

TRULY BLURRING BOUNDARIES

Kailash Kher and Ustad Shafqat Amanat Ali rocked the stage in Singapore in a first of its kind concert.

By MALVIKA NATRAJ



On February 2nd, an eclectic mix of Indian and Pakistani music enthusiasts eagerly gathered together at the newly opened state-of-the-art theatre in Buena Vista's Vista Exchange Green, to witness what could only be called a foot-stomping, hand-clapping *jugalbandhi* of two internationally celebrated maestros - Shafqat Amanat Ali and Kailash Kher.

Anhad, meaning 'without boundaries', was a musical collaboration of artistes aimed at celebrating the richness and diversity of South Asian culture.

Ali, a classical Pakistani singer/writer/composer better known as the Rockstar Ustad, is the son of the legendary Pakistani singer Ustad Amanat Ali Khan, making him part of the nine-generation old Patiala Gharana. Popularly known as the lead vocalist in the Pakistani band Fuzon, Ali carved a name for himself with *Mitvaa* from Karan Johar's *Kabhi Alvida Na Kehna*, and *Yeh Hausla* from the movie *Dor*.

Renowned for his vocal versatility, his voice can raise the listener to peaks of ecstasy or plunge them into the depths of pain in a matter of moments. That night, as fans waited for this charismatic man to engage them, he did not disappoint. The audience interaction, rare at South-Asian concerts, was an unexpectedly refreshing twist to his performance. Ali swept fans away with his rendering of *Aaj Jaane Ki Zid Na Karo*,

walking amongst them and drawing on the participation of individuals within the crowd, who were dazzled equally by the Rockstar Ustad, as well as by their own few moments in the sun.

Also firing up the stage that evening was smash-hit singer Kailash Kher, a virtual powerhouse of energy. He leapt about the stage, while the audience couldn't hold themselves back from dancing in the aisles and shouting their appreciation for this Sufi-Bollywood legend. Kher's powerful voice - likened to that of late Pakistani maestro Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan - carries traditional folk sensibilities, while his lyrics are strongly influenced by the mysticism of Sufi saints. Having performed over 800 concerts globally, he is no stranger to the stage and has been awarded several times for his contribution to Bollywood music.

His band, Kailasa, formed together with guitarist brother duo, Naresh and Pares Kamath, skilfully combines classical and folk with more contemporary tunes. At Anhad, Kher's songs *Teri Deewani* and *Tauba Tauba* were delivered to screaming, whistling fans while the ever-popular *Allah Tero Nam* and *Duma Dum Mast Qalandar*, performed together with Ali, was an apt finale creating frenzy amongst the crowd. The auditorium reverberated with the energy of the singers and fans, bringing the concert toward an epic climax.

The show attracted over 1800 people including former President of Singapore, HE S R Nathan and other special guests like the Indian High Commissioner HE Dr T C A Raghavan, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh HE Mahbub Uz Zaman, as well as former Member of Parliament Zainul Abidin.

As the first Indian-Bollywood concert to be held at The Star theatre, this show has set the bar high for any such shows that will follow. Going forward, Anhad aspires to be an enduring concept in Singapore's live music scene that continues to maintain a rich diversity of cross-cultural music and attracts the best talent from all over the globe. This event was brought to Singapore by DML Live and Arte Compass. □