

Taking film music to the streets of Chennai

■ MERIN JAMES

Every weekend, a group of five corporate professionals used to come together and jam at coffee shops in the city. During the sessions, they realised that there was a lot of happiness around and people were enjoying the music. This inspired them to step out of the comfort zone and sing in public spaces like beaches, malls, metro stations, Central Railway Station, parks and pavements. With an intent to developing a culture of street music in the city and spreading happiness, they started a music community called On The Streets of Chennai.

"The idea of street music is still in its nascent stages in India. Through live music, we wanted to spread happiness and positivity on the streets of Chennai," says Senthil Raj, founder of On The Streets of Chennai. Since the performances are happening in public places, the team had to get permission from the authorities. "Initially, we had some hiccups in getting permission. But when they understood our intentions, they became extremely supportive of our gigs," he adds.

On The Streets of Chennai was started with just six people and now, the team has more than 80 members, including students. Music lovers who are interested to join the group can contact them on social media. "We are getting a lot of requests. We conduct an audition just to know their level of understanding of singing or playing an instrument. Based on that, we can train them through rehearsals," says Senthil, who plays guitar at gigs.

Initially, the team planned on performing



(Top) Members from On The Streets of Chennai performing at Chennai Central Railway Station; (right) during one of the gigs at Pondy Bazaar



all kinds of music — Indian, Western, rock, pop, fusion, etc. But, after a couple of gigs, they realised that their audience loves Tamil film music; mostly, Ilaiyaraaja and AR Rahman songs. "Again, it varies depending on the place. On Bessie Beach, we sing English and Tamil songs. But at places like Nageswara Rao Park, Pondy Bazaar, metro stations, we prefer singing Tamil film melodies," Senthil shares. Rashmi Nandita, the co-founder of On

With the aim to develop a culture of street music and spread happiness, a group of professionals has come together and started a music community called On The Streets of Chennai

The Streets of Chennai, vouches that music can bring a smile on people's faces. "Music is a great form of therapy for a lot of people. From the kind of response that we have been receiving, we understood that music can also spread positivity. The brilliant thing about the whole concept is that it touches the lives of people from all walks of life."

In order to better their performances, they are reaching out to bigger music bands to get orientation. "Ours is a mixed group of professionals and amateurs who can sing and play instruments. In the future, we are planning to invite bands to train us on how can we do better in terms of quality," she remarks.



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