When sufi mingled with sultry breeze

After the success of Kailash Kher’s concert, Kovai gears up for new genres of music

By GAUTAM SUNDER

The Isha Yoga Center at the foothills of the Velliangiri Mountains took on a new aura this Sivatri as Kailash Kher took the stage amidst loud applause of the audience.

As Kailash Kher did what he does best; getting into the heart of the crowd, literally placing them in a trance with his music and giving spirituality a new meaning and a new high.

“I couldn’t have picked a better time to perform here, nor a more divine place or had a better audience. Such fests are hardly organised in South India; I appreciate the organizers for believing in the city and appreciating the beauty of real, soulful music in such an ethnic, worshipful setting. From the Kennedy Centre in Washington to Ranchi, from Las Vegas to Benares, to small villages with no airports or trains, my band, Kailasa, has toured everywhere trying to show people what music is all about,” says Kailash.

“I’ve sung in several regional languages, and I especially love Tamil for its syllables that have beautiful vibrations; the words evoke so much harmonious meaning. A. R. Rahman, who’s a brother to me, and his family have actually been trying to teach me Tamil properly! I love the simplicity and homely atmosphere in his home, as they treat me like one of their own,” he adds.

Kailash goes on about his music philosophy, “I’m inspired by life around me, and observe things with a different perspective with all my senses. For instance, the sound that rustling leaves hugging each other make when the wind blows against them — every little sound can teach us about the romanticism in life.”

So, is the Carnatic capital of the country waking up to embrace fusion genres? “Music is like meditation to me. I try to bring in as much diversity and contemporary effects to my vocals, as South India needs to accept fusion music. In my shows, I bring a lot of energy and urge the audience to interact with me; that’s the formula to making sure they experience the magic of it!” he smiles.

As the night breeze blows over a group of expatriates and socialites, Raghupathy Rao, a businessman from the city, comments, “Tonight’s audience consists of people from all around the world — Europeans, Americans, and of course, diverse Indian strata as well. Coimbatore should be proud to host an event like this, which puts it on the map as an advocate of world culture.”

Sunita Sarathy, playback singer and vocalist of her band, The Agenda, remarks, “There are no cosmopolitan cities down South. Youngsters go abroad to study and be exposed to world music. So, they’re able to understand where the real appeal of a live concert lies, rather than be treated to the run-of-the-mill shows with the usual filmi dances and songs. Even for a band like mine that is an exponent of a genre like new — soul, the niche audience is slowly growing, which is a positive sign.”