



# MASS MEDIA

*Alternative artistes have finally made inroads into Bollywood, turning film music on its head*

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the '90s were Bollywood music's Dark Ages, with the kind of fare you can look back fondly on only from the safe distance of two decades. The songs sounded identically awful and the lyrics, at their best, often only skimmed logic.

The turning point came in the early aughts – 2001, to be precise – when Farhan Akhtar debuted a new kind of Hindi film – slick, cool, yet inordinately relatable. The film's music, by Shankar, Ehsaan and Loy, followed suit. Bollywood music could be more, we were reminded – it could speak your language, it could fit in with your friends and it could keep step with 'serious music'.

A decade later, the movement has picked up momentum. A new breed of film directors (with Anurag Kashyap as their patron saint) is tackling all sorts of genres and themes and exhorting music directors and lyricists to do the same. Cases in point: Piyush Mishra's blackly comic lyrics for *Gangs of Wasseypur* and Amit Trivedi's zeitgeisty 'Dilli', which opened *No One Killed Jessica*.

According to music director Vishal Dadlani of Vishal-Shekhar, any remaining distinction between indie and mainstream is only in your head. He explains, "Everyone's doing everything and that's great, music should be like that. Artistes are expressing themselves with their own projects, and they're also happy to collaborate with major

composers." Dadlani thinks they're in a win-win situation: "You're not just doing it for the money here; the sheer recognition that Bollywood offers is an incentive. And as long as you're not losing your identity, why not?"

(H)indie singer and lyricist Ankur Tewari (who's worked on films like *David*, *Quick Gun Murugun*, *Ek Chalis Ki Last Local*) agrees: "In the movies, the music director usually wants you to stick to his brief. But as long as you can still own the song, it's a great opportunity."

Singer-songwriter Nikhil D'Souza considers himself lucky as all the music he's been asked to create so far has been in recognition of his forte. "Directors like Pritam [Chakraborty] have brought me on board to for the more intense rock or ballad genres.

Wait for the credits to roll, and you'll see a whole range of artistes on the list – multi-lingual folk artist Raghu Dixit, metal band Bhayanak Maut, indie veterans Indian Ocean and Agnee, alt/punk act The Lightyears Explode, electro fusion artistes Midival Punditz and Karsh Kale. Through the movies, these artistes are able to reach a much, much wider audience, in corners of the country where their live performances would never have otherwise taken them.

Like Dadlani puts it, "It's nice when a billion people know your name."

RAVINA RAWAL

## THE BIG FIVE

*Bollywood's power lyricists*

### AMITABH BHATTACHARYA

Bhattacharya has an unerring ear for colloquialisms, which results in effortlessly funny songs that lodge themselves in the brain. Think 'Emotional Atyachaar', 'Pungi', 'Ainvayi Ainvayi' and 'Bhaag DK Bose'.



### SWANAND KIRKIRE

He's won National Awards for his work on 'Bande Me Tha Dum... Vande Mataram', and 'Behti Hawaa Sa Tha Woh'. More recently, Kirkire has created earworms for *Kai Po Che* and *Bombay Talkies*. His ace is his incredible simplicity and ability to lightly layer mainstream songs with regional dialects.

### ANVITA DUTT

This lyricist and dialogue/screenplay writer has worked on hit songs for films like *Dostana*, *Kambakkth Ishq*, and *Tees Maar Khan*. Her shining moment came in 2012 with the song 'Ishq Waala Love'. Dutt is radical, relevant and happily illogical when required – and it works.



### IRSHAD KAMIL

His strong suit is his flair for Urdu and poetry. Punjabi-born Kamil is known to infuse his writing with the hearty candour and mischief of his native place. *Jab We Met*, *Love Aaj Kal*, *Rockstar*, *Aashiqui 2* and the recent *Phata Poster Nikhla Hero* feature his work.

### PRASOON JOSHI

This National Award winner's command over Hindi, and his ability to mine situations in daily life enable him to write simple lyrics that evoke profound emotion. Refer to his work for *Taare Zameen Par* and lately, 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram' from the film *Satyagraha*.

