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MAIN DESK STORE

Student uses music to bridge gaps

By Kelvin Wee
Encore Editor

Suresh Nathan is an international student with a desire to someday achieve glory in the world of music.

Since 1988, Nathan has actively written his own music and recorded it in his University dorm room.

The room, no larger than the size of a small office, houses his equipment — a bass guitar, an electric guitar, an electronic keyboard, a drum machine, a four-track recorder and his stereo equipment.

Nathan earned some fame recently with his composition of the International Festival's theme song "One World." The song, with verses sung in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish and Kikuyu (a Kenyan language), reflects Nathan's belief that music can be used to unite people.

"The lyrics of the song (One World) basically talked about what we can do for the future in terms of education," he said. "Any sort of discrimination basically comes from ignorance and when we discussed the theme of the song, we focused on unity, friendship and on love."

The song came about from his participation in the University's International Cultural Service Program in which participants receive financial aid in exchange for 80 hours of pre-talking about their countries and cultures.

"I wanted to write a song to unify a variety of cultures," he said. "We are the ones who will go out tomorrow and make something out of this world and that was the inspiration. It was hard to think of a melody that would fit all the different languages, but we did come up with something, we wrote it, we tried it and it came out really well."

Originally from Singapore, the 25-year-old marketing senior has been studying in the United States since 1985.

Nathan said his interest in music dates back to when he used to perform professionally with a band in Singapore before he came to Eugene.

However, Nathan said he didn't begin with writing music, but with poetry. It was not until one of his friends read his poems and encouraged him to add music to them that he began to do so.

Despite this, Nathan has not performed his own music in Singapore.

"Most musicians start off by playing cover tunes," he said. "But the American public is used to hearing new stuff all the time so they're more receptive. That's not the case at home. And generally, there is a tendency to believe that local-grown talent in Singapore is not good enough to make the charts."

Nathan said his music has matured along the years. From listening to different types of music and artists, he said he has tried to derive his own style and sound. But, despite his stay in the United States, Nathan said his music still reflects the rhythms and melodies that he grew up with.

"It's very hard to depart from where you're from. I grew up listening to rock, but then, there's a lot of ethnic influences," he said. "What I feel is that sometimes, it's better not to try to depart from that because whatever your background is, that's basically who you are."

While it is unintentional, Nathan said that people who are familiar with East Asian cultures may

hear the traditional beats of India and Malaysia in some of his music.

Nathan said he tries to make the end product as original as possible. To achieve this, Nathan said he combines different beats in each of his writings.

"Basically when you're writing your own songs you want try to come up with your own sound, your own distinct flavor and you don't want to sound like somebody else," Nathan said.

"Then again, there's the irony. You don't want to sound like somebody else, you want to sound original, but whatever sells is assimilated to what sounds like somebody else. It's a very difficult thing to try to break away and to do something eclectic," he added.

Unlike many other musicians, Nathan said he writes his lyrics before writing the melody. Once the lyrics are done, Nathan said the melodies come automatically.

"When I write a song, I have a picture in my mind of what I am writing, how I want it to sound," he said. "And when I listen to the music I hope to see that picture come to life. I try to do things that maybe other people have not done."

However, like most other artists, Nathan is extremely emotional about his work. If a piece of work doesn't live up to his expectations, it never makes the portfolio or onto a demo-tape, he said.

"I love music because it's almost like the growth of a human being, lyrics mature over years, music matures over the years, and you tend to have a different purpose when you write a song," he said. "For me, if I don't feel a song, I don't want to do it. If the lyrics do not move me, then I basically throw it into the trash, that's it."

However, writing is not all Nathan does. Once a piece is written, he begins recording it on his four-track recorder, trying once again to achieve that perfect sound.

"I record stuff with basic tracks first, then I listen to them over and over and over until I figure out what I need to do just to make it sound better," he said. "What I'm basically working on right now is a solo-demo and I have about 10 songs recorded and another 10 that are on paper."

Nathan said that he hopes to have the demo-tape completed by next spring when he plans to move to either Los Angeles or New York city to market his music. But for now, what Nathan plans to do is keep this as a recreational activity until he completes his studies.

But music will not be pushed totally away for the upcoming year. Nathan said since the performance of his song "One World" at this year's International Night, a number of international students with strong backgrounds in music have approached him and they are now planning to form an international band.

"We have more than enough talent in terms of musicians and singers (in the international student community), and I don't think such talent should be wasted," he said. "It's our plan to form a band that will perform their original compositions and music from a variety of cultures."

When times are low, when times are down, Nathan remembers what the only music teacher he has ever had once told him a long time ago:

"Listen to your heartbeat if you want to listen to rhythm, that's a constant rhythm."

Encore!



Suresh Nathan prepares to record a demo of one of his original compositions — right in his University dorm room. Nathan plans to start a band of international students in the upcoming year.

Saxophone quartet to play tonight

MUSIC

Friday, April 27

The World Saxophone Quartet, an all-saxophone classical jazz band, will perform at the Hult Center's Soreng Theatre tonight at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 at Hult Center outlets or by calling 687-5000.

Saturday, April 28

Cris Williamson, acclaimed song writer/singer, will perform tonight

Calendar

at 8 in WOW Hall, 291 West 8th. Tickets are \$10 and available at the WOW Hall box office, Mother Kali's Books, Balladeer Music and Valentine's Wine and Cheese. Oregon Mozart Players will perform tonight at 7:30 in the Hult Center's Soreng Theatre. Tickets are \$15, \$13.50, \$11.50 and \$9.50 and can be purchased at Hult Center box offices or by calling 687-5000.

Sunday, April 29

Muzikás, an internationally acclaimed Hungarian folk music ensemble, will perform at 3 p.m. this afternoon in Beall Concert Hall.

Tickets are \$8 general and \$5 students and seniors and can be purchased at the door.

The University of Alberta Mixed Chorus, celebrating their 40th year, will perform at 8 tonight in the First Congregational Church, 1050 East 23rd.

Music of the Bach Family, a Faculty Artist Series, will be performed today at 4 p.m. in the Central Lutheran Church, 1857 Potter. Tickets are \$4 general and \$2 students and seniors.

Herbert Eckhoff and Dean Kramer, Bass-baritone and piano players, will perform tonight at 8 in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets are \$4 general and \$2 students and seniors and can be purchased at the door.

Monday, April 30

Studio Jazz Orchestra, a University student ensemble, will perform tonight at 8 in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets, \$3 general and \$1 students and seniors, can be purchased at the door.

Tuesday, May 1

The Eastern Oregon State Choir will perform tonight at 8 in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets are \$3 general

and \$1 students and seniors and can be purchased at the door.

Wednesday, May 2

The Oregon Brass Quintet, a University ensemble for 20 years, will perform a Faculty Artist Series concert tonight at 8 in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets, available at the door, are \$4 general and \$2 students and seniors.

Thursday, May 3

Knut Buen, world famous Norwegian fiddle player, will perform tonight at 8 in the EMU Ballroom. The concert will be followed by a traditional Norwegian dance. Tickets are \$8 general and \$4 students and may be purchased at the EMU main desk and Balladeer Music.

Zvuki Mu, the Soviet Union's most intriguing "unofficial" rock band, will perform tonight at 8 in the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall.

Frederick Moyer, a guest artist, will present a grand piano recital tonight at 8 in Beall Concert Hall. Tickets, available at the door, are \$6.50 general and \$3.50 students and seniors.

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