

DIY: Tamil film music



According to a recent report, 200 new music directors have come to the industry in the last five years alone. It is obviously an alarming statistic. Yes, the number 200 is too low when practically anyone can become a music director these days. When we say anyone we mean you.

And this is how: Here are the simple steps to compose various types of songs:

Fun Song or the song that helps to move the movie plot by three or four minutes: This is a type of song that calls for a lot of skill from the singer as it has to stand out from the plethora of similar numbers out there. It is suggested that you write out the names of potential singers for the song on a paper. Once done, take a hard, intense look at the list, close your eyes and think of the song that you may want to record. Now, without opening your eyes, tear the paper in the hand, forget the singers you had in mind and call the film's leads, even if it is an animal film and the protagonists are an elephant and horse, for recording. This is the rule.

Now, you have no idea how to compose a song. The actor you have called pretty much doesn't know how to croon and his last stab at singing was an off-key rendition of Jana Gana Mana at his school sports day. But you need a chartbuster. So what next? Exactly. What you need is: Cringe-worthy lyrics. There is a serious market out there for badly tuned, cluelessly sung, sillily written songs with placeholder words that no lexicon contains. And if you can make a laughable video of the whole thing, you have a huge winner on your hands. Apparently, there is a strange alchemy in the whole thing that people just lap it up. Of course, you can also fall back on auto-tune, that miraculous technology that works by reducing the musical sensibility in the listener.

But remember, you have to constantly improvise. Which is to call a different film's hero to sing in your film or bring in another music director to croon. Don't bother whether they will agree or not. Just shamelessly ask, and they will shamelessly agree. The universal law in these matters is: Everybody is shameless and loves cheap publicity.

And once in a while go for singers who have no connection with films or art itself. If I were you I would be already lining up Lulu Prasad Yadav or Subramanian Swamy for my next composition. One night while watching TV, I heard him speak. Suddenly, something in me told me this is the voice that I was looking for. His voice has a texture and character. Its resonance is interesting, you can ponderously tell a gushing TV anchor who will doubtless interview you later.

Love Song or every other song: Don't even bother trying. All good songs are already composed. Just take a raga (usually Reetigowli works) add random musical bits (these are now available off the shelf or get college youngsters for jamming session and just take whatever they come up with), tell your singer that this is a melody number, which is the industry code word to sing in low volume and he or she will do the needful.

For extra effect or impact, get a reality show (for which you will surely be invited as a guest judge even if you have tuned in just half-a-song) performer record for you. It will show to the world that you back young talent. Also, you can get them to sing for cut-throat rates.

Pathos Song or the song that usually comes 15 minutes before the climax and Yesudas sings it: We looked up the Oxford dictionary for 'Pathos' and it is described as: (n): Extreme sorrow or sadness experienced by any Tamil movie character. Practically, a Tamil slang.

The pathos song is going out of fashion, probably because Yesudas isn't getting any younger or today's music directors take so much time to deliver that the movie director eventually gets to a situation where he wouldn't mind accepting even a rap piece to go with a

death sequence on screen. Rap bits are, no matter what the mood of the scene is, greatly incongruous to it. There isn't a single human emotion or feeling that can be adequately expressed through rap. No wonder it is popular among young directors.

But if you ever have to record a pathos number, the way to go is 1) Slow down the rhythm pattern 2) Pick a 'base voice', whatever it means 3) Get Vairamuthu to pen the lyrics.

The point of going to Vairamuthu is he has - let the record show - an undoubted literary talent for effective PR. And there are Tamil magazines out there ready to publish whatever he hands them, even the telephone directory, as works of literary merit. He can also get top musicians, especially if they are dead, to say a few encouraging words about you. Of course, he will also come up with a lot of encouraging words on himself.

Overall, as a music director you may have misgivings whether your music will appeal to the general public or not. Fret not. The good news is nobody listens to music anymore. Music is more or less something that people chance upon when 1) driving 2) swapping channels 3) browsing 4) walking 5) climbing down the stairs and a random song streaks in from neighbour's house.

You don't have to make CDs of the album. Just a notional cover (wrapper) would do which can be released at a big function. In the film, you can have random bits playing in the background. People wouldn't notice. They would be busy live-tweeting the film.

PS: Wait for the YouTube video on the making of this article.