

The western music scene (any genre or language) in Kolkata has always fascinated me by its sheer diversity and magnitude. Though compared to the general Bollywood and Indi-Pop awareness in this country, the percentage of western music enthusiasts is way lower. Still I can proudly say that this city boasts the maximum of it. The urban music scene does not comprise of only the artists, a large part of it are those ardent fans, enthusiasts and music lovers, who make a certain music scene alive. When I sat down to write something on this topic the first thing that crossed my mind is this vast number of music listeners in this city. However they are hardly written about.

Obviously it is not possible to cover the entire gamut of music enthusiasts of this city. Rather I would focus, for the time being, on the shift in the nature of this group. To elaborate further, the live music scene in this city is primarily divided into two parts. Firstly, the pub/club scene (i.e. bands playing in pubs/clubs), and, secondly, the concert scene (primarily outdoor concerts). The crowd profiles for both these sectors are largely different; still there exists a kind of overlap. This overlapping chunk is the most important for any artist, as well as the overall scene. These are the people who go for all concerts or shows and are aware of the musical developments in the city.

As an active part of this scene for more than two decades, I have noticed a massive shift in the nature and character of this fraternity. Till the mid-nineties, this group of people was more open in accepting and nurturing various forms of music. Personal preferences were always there but the overall approach to listening to new stuff was more liberal. Prasanna Singh (35), an IT professional who has been a part of this brigade feels, 'People from our generation grew up on various forms of music primarily because of lack of choice. We had to listen to whatever that was available.'

Internet and the overall availability of international music is the reason why the younger generation (mostly 16 to 25) has become more watertight when it comes to preferences and listening nowadays. The forerunners of this new wave are the metal heads or the head bangers. Heavy metal music all over the world is known for its fans and followers. Probably no other music in the whole world has such a clannish following. It is no exception in this city. This bunch of kids would only listen to what caters to their particular taste of music and visit only such concerts. Similar is the clan of emo or punk listeners or even the hip-hop lovers.

In my opinion though, we should look at this change in the scene positively, instead of passing value judgments on it. This close listener-ship in a way helps the breeding of certain genres.

Jivraj (23), drummer of the band Pink Noise feels that 'various genres of music should co-exist to make a real music scene and they should have dedicated listeners who help the overall development of the genre.' Thus what used to be in the earlier days has changed over time. Also I would like to state here, that the younger generation of the audience is more accepting about certain newer experimentation of music which the earlier generation would not pay much heed to.

Overall, the music scene and the audience have become more diverse, though in some cases it has become more genre specific. I personally feel that another reason for this change is the decrease in the number of outdoor concerts in the city. This has forced people to listen to music in their homes. The habit of going to concerts is something that is really needed for a vibrant music scene. Both as a performer and as a member of the audience in the city I feel that we need many more live music pubs and proper concerts for the entire music scene to grow and become more liberal and interesting.