

Souk-a-thon

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bengaluru CHRONICLE

SATURDAY 27 | APRIL 2013



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<< **30**



THE toast mistress

This fiercely ambitious corporate honcho has relocated to *namma* city to spearhead a liquor company that has already become one of the most sought-after emerging brands. She shares her professional aspirations and personal dreams in this interview

DC CORRESPONDENT

She packs quite a punch. Lisa Srao, the MD and chairman of I Brands Beverages Ltd may have a formidable personality but is a down-to-earth lass. The woman behind Star TV's launch and tremendous success in the UK, Lisa had already worked with top Bollywood stars like Amitabh Bachchan, Shahrukh Khan and Akshay Kumar by 29. Today, she is one of those few women in the country who are not just thriving, but are making it big in a man's territory — In the spirited world of liquor.

An Aston University graduate, Lisa was born and brought up in London.

Continued on
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Lisa Srao

The toast mistress

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Then, at the peak of her career, she fell in love and got married to her husband, Manoj Verma. "Manoj asked me if I would like to shift to India. I agreed," she says. Moving to India was the craziest thing she has done in her entire life. A culture shock ensued. After she had children, Lisa took a sabbatical for around four years.

She wanted try her hand at something new. "My father owns a liquor company in the UK, and I knew a lot about the trade," she reminisces. From there cropped the idea to enter India's \$9 billion liquor industry. The rest, as they say, is history. I Brands, her passion, is considered one of the top emerging brands in the nation today. She makes no secret about Seagram being her biggest competitor. She looks up to Steve Jobs and wants to excel in whatever she does. "Money will come eventually, but I want to produce quality products that far exceed customer satisfaction," says the savvy entrepreneur. She has had to face difficulties as well, but her self-driven attitude powered her through hardships.

Money will come eventually but I want to produce quality products that far exceed customer satisfaction

So how does this mother of two, strike a chord between work and family? "I like spending time with my family. I also love to paint and I travel a lot. I will be heading to London for a vacation," she says.

It's been almost a decade since she moved to India. "I am totally in love with Bengaluru. I would never move to any other place", she quips. So hasn't language been a problem for her? "My nanny has learnt English. But I haven't been able to learn Kannada yet. That kind of makes me the uneducated one," she laughs heartily.

— Monalisa Das



Sahil Warsi

Blues to soothe YOUR SOUL

He is probably one of the youngest jazz musicians in our country and loves to infuse the old in the new for an eclectic sound

AYSWARYA MURTHY

DECCAN CHRONICLE

Sahil Warsi fell in love with the double bass when he saw Tom serenading a beautiful female cat with *Is You or Is You Aint My Baby* in an old cartoon. As this young, self-taught musician from Delhi, who is probably the youngest double bass player in the country, started going deeper into the world of jazz, he knew that was the sound he wanted to make. "Though I started out with a rock band, by the time I was 20, my fascination for that was long gone. Then I found jazz and like many others, the interest started with Miles Davis. It was a sound I could

relate to and I wanted to explore it more. The problem was that learning the double bass wasn't that easy. Even getting my hands on the instrument proved difficult, I certainly couldn't find any teachers and I had no references," he says. So Sahil had to take matters into his own hands.

"I spent a year in Japan after my graduation and I would spend my evenings at their many jazz clubs, watching, listening, playing. When I returned to

India, I started playing with the band Drift (who also never had a double bassist in their line up) and this is where I learnt the bulk of my music," he says.

With his mother who is a doctor and a political analyst for a father, we ask him how he managed to be drawn into a career in music, especially in an eclectic genre like jazz. "I guess at the beginning, they really didn't expect me to follow through with it," he laughs, "But gradually, as music started becoming the cen-

tre of my universe, they understood. For a naïve listener, jazz might seem like a complicated" (which I refuse to believe), so it was easy for them to take me more seriously, I think."

Sahil is among the new crop of young musicians who are infusing this old-world music with new life and fresh ideas. "I would like to think of our music as contemporary jazz," he says, Drift has just finished recording their new album *Nico* with consists of nine original tracks ranging from heavy swing and straight blues to modern jazz and Latin grooves. "It should be out soon," says Sahil.

I was in Japan for a year after my graduation and I would spend my evenings at their jazz clubs

'I'm not a Casanova'

REENA KAPOOR

DECCAN CHRONICLE

From acting in daily soaps, to participating in reality television and then anchoring crime-based shows, Karan Kundra's growth has been gradual, but a phenomenal one nonetheless. In his four-year-old career, Karan believes that he has made the right decisions at the right time. "I didn't want to stagnate. The growth wasn't really though," he laughs. The next big and the most inevitable step in Karan's career is Vikram Bhatt's film *Horror Story*. "I've signed a three-film contract with Vikram. We've finished working on one film and will commence the second." Karan might be

new to the industry but his formal training in acting took place during his television days. "I owe a lot to TV. But I can't possibly concentrate on two media simultaneously. TV was and will always be special. Right now we've taken a break in my TV show *Gumrah*." In the interim, Karan's Punjabi film that released last year had a resounding run at the box office. "I'm working on Shailesh Singh's (of *Tanu Weds Manu* fame) next film with Prateik Babber."

On the personal front Karan insists that he is single. "Contrary to the general perception, I'm not a Casanova. I'm a normal boy, who is currently focusing on work only. Yes, I was in a steady relationship. But it's

over and I've moved on." Quite often, one hears rumors about Karan's reconciliation with former girlfriend Kritika Kamra and his current affair with Madhura Naik. Does it get too much to handle? "Not really," he shrugs. "An actor has to deal with absurd rumours about him. Recently, I read that I had patched up with Kritika. If it were true, I wouldn't have kept it secret."



Karan Kundra