

MUSIC

SONA MOHAPATRA WAS AN EXPLOSION OF MUSIC AND WORDS AT THE THIRD EDITION OF EMAMI CULTURAL FIESTA, IN ASSOCIATION WITH t2



PAGE 13

SUPER SONA

It is 6.30pm and the house lights are about to dim. The Thursday crowd is shuffling steadily into Science City auditorium. A few minutes later, strains of *Tere ishq nachaya* fill the packed house. Sona Mohapatra has arrived and slowly she cranks up the volume to 11 and keeps it there for the next two-and-a-half hours. "I have a long process of meditation and *riyaaz* before a concert. It's a preparation I deeply cherish as I perform and sing non-stop for close to four hours at times!" she told t2 after the concert.

The first show of the third edition of Emami Cultural Fiesta was not an ordinary one because Sona is no ordinary singer. She throws in a story here, a fearless statement there. The 39-year-old ensures that every gig is different.

Here are some of the things t2 learnt about supergal Sona during and moments after the February 11 gig.

Good versus Hit

When we were growing up, Bollywood music was about good music, today it's about *hit* music, which has more to do with marketing than any really musical pedigree or conviction. As a result of this, it's harder than ever before to get quality music out for the audiences.

All choices or decisions are... testosterone-driven

I feel the entire economic scenario is down to negotiation. If someone values you, they'll pay you what you think you're worth, male or female. Sexism is rampant in the industry, but that's an extension of our society and that is the case across the globe, including Hollywood. One can't change without the other, but being the front runners in gender equality would only reflect well on us.

You might be surprised to know that hardly any solo female artiste with or without a band gets to headline college campus festivals and more so in our esteemed IIM and IIT campuses. All the choices and decisions are subconsciously or otherwise testosterone-driven. Unless we as a society and media take note of such matters, we cannot expect our inherent gender biases to change.



ON-STAGE FASHION KILLA!

It's a deconstructed desi look, much like my music. I like mixing things up! It was an ode to Ma Saraswati and I also took forward my project of *#CelebrateIndianWeaves*. The red dhoti was a Dhakai weave by designer Vaishali Shadangule and so was the hand-crafted neck-piece and belt. I wore it with a white-collared shirt and jewellery by Eina Ahluwalia, conch-shaped earrings and a *hathphool* with rings, the traditional *chandan* and red artwork on my forehead.

The second look was a dress and dramatic foil cape by my favourite designer Kallol Datta. His work represents the modern artistry and aesthetics of Calcutta but is truly global in character and at the same time provides a drama to the stage that is unparalleled. It's not everyone's cup of tea and that is what I like most about Kallol's creations — individuality and singular voice.

Everyone should come and be a part of this festival. We hope to continue with this in the coming years — **R.S. Goenka**, joint chairman of the Emami Group



We are happy to get Sona Mohapatra, Tanusree Shankar and Papon to perform for the Cultural Fiesta. We try to select artistes from varied fields. I want the crowd to enjoy and continue supporting us — **Aditya V. Agarwal**, director of Emami Group



Through Emami Cultural Fiesta we promote art and culture. The best part is that we get different artistes every year. I am personally really looking forward to hear Papon — **Manish Goenka**, director of Emami Group



I look forward to Emami Cultural Fiesta every year. We give free passes, which surprises many people. This reflects the passion of our founder — **Priti A. Sureka**, director, Emami Limited



Rewind to Gauhar Jaan

I was reading Vikram's (Sampath) book (*My Name is Gauhar Jaan!*) in between recording the song. She (**Gauhar Jaan**) was among the only women in society at that point who had her own money and was truly independent. She was also a powerful and individualistic artiste. We've come a long way from those times, but much more needs to be achieved.



Asked to pursue Tina Turner school of songs

But my persistence won! I really like the sound of my singing voice, so I continued learning music seriously. My mother was always a supporter and committed to my cause of singing. Then I started winning music competitions in Hyderabad which gave me the confidence that I was on the right track. My musical hero as a teenager was **Shubha Mudgal** as she had a big, strong, classical voice and had made a mark in the mainstream. I came to Mumbai, worked as a marketing manager for five years while I kept playing my demo to music directors, that's how I got here.



Count on them to outshine the boys



I like all of them. Deepika (Padukone), Anushka (Sharma) and Kangana (Ranaut) have made some really bold movie choices. I also have respect for the way Priyanka (Chopra) has shaped her career. She's opened the floodgates for Indian actresses on the world stage. Richa Chadda is another fantastic actress. Sonam (Kapoor) sets the fashion standards. Alia Bhatt has a strong teenybopper following.... Yes, I believe that things are changing, and all these women are set to make 2016 a turning point for the industry. They won't be second to their male counterparts for sure, in fact I count on them to outshine the boys with their focus and drive.

STAR GUEST



Rituparna Sengupta arrived soon after the concert started and she stayed put, clinging on to every note. "Emami is like family to me. I never miss any of their functions. And Sonu is a wonderful singer. She bowled us over with *Dama dam mast qalandar*. She is brilliant and has great stage presence," she said.

FRIEND ZONE



Kallol Datta and **Eina Ahluwalia** were in the audience for their friend. "I am really excited as this is the first time I will listen to *Sona live*," said Eina. "This is my third gig of hers!" said Kallol. "She has talent, knowledge, authenticity, socio-political standpoint and a powerful voice," was Eina's verdict after the concert.

THE PLAYLIST

- ♪ Tere ishq nachaya
- ♪ Piya re piya re
- ♪ Aaja ve
- ♪ Rangabati
- ♪ Shundori komala
- ♪ Piya se naina
- ♪ O ri chiraiya
- ♪ Rupaiya
- ♪ Jugni
- ♪ *RD Burman tribute:* Chaand mera dil, Bolo bolo kuch toh bolo, Meri soni meri tamanna, Aaja piya tohe pyar doon, Puchho na yaar kya hua, Ab jo mile hai to
- ♪ Jiya lage na
- ♪ Aaj jaane ki zid na karo
- ♪ Abhi na jao chhod kar
- ♪ Abhi nahin aana sajna
- ♪ Naina
- ♪ Bedardi raja
- ♪ *Folk medley:* Kava kava, Genda phool, Taar bijli sey patley hamare piya, Resham ka rumal
- ♪ Ambarsariya
- ♪ Bolo na kya hua
- ♪ *Dama dam mast qalandar*

FAN SPEAK

I love her voice and the Sufi touch she gives to her songs. I became her fan when she started performing on *MTV Coke Studio*. *Piya se naina* is my favourite track — **Geetika Khetawat**, a businesswoman



It was a powerful performance. We loved *Ambarsariya* from *Fukrey* and also when everyone started dancing to *Dama dam mast qalandar* — **Pallavi Bajoria** (right), 26-year-old New Alipore resident, who came with her sister **Sanchita**



Bolo na really touched my heart. The lyrics of this song are amazing... relationships are so important. — **Sandeep Shah**, with daughter **Yukta Shah**, a Class IX student of DPS Megacity. Her fave track is *Jiya lage na*.



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