

Nishi Rajan: American Pop meets desi grooves

PAULOMI PATEL

Toronto

SHE is a lawyer by profession, a web-designer, by hobby and a kickboxing enthusiast. Needless to say, when somebody with such a variety of interests makes music, her compositions are sure to have interesting amalgamations.

"I have written some 250 songs to date. My music is a blend of American pop, alternative Rock, Bluegrass and Indian Rhythm," says singer-lyricist Nishi Rajan, who has not undergone any formal training in music. "I admire many different artists. I don't write music traditionally. Whenever I have something in my mind, I put it in words and work out the composition with my guitarist and pianist."

Ask her where she finds her inspiration and she says, "Christina Aguilera is one of my biggest idols. I also draw inspiration from Dido, Cheryl Crow and Lorena McKennitt." Other artists and bands that fill up her CD collection include Alternative Rock and Pop artists Nickelback, Sting and Creed and Bluegrass' Alison Krauss.

"All my music is written in English, but it has a distinct Indian vibe to it which comes naturally due to my Indian roots," says the New Delhi born Rajan, whose parents are originally from the state of Kerala in southern India. Rajan came to New York at the age of five where she has lived since. "I love Bollywood music, I



have grown up listening to a lot of it." And her favourite Hindi music comes from the universally popular, super-hit movies *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*.

Rajan likes to describe her style of music as Indo-pop with an American edge. She performs regularly in New York where her audience is a mix of dance lovers and rock and pop enthusiasts. "In general, it is pure pop music and anybody who likes to dance is sure to like my songs. I have played at, among other places, the Alphabet Lounge in New York and am scheduled to perform in Los Angeles next year," she says.

Rajan, who also plays the violin, has made music since she was a child. She wrote her first song when she was nine. "It was a song about Jesus and I had written it for the local church," she says. "I started learning to play the violin when I was eight years old. My parents have always supported my artistic aspirations. I now plan to start piano lessons soon." Having grown up with music, she says her songs and music have evolved over time. "When I first started writing, my songs were made up of fun lyrics. Over time they have become more meaningful. My music has better form and better quality and the lyrics are of better choice."

She describes herself and her music as caring, fun loving and introspective and says she will soon be performing in Canada.

Charest unveils Mahatma statue: India's gift to Quebec

RENU MEHTA

Quebec City

PREMIER of Quebec, Jean Charest on November 2 unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in the city. The event was attended by Indian High Commissioner Shyamala B. Cowsik, two Cabinet Ministers of the Quebec Government, the Mayor, the Chairman of the Capital Region, other local dignitaries.

A gift from the Government of India to the people of Quebec, the bust has been designed by noted Indian sculptor Gautam Pal. It is situated bang opposite the Parliament building, a location personally approved by the Premier. The bust was sent to the Indian High Commission of India by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations that was then forwarded to the Government of Quebec.

Speaking on the occasion, the High Commissioner highlighted Gandhiji's importance not just for India, but for the rest of the world.

Premier Charest, who has always attached a great deal of importance to promoting his province's relationship with India, called Mahatma Gandhi as an apostle of non-violence and a staunch promoter of democracy. He also reiterated his government's desire to host



Premier Charest with Cowsik and members of the community

India's Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in Quebec City when he visits Canada in 2007.

The unveiling of the bust was accompanied by an exhibition of paintings of Gandhi by Montreal-based artist Suraj Sadan, whose paintings have been selected both by the Indian Government for the Gandhi Centennial commemorative stamp in 1969 and by UNESCO for the cover of their special issue for the same centennial. This exhibition was inaugurated by Monique Gagnon-Tremblay, Quebec Minister for International Relations, and attended by a number of local dignitaries.

This exhibition, sponsored by the Gandhi Memorial Trust, is also due to travel to India in January 2007 and will be inaugurated on the anniversary of the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 2007.

