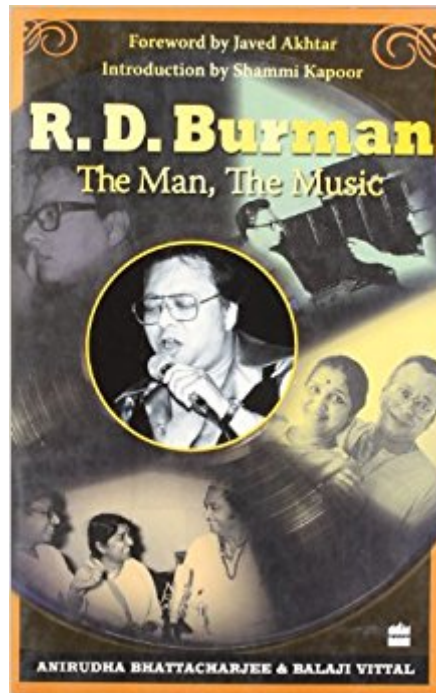




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R. D. Burman: The Man The Music



Synopsis

To a nation fed on classical music, the advent of Rahul Dev Burman with his repertoire of Western beats was a godsend. RD revolutionized Hindi film music in the 1970s, and with his emphasis on rhythm and beats, this Pied Piper of Hindi film music had young India swinging to his tunes. At the same time, this genius proved his many detractors who criticized him for corrupting popular taste wrong by composing some of the most influential raga-based songs in Hindi cinema and showing an immense comfort with all kinds of music, including Indian folk. RD: The Man, The Music looks at the phenomenon called R.D. Burman and how he changed the way Indians perceived Hindi film music. Through anecdotes and trivia that went into the making of Pancham s music the many innovations he introduced, like mixed rhythm patterns, piquant chords and sound mixing and through interactions with the musicians who were part of RD s team, the authors create a fascinating portrait of a man who, through his music, continues to thrive, even fifteen years after his death.

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Customer Reviews

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Metropolis and Young World. Balaji lives in Delhi.

This book is essential reading for anyone with an interest in Hindi (India's 'Bollywood') film music. For fans of the subject - music director Rahul Dev Burman - authors Balaji Vittal and Anirudha Bhattacharjee deliver the equivalent of a huge gift in a shiny wrapper on Christmas morning. (Full disclosure: I have been cited in the book for a brief commentary on one of his songs) Listeners of Hindi film music need no introduction to 'RDB'. In the decade of the 1970s, he brought to the genre what Michael Jordan delivered to basketball in the 1980s - genius extraordinaire, consummate artist, breathtaking innovation, the ability to deliver from any point on the court, a razzle-dazzle never seen before or since, a master of his game. And iconoclastic - with the advent of his musical style began the sunset of many music directors who were themselves titans of their age. RDB passed away in 1994, but his long contribution to music - first as assistant to his father (himself a legend in the field) and then under his own baton from 1961, has transcended several generations. In an all-too-brief lifespan of 55 years, he composed music for nearly 400 films (released and unreleased). At an average of five per film, that would equal about 2,000 songs, not including the background music of the film, which was also his responsibility. Given that this was achieved in the cut-throat, hyper-competitive world of the Mumbai film industry, there are no parallels to be found in the world of American film music composers. Rahul Dev Burman promises to thrill with his music for far into the future - as evidenced by continual reissues of his music in audio/video formats, many music directors of Hindi films in his wake acknowledging him as their stylistic mentor, honorific music festivals, an award-winning biopic, scores of his songs on YouTube, numerous Internet fan clubs (the most eminent of which is managed from the United States), millions of fans across the globe (including a few of the most sophisticated audiophile collectors of his music also in the U.S.), and finally, print media. Thousands of newspaper articles have been written about him, as also an excellent filmography by another author. 'R.D. Burman, The Man, The Music' is, to my knowledge, the first English-language biographical treatment of the subject in book form. It can be read at several levels. For the uninitiated but curious, the book provides a fascinating sketch of the man, tracing a journey of a child brought up in a home literally filled with music... to the young adult already steeped in Indian classical genre... the gradual exposure to Western music... acquiring the talent of playing myriad instruments himself.. apprentice to his father... then breaking out into his own.. the rise to dizzying levels of popularity and critical acclaim... then the later years of disappointing results at the box-office in which his music suffered undeserved ignominy, and finally his lonely passing in virtual self-imposed exile... but not before delivering his

swan song, in a Hindi film titled, '1942 - A Love Story', regarded as the finest musical score of those years. At this level, the book reads as if a Greek drama. At the second level, the book should have a huge appeal to the general listener of RDB's music. It is an exotic treasure trove of anecdotes and vignettes of scores of his films and songs. For those readers who grew up contemporaneous to these films, it is a delightful walk down nostalgia lane, a wealth of rich memories revisited, page after delightful page. And at the third level, the authors exhibit their profound knowledge of the technical measure of RDB's music - its subtle nuances, the arrangement of his orchestration, information on specific instruments and their interplay in a given recording, as well as a biographical sketches of individual musicians on the orchestra, some of them luminaries in their own light. Also on display here is the authors' knowledge of wide swaths of Western pop/rock and instrumental themes, which are cited for songs where RDB sometimes found a source for improvisation, a subject itself hotly debated within his fan clubs! Though the seamless, symbiotic pulling together of all three levels, the book provides a fascinating look back at the life and times of the music director, and his impact on the current and future of 'Bollywood' music. The book is supplemented by a general index, as well as an index of the songs referenced. It would also have been useful to find a chronological index of the music director's films, a listing of the many awards he received, and maybe key statistical information about his singers and lyricists. (The authors may have included it, only to see it edited out by the publisher). As said of Lombardi: "A certain magic still lingers in the very name" of Rahul Dev Burman. The authors have done an admirable of preserving some of this magic through the pages of their book.

This is a very important book for Indian Cinema. Although it is fairly common to find several biographies/autobiographies/movies on famous western music groups, there is a surprising dearth of similar material for Indian music personalities. The story of Indian music icon R.D. Burman is quite an interesting one. Pancham's struggle to emerge from his legendary father's shadow in the 60s, followed by his meteoric rise in the 70s, and then his speedy downfall in 80s would just have been filmy enough, but Pancham's story has more to tell with the last punch of music he delivered before his death, the sweet smell of success he could never witness. The authors couldn't have told this story better. Hats off to authors for meticulously researching every aspect of his music. They take us through a journey of Pancham's life using his songs. It is simply amazing to read what goes behind the creation of a song, more so of a Pancham song. For many of the songs the authors describe in great detail what was going on in Pancham's mind for a particular song, who was he talking to, what was he listening to, how did a certain piece make it to the song, which raaga(s),

which chord progressions, who played which instrument and how did they feel about it, and of course the amazing experiments his team did. If you are a music student yourself, or have deep interest in music, you will find these truly fascinating. If you are not, you will still find a lot in this book as it details the relationship or brotherhood shared between the producers, directors, actors, lyricists, singers and music directors. Last but not the least, you will learn important career management lessons from Pancham's story :) The only weak spot I can point out is that in a few places it is fairly obvious that the authors are die-hard fans of Pancham. Of course I don't mind it because I am a fan myself, but non-fans (if there are any ;-)) would probably prefer the narrative to be totally objective. Overall, one of the best books I have read in a long long time and this surely is now a prized possession in my library. I'd urge all Indian movie fans to not miss out on this fantastic book.

When a book written on one of the greatest music maker of Indian films leaves you wanting for more, that is a big time compliment to the writers. RD Burman: The Man The Music is one such well documented work by Anirudha Bhattacharjee and Balaji Vittal. Well researched, well written with insider inputs makes the book intriguing. I have myself met number of Indian movie music personalities and among other things spoke about father and son, SD and RD Burman in much detail and find this book very close to the information given to me. This book has just been awarded best book on cinema award. I must say, Thank you for writing and publishing this book.

Excellent book. For R D fans like us, who had only had the opportunity to appreciate his music, this book brings out many other details which will help you to appreciate the human being in much greater detail. It established the fact that he is the greatest among all the Music Directors of the last century. A lot of information has been culled painstakingly and presented in a very lucid format. A big thanks to the authors.

a scholarly work! this is something every RD fan absolutely needs to read. I hope collaborates with the authors to make this a multi-media book offering with links to songs that are talked about provided so as a reader reads they are able to sample the tunes themselves. outstanding work!

A fabulous treasure-trove for Pancham lovers and music aficionados alike, the authors infuse a sense of objectivity by highlighting the lows in RD's career exceptionally well. Their sincerity is evident as is the thoroughness of their research. A follow up perhaps, looking at anecdotes linked to

his genius?

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