



FUSION MUSIC: A MODERN TREND IN MUSIC

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Abstract

While a classical music in India still retains many of its original forms and practices, local Vocalist and Musicians are experimenting with new musical ideas to promote the classical music and instrumental music to a wider audience of mixed ethnicity. Musicians combine Hindustani musical elements such as Raag or melody and Taal or rhythmic with different musical elements such as the different scale, different instruments and new genres to produce a musical blend broadly dubbed as 'fusion music'. This article explores about fusion music, scope and limitations of fusion music, ideas to create music in the form of fusion etc.

Keywords: Music, Hindustani classical music, fusion music



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Introduction:

According to New World Dictionary of the American Language, The union of different things by or as if by melting; blending; coalition is called fusion. So, in music, when different musical elements, often from different musical genres are put together then its called fusion music. A fusion genre is a combination of two or more genres of music. The characteristics are said to be variations in tempo, rhythm and at times division of long musical journeys into smaller parts, each with its own dynamics and style. Noted vocalist and a research scholar Vyzarsu Balasubrahmanyam says music should first attract the ears. In which form it is, is not important.

Content:

Fusion is not a mere mix of music of East and West, but also a mix of our own Indian musical systems, such as when legends like the late Bhimsen Joshi and M. Balamuralikrishna chose ragas of similar notation but of different name and structure rendered in their

jugalbandi at Ravindra Bharati, a decade and half ago, in Hindustani and Carnatic styles. Merging voices together on occasions was by itself a fusion of Carnatic and Hindusthai.

Here are some examples of fusion music;

1. Reggae Rock
2. Rap Rock
3. Jazz Fusion
4. Gypsy Punk
5. Gypsie Jazz
6. Folktronica
7. Folk Metal
8. Folk Punk
9. Celtic Punk
10. Country Rap

From most of these titles, you can see what genre has been mixed with what other genre; 'Country Rap' is obviously Country Music mixed with Rap Music and 'Folk Punk' is Folk Music mixed with Punk Music. This is only a partial list, of course, since the combinations are pretty much unlimited. Being of Germanic heritage. One of the more successful types of fusion music is Country Rock.

Another term applied to fusion music is 'cross-over.' You have probably heard the term 'Cross-Over Hit,' referring to a song that captured the attention of listeners in different genres of music. Fusion music often originates from the desire of a band to reach a broader audience but it can also come from the effort to establish a unique or new sound.

Most musical artists who have stood out have had a unique sound of their own and this is actually the end product of this fusion process. Whereas some fusion efforts are very obvious, that is to say they have combined a very identifiable musical element with another very identifiable musical element, some fusion processes are much more subtle and involve a larger number of musical elements.

Fusion is said to have begun with Ali Akbar Khan's 1955 performance in the United States. Indian music and Western rock and roll fusion in the sixties and seventies was limited to Europe and North America. Once sitar maestro Pt. Ravi Shankar took stage, Indian fusion gained prominence. He made albums with Bud Shank on jazz. George Harrison and others were also influenced by this trend and came out with some works in 1965. Another jazz

maestro, Miles Davis performed with Indian musicians like Bihari Sharma and Badal Roy. So did Rolling Stones in integrating Indian influence. These added new trends in fusion. Names like John, L. Shankar, Zakir Hussain and others also continued. Later this trend was taken over by British artists in late 1980s fusing Indian and Western traditions. Percussion wizards like Kaaraikkudi Mani, Zakir Hussain, and others are well connected with fusion, as an opportunity to create something new. The percussion fusion presented by Chennai-based mridangam vidwan Kaaraikkudi Mani and his five-member soloists on the last World Music Day was an outstanding show of fusion Does this fusion route affect presentation style of the artistes when they get down giving traditional solo? The well-practised fusion does affect the performance style of some individuals, if they are not wary of it. Some of the artistes resort to wizardry like they do in fusion. They should then come out of 'fusion' mindset and present the devotionals in right spirit

Hindustani-Western Fusion has been a popular genre over the last few decades. Indian musicians like Zakir Hussain and Anoushka Shankar rose to international fame by composing music that blends traditional Indian instruments like the Tabla and Sitar with modern Jazz and Blues genres. While fusion music might sound recent, it's roots can be traced back to the late 50s and 60s when musicians such as Ali Akbar Khan, and Ravi Shankar did their first international performances.

The 1950s and 60s was an age where Rock & Roll was on the rise and the music industry was at its competitive peak. Musicians were keenly experimenting new sounds and effects to make themselves stand out and become the next big sensation. Ravi Shankar's performances abroad caught the eye of a young English musician, George Harrison, the lead guitarist of the Beatles. He was intrigued by the sitar and ended up acquiring one for himself. He went on to play an iconic piece using the Sitar, on the song "Norwegian Wood" which could perhaps be seen as the first-time Indian sounds were fused into Western Pop music. The song was critically acclaimed, and people described the sound of a Sitar as "psychedelic"

While the Beatles were experimenting with Indian sounds, Ravi Shankar's fame continued to rise around the Western world. He toured with the renowned Tabla player Alla Rakha, father of Zakir Hussain. Together, they've opened at various Rock and Pop festivals, most notably, Monterey Pop in the United States, in the presence of some iconic bands such as Simon & Garfunkel, Otis Reading, and Jimi Hendrix. Along this journey, he soon inevitably crossed paths with George Harrison.

His meeting with George Harrison would start off an iconic history of collaboration which spanned for many decades. During this time, the Beatles released a lot more material that contained a variety of Indian instruments. Songs such as Within You Without You, Across The Universe and Love you To were examples of the Beatles expressing their love for counterculture. Apple Records, a recording company owned by the Beatles, has hosted various Hare Rama Hare Krishna troupes in its recording facilities. The band even made frequent trips to India where they tried their hand at learning about spiritualism. While most of band members lost interest in this area of music and fell back to their roots over the years, George Harrison remained true to it.

Upon leaving the Beatles, he continued to write music with Indian influences. Most notably, My Sweet Lord, which went on to become one of the most played songs of all time in the 70s. With the aid of Ravi Shankar, he arranged various festivals such as the Concert for Bangladesh which was focused at raising money following the war-related genocide in Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan). He would continue to collaborate with Ravi Shankar and his daughter Anoushka Shankar well into the late 90s. Following Harrison's death in 2001, Ravi Shankar composed a concert in his honor "Concert for George" where his daughter Anoushka Shankar led an Indian orchestra and played compositions of her father's old music. Concert for George marked the end of a unique relationship between an Indian musician and a Western Pop icon. While collaborations of this nature are frequent these days, we'll probably never witness one where both people are so genuinely invested in a single cause – World Peace.

Fusion music has come a long way since the 60s, but it wouldn't exist if not for the efforts of Indian orchestras in the 60s who were brave enough to play for an audience who had never heard their music before, while enduring accusations from their home country about performing to an audience that was known to use drugs to enjoy and enhance the effects of music. However, these early musicians opened a gateway that allow modern Indian artists to showcase their talents around the world and even win western awards such as the Grammys and Oscars.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF FUSION MUSIC

Experimenting by fusing different music styles is the way to create fusion music. Fusion, being an experimental form of music, there are tremendous scopes in it. New results are achieved by experimentation, thus fusion also brings newness with it. Fusion may come

wearing the face of surprise, shock or beauty also an underdeveloped avowal, which is on its path towards establishment, as it is not bound by any specific rules and thus leaving a scope for its expansion. Let us figure out some points to open up vision for creation of fusion music though they might be in use but with a possibility to explore further in the directions suggested. Some probable initial thoughts or ideas to create music in the form of fusion are:

A. Based on melody

Harmony and rhythm ‘Raga’ The Indian melody, is being considered to be a potential base for some fusions. Artists either compose harmony pertaining to a bandish of a specific raga or search for a bandish appropriate for a particular harmonic piece. Many a times, the combination of Indian melody and Jazz melody proves to be an attractive bait to lure audiences to shows. Many experiments based on rhythm are being carried out. The Indian Tala structure and its progression which is outlined by the usage of only one instrument at a time have amazed foreign artists. Viz a viz. the Indian counterparts have been stimulated by combined usage of a group of rhythm instruments. Fusion introduces a large variety of compositions which are based on melody, harmony or rhythm along with compositions based on any of the above three components combined together. The scope of fusion limits itself to our creativity and open mindedness.

B. Based on theme

The Indian tradition offers a plethora of songs for every occasion of our lives. For e.g. songs for every season, songs to grieve on someone’s demise, songs to celebrate childbirth, weddings, festivals, etc. These themes are very much in use in present day fusions. Also, as we have seen in chapter 1, theme based music has played a crucial role in the development of Jazz Music. Themes akin to emotions, stories, places (desert, mountain...), themes initiating relaxation, etc. have been used by jazz artists. Thus, theme based composition is already a very popular style in Indian and jazz music. Such themes can be further developed for widening the extent of fusion.

C. Based on lyrics and singing styles

Fusion is mainly about amalgamating the music of different regions which also includes different languages. Syllabic pleasure is the highlight of this kind of fusion. Different languages and their enunciation augment this experience. The distinct forms of Indian music, such as ‘sargam’ where notations are pronounced in their abbreviated forms and ‘tarana’ where meaningless words are manifested, can enhance this experience. The style

of singing, voice projection, and pronunciation is very different in every music form. It can be clearly observed that the folk style of singing, the ghazal style of singing, Indian classical or scat - all are very different. Also, if combined together they may sound appealing.

D. Based on different types of instruments

We have a large number of musical instruments of different categories and families with diverse tones. Instrument - types i. Wind instruments: flute, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piccolo, etc. ii. String instruments: all types of guitar, sitar, violin, mandolin, cello, etc. iii. Rhythm instruments: all types of drums, tabla, mridangam, Dhol, Dholak, pakhāwaj, ghaTam etc. All instruments differ in their making, timber, range, patterns, usage, etc. In fusion, a combination of instruments can be used or use of technicalities with instruments which differ in the normal practices of that music style. For instance, Indian technicalities can be used with Jazz Instruments and vice a versa. All instruments are blessed with the tact of playing ornamentation and subtle expressions in their own distinct ways. Thus, it becomes necessary to choose the right kind of instrument for a particular musical piece or composition.

While using Indian music in fusion, many details are left behind. They are ignored by the artists, not by choice but because of lack of care and responsibility towards music, thus posing limitation for its qualitative expansion. Another significant limitation is from some traditional artists who are afraid of losing the value of the traditional and pure forms of prevailing styles of music.

Conclusion:

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