

Promotions have taken over music creation, rues Khayyam

Octogenarian music director Khayyam, who has just been chosen as the first recipient of the Naushad Samman, says there was a time when the works of composers spoke for themselves but today tunes are popularised through promotions.

'I hear that some music companies spend as much as Rs.150 to Rs.200 million (Rs.15 to Rs.20 crores) to promote the music of a film today. Which only means that marketing has taken precedence over creation,' Khayyam, whose tunes in the film 'Umrao Jaan' mesmerise people even today, told IANS in an interview.

The composer, who has virtually been in retirement since 1990, is overwhelmed that the Lucknow-based Naushad Sangeet Kendra has chosen him for its first Naushad Samman, an award instituted in memory of the late composer.

'I must have done some good work in my previous life to be selected for an award named after a person like Naushad, a maestro who greatly enriched the tradition of Hindi film music by his immortal compositions,' said Khayyam, whose real name is Mahammed Zahur Khayyam Hashmi.

The award, which also carries a cash prize of Rs.100,000, will be conferred on Khayyam in Lucknow Feb 14.

Khayyam has himself earned his enviable fame for composing soul-stirring songs in films like 'Phir Subah Hogi', 'Footpath', 'Mohabbat Issko Kehte Hain', 'Aakhri Khat', 'Kabhi Kabhie', 'Trishul', 'Bazaar' and of course 'Umrao Jaan'.

Khayyam said he just followed in the footsteps of Naushad, who strove all his life to bring the treasures of Indian classical music closer to the common man and succeeded in doing so.

'I am 10 years his junior and I only followed the path he led and tried to keep the sanctity of music unblemished by the trends in vogue,' said Khayyam, who earlier received the Maharashtra government's Lata Mangeshkar Award in 2007.

The musician, who likes to attribute his success to his singer-wife Jagjit Kaur, emphasised that in film music, a tune itself was not the be all and end all.

'It has to be a part of the story and songs should advance the narrative. So in film songs, words are very important and the tunes should compliment those and vice versa. So unless a lyricist is a word master, if not exactly a poet, no song can touch people's hearts,' he explained.

According to Khayyam, the weak combination between the composer and the lyricist is the reason why very few everlasting film songs come out of the recording rooms today.

'The good thing is that, occasionally, we get to hear some good melodies and that augurs well for Hindi film music,' said Khayyam, who in the 1950s had composed music under the name of Sharmaji for a while.

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