

Jamming for a musical cause

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For Sam John Thomas and his group, music is much more than just a passion. It is a tool for social change.

For many, music genres like jazz and rock may mean the sound of rebellion. A part of the LiveJam team heading the activities in the city, Sam attempts to lend a helping hand to youngsters through music, while attempting to break the conception of rock as rebellious music .

With its head office in Delhi, the movement is a country-wide initiative, in which the members use music to address problems faced by youngsters- ranging from peer pressure to drug addiction. The music movement focuses on school students from classes VII to XII. The student tour programme which was initiated in Thiruvananthapuram as a coffeehouse concert, soon caught on. Before long, the venture turned into an event exclusively for youngsters, and during 2005-06, came up in Kochi as well.

Elaborating more on the student tour venture, Sam, says, "I knew the person who introduced the concept, and soon, I was also part of it. It's only been a few years since I became active in the groups activities. We organise student tours every year and we have been getting a positive response from youngsters."

For the venture, artistes from across the country journey to other cities and interact with school students of that place.

With a flair for singing, Sam plays the guitar as well. He adds, "The genre of music played will be mostly contemporary, blues and alternative rock."

Elaborating on what happens during one of their concert sessions, Sam says, "We interact with the students, share with them our childhood experiences, the problems we have had to cope with and more. We give them an opportunity to speak out and unwind."

The duration of such concerts are forty-five minutes to one-hour. The group also conducts a grand finale concert every year for all schools that were covered through their concerts. This year, the event was held on November 4 at MG Road here.

Recalling his memories as part of the LiveJam team in Kochi, Sam says, " I feel great to be part of this activity- to be able to share stories and talk to kids. Youngsters often come across as very fun-loving and happy on the outside, but some of them may be struggling with a lot of anxieties and problems which they are reluctant to share. Deep down, youngsters are a group of people who want to have fun and feel secure. This is what we try to do through these concerts."

There is also another reason he believes in the success of such an initiative, "Anyone can talk and advise youngsters without creating any sort of impact. But when it comes to a piece of good music, it tends to stay in their minds for a long time and touch them in ways of its own."

This year, LiveJam, Kochi, covered around eight schools in the city, including Gregorian, Campion and Nava Nirman. Their next activity to look forward to, is the annual Gloria Deo music festival- its Christmas concert, which will happen on December 2 at Thyagaraj Indoor Stadium in Delhi.

The group regularly showcases renowned musicians during the festival.