

Shaan rocks at Hong Kong concert

With whistles and whoops, the singer's adoring fans proved that they'd been sufficiently warmed up by their star

Venkatesan Vembu. Hong Kong

Barely hours before his live show in Hong Kong, singing sensation Shaan's cheeriness of spirit is momentarily clouded over by a discomfiting realisation. The erstwhile *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa* star who epitomises the *Voice of India* has just been told that the crowds at the Hong Kong auditorium won't be permitted to dance in the aisles or otherwise resort to excessively boisterous behaviour.

"A live show without spontaneous dancing?" muses Shaan. "Oh well, let's see how we can get the crowd warmed up..."

As it turned out, Shaan didn't have to do very much. Even the overly officious usherettes who were looking to enforce decorum in the hall couldn't entirely tame the wild spirits of a sellout crowd, largely made up of immigrants from the Indian sub-continent. The business-suited bankers in the premier seats (the event, organised by Jade Group, was sponsored by BNP Paribas for its clients) may have confined themselves to genteel shows of appreciation, but up in the gallery, a high-decibel party was on. With whistles and whoops and a whirl of flailing limbs, Shaan's adoring fans proved that they'd been more than sufficiently warmed up by their star.

"It's what I love about live shows," Shaan told *DNA* during a laid-back interaction. "I immensely love the energy, and I feed off that. And even though there are many competing demands on my time these days, I don't want to give up on these shows."

It isn't Shaan's first time in Hong Kong: he was here 13 years ago, with sister Sagarika for another live show, and he expresses wonderment — given the large sub-continental diaspora in the region — that it's taken him this long to come again. His musical journey since 2000, which he rates as his "breakthrough year", has taken him to many unlikely places with large Indian-origin populations: "Malawi, Nigeria, the Caribbean, even Reunion Island, a French region off Madagascar, with a large number of people of Indian-origin... They may not under-

'TV talent shows aren't finding new voices'

Venkatesan Vembu. Hong Kong

A reflective Shaan, who hosts *Voice of India* on Star Plus, tells *DNA* of the limitations of TV talent shows, and why 'chequebook charity' isn't good enough.

On being a TV show host: It's the most difficult of all the things I do. For one, my Hindi is a little faulty. I may want to say something, but it comes out as something else. And then you have to cut and reshoot: all this in front of an audience. Also, in TV shows, someone else is singing and I'm screaming like a mad man: "Taaliyan bajaiye... Aap ka swagat hai" and all that. At that moment it's exciting, but my voice goes for a toss for two-three days after.

On the new talent that's coming out: I've been hosting shows for 5-1/2 years now, and we always boast of the talent that comes out, but the success ratio hasn't been that hot: we're still talking of Sunidhi, who happened about 10 years ago. I wonder if it's all heading the right way. There are a lot of new artists, but somehow, the youngsters coming from talent shows haven't been able to make a mark. And with every passing year, the hope of being able to introduce new voices through the show is dying out. The shows are, of course, hugely popular, but in terms of being able to come in as premier artists — be it pop or film — that's not happening. That's what worries me. If it goes on like that, I'll quit (laughs).

On his career plans: I'm not much of a planner: for now, I am ready for whatever doors open. But in the long term, I'm telling myself I'll get socially involved. I want to make a contribution at some level. There are many issues demanding attention in India, and we don't have much time, so we can't just live in our castles and selfishly live our lives. It's easy to blame the system or government or corruption, but you have to realise you're in a

stand the lyrics, but they know the song."

Then again, Shaan has taken his music into the international orbit, working alongside Blue, Samira Said and Michael Learns to Rock, among others. Has this helped him reach out to audiences from other cultures? "Sometimes, I



“There are a lot of new artists, but somehow, the youngsters coming from talent shows haven't been able to make a mark. And with every passing year, the hope of being able to introduce new voices through the show is dying out.”

—Shaan

lucky zone. And it's not enough to just give money to charity. Whatever cause you take up, you have to do it yourself, physically offer yourself. When more of us start going down to the grassroots level, we'll understand that doing things in isolation isn't enough.

see a lot of White Anglo-Saxons at my concerts," he recalls, smiling mischievously. "For a while they look really confused and out of place, but the good thing is they seem charged, and as soon as they see a few people shake a leg, they too hit the dance floor!"

Kader Khan honoured in Houston

Indo-Asian News Service. New York

Well-known Bollywood actor and scriptwriter Kader Khan and former chief justice of Delhi high court Rajinder Sachar were given the honorary citizenship of the city of Houston by the city mayor at an annual function organised by an Indian social organisation.

Mayor Bill White honoured the two Indians at the 17th annual convention of the American Federation of Muslims of Indian origin (AFMI), a North America-based organisation which focuses on socio-economic and educational development of Muslims and other underprivileged people in India.

Justice Sachar was also awarded the prestigious 'Pride of India Award' by the AFMI for his contribution in the field of law and the leadership quality exhibited as the chairman of the committee on socio-economic status of Muslims in India.

Kader Khan who has written scripts for over 200 Hindi films and acted in 350 films was also honoured by the AFMI, for his outstanding contribution to films and commitment to the cause of education of underprivileged people in India.

