him a drum set. There's been no looking back since.

Now a Jazz Ambassador of the United States (designated by the Department of State), he hardly gets a break performing in jazz festivals the world over. Hailing from Rochester, New York, Jain, who was in town to perform at Jazz Yatra, got drawn into the genre because of "the rhythmic complexities" of jazz drumming. "I took it as a challenge," says this recipient of the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award.

He earned a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance from Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University (New Jersey), as well as an M.A. in Music Business from New York University. "The degree in Music Business helps me to market myself. I now know where to place myself

All That Jazz

- Sunny Jain Collective comprises four members, including Karachi-born Rez Abbasi who plays the unique hybrid guitar-sitar
- The Collective's debut album, *As Is*, contains his version of *Raghupati raghava* and *Aap jaisa koi*
- Jain visits the city often, to visit relatives in Ashok Vihar
- Jain, single, would like to marry an American-born Indian girl

in the music industry," he says. His Indian roots, of course, helps. "I grew up listening to *bhajans* and Hindustani classical," says Jain, who later incorporated these sounds in his album.

Jazz reflects society and Jain feels it's only logical that the sound changes with time. So, the Classical jazzman shouldn't look down at Neo Jazz. "At the same time, one must learn Classical styles for its educational value," says the man for whom Indian jazz means Louis Banks. ■



Designated by the Dept. of State as Jazz Ambassador of the US, Sunny Jain (left) was in town to perform at Jazz Yatra with his band Sunny Jain Collective, comprising (below, from left) Stephen Welsh, Gary Wang and Rez Abbasi

PHOTOS: MANOJ VERMA