

## Mohammed Rafi draws packed house, 28 years after death

Songs by legendary singer Mohammed Rafi drew a packed house here 28 years after his death, and audiences were in for a surprise as an evergreen voice from the yore took the stage again, rekindling memories and melodies of an era gone by.

'Mujhko apne gale laga lo..' and 'Thahariya hosh me aa loon', sung by the forgotten Mubarak Begum wafted across the lush green lawns of the Green Court Club on the city's outskirts Sunday night.

Begum has sung many a duet with Rafi during the late 1950s and '60s.

As the songs by the Begum progressed, a wedding reception nearby stopped its own music and the guests enjoyed a musical feast.

The Green Court Club was observing a musical nite 'Aasmaan Se Aaya Farishta..' to commemorate Rafi's 28th death anniversary (July 31), nearly two months in advance on public demand and to avoid the monsoon.

Club chairman Vijay Saini, pointing at the 2,000-plus gathering and another 1,000-odd waiting to gain entry, told IANS: 'See, Mohammed Rafi Sahab is very much alive. Observe how the crowd is completely enchanted by the immortal Rafi numbers and is enjoying without a noise..'

Organised by the Mohammed Rafi Foundation, singers of a professional orchestra rendered around 30 popular Rafi numbers.

But the Begum's entry, after about 10 songs were sung, took the Rafi fans by surprise. The crowd was on its feet and welcomed her with a thunderous applause.

The 70-year-old Begum sang the two songs without a note or tune going awry. Though feeble in body, her voice was as fresh as ever and she got a standing ovation from the crowd that wanted more.

The show brought out some rare gems from the music of Rafi and some little-known anecdotes from his life too.

For instance, it was revealed that the late Naushad Ali had originally commissioned the late crooner, Talat Mehmood, for the entire album of 'Baiju Bawara'.

However, Naushad was a man free of vices and when he learnt that Talat Mehmood was a chain-smoker, he dropped him and signed on Rafi. And the rest as they say is history.

A family from the nearby suburb of Dahisar came all the way just to hear the evergreen songs by Rafi.

H. Mehta, a senior executive with a multinational company, said: 'My parents, both in their '70s, and my daughters both below 10, and my wife feel the effort was worth it.'

'Rafi sahab is still amongst us,' H. Mehta added as the song 'Aaj kal tere mere charche' was playing

in the background.

Ajay Saini, director of the club, said they had not anticipated such a crowd and had to double the number of seats at the last minute.

As the function came to a close after nearly four hours, music buffs returned homes with the tuneful memories of Rafi, who ruled the film music world and audiences for nearly four decades.

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