



## CONCERT



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## SUNIDHI CHAUHAN

## Sensational singer delivers a stunning performance



by ASJAD NAZIR

THE Bollywood live music scene in the UK has never been as strong as it is today and that is largely thanks to live-show producer Vijay Bhola.

With Rock On Music Ltd, he has organised blockbuster shows with A-list stars such as Sunidhi Chauhan.

The award-winning singer returned to the UK earlier this month with concerts in Leicester and London, which once again showed there is no Indian singer who can do what she does on stage. Others singers will deliver their songs with bands and impressive light shows, but Sunidhi rolls out high-energy dance moves, explosive power and the kind of stage versatility no one else can deliver.

For the London show at IndigO2, that impressive range was in full flow for a performance of two contrasting halves.

The first half was very much emotion-driven as Sunidhi, dressed in traditional Indian clothes, sang slower and mid-tempo numbers like *Te Amo*, *Neeyat Kharab Hai*, *Kabira*, *Fanaa* and *Be Intehaan*, which all contained explosive power notes

**Performer:** Sunidhi Chauhan  
**Organiser:** Rock On Music

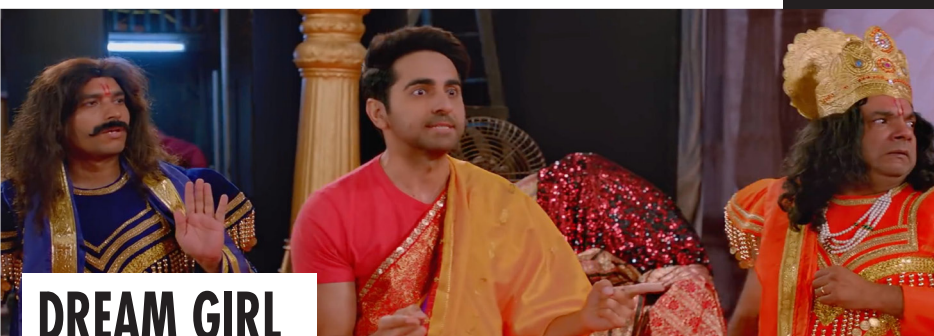
that raised the roof. She also paid tribute to Lata Mangeshkar with a wonderful rendition of *Neela Aasman So Gaya*. But perhaps the highlight of the first half was the boundary-breaking singer delivering top tracks *Bahon Mein Chale Aao*, *Dekho Na* and *Bin Tere* with a live beat-box artist.

If the first half was about emotions and remembering great artists, the second was one big party, which exploded into life with the songs *Dhoom Machale*, *Crazy Kiya Re* and *Bounce*.

Dressed in black leggings and a sparkly jacket, which all the ladies in the audience wanted to steal, Sunidhi delivered her high-energy trademark performance. The multi-talented singer rattled-off big party numbers like *Dance Pe Chance*, *Right Here Right Now*, *Aaja Nachle*, *Ainviyi Ainvayi* and *Desi Girl*. She had the whole auditorium dancing along with her. Then for the spectacular finale, she saved her blockbuster hits like *Mehboob Mere*, *Bumbro*, *Race Saanson Ki*, *Ishq Samundar* and *Sheila Ki Jawani*.

The masterful way Sunidhi rattled-off hits, danced and unleashed thunderous power notes was like watching lightning on stage.

## FILM



## DREAM GIRL

## Ayushmann-starrer has plenty of laugh-out-loud moments



**Starring:** Ayushmann Khurrana, Nushrat Bharucha, Annu Kapoor  
**Director:** Raaj Shaandilyaa

by PRIYA MULJI

WITH films like *Badhai Ho*, *Article 15* and *Andhadhun*, Ayushmann Khurrana is establishing himself as the go-to star for original stories in Bollywood.

This time around, the unique plot revolves around a struggling actor who is especially good at playing female roles on stage and he puts that talent to good use by landing a job at a phone chat line. He uses his vocal skills to pretend to be a sexy woman, who keeps lonely men company and gives them that extra boost with added flirtation.

It isn't long before the male callers start to fall in love with the dream girl at the end of the phone unaware that it is a man, who is happily in a relationship with a woman. What follows is a comedy of errors and mistaken identity.

The hilarious film adds to the impressive recent

momentum generated by Ayushmann and once again he gives a winning performance filled with laughter. He shows off his impressive range and is surprisingly convincing when dressed as a woman in a comedy that has plenty of laugh-out-loud moments.

The excellent supporting cast adds to the fun, including an impressive turn from leading lady Nushrat Bharucha, who plays the kind of empowered woman we need to see more of in Hindi cinema. *Dream Girl* does lose some early momentum mid-way through the movie and some of the sexist lines weren't in good taste. This film demanded a much stronger soundtrack, which wasn't there.

Overall, this is a fun family film that provides plenty of entertainment and it is one of the funniest comedies of the year. It will make you think twice when communicating with a stranger on the phone or online.

## THEATRE



@The Other Richard

## MUSHY: LYRICALLY SPEAKING

## This inspiring, true life-tale is a must-see production



by PRIYA MULJI

THE Rifco Theatre Company has led the way with entertaining productions about the British Asian experience and continue that impressive run with rap musical *Mushy: Lyrically Speaking*.

The new production premiered at the Watford Palace Theatre earlier this month, before embarking on a national tour.

The play, based on the real-life story of *Educating Yorkshire* star Musharaf Asghar, follows a young Muslim boy from Dewsbury suffering with a stammer, who finds his voice through music with the help of a schoolteacher.

*Mushy: Lyrically Speaking* is an emotion-filled story that sensitively and humorously handles themes of family, culture and education.

Throughout the title character's relatable journey, we see him grow from a schoolboy to an inspirational role model with the help of his teacher Mr Burton.

**Starring:** Varun Raj, Oliver Longstaff, Medhavi Patel  
**Director:** Ameet Chana

It was fantastic to see *Mushy* and Mr Burton's relationship grow from student-teacher to friends.

The audience is made to feel challenges the lead protagonist faces, whether that's suffering with a stammer, handling newfound stardom or coming from a broken home.

That is largely due to great directing from Ameet Chana, who makes full use of the great source material, including a talented cast and great writing.

Lead stars Varun Raj, Oliver Longstaff and Medhavi Patel are all wonderful in their respective roles. The other hero of this musical is sharp lyrics written by popular rapper Raxstar, which add an extra dimension.

The simple, but innovative stage design allowed the play to flow freely through the scene changes.

The biggest credit must go to Rifco Theatre Company for continuing to be brave enough to bring challenging subjects to the forefront in a heart-warming and inspiring way.

All of this makes *Mushy* a must-see production.

## THEATRE



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## THE LOVELY BONES

## An acclaimed novel is brought to life on stage



**Starring:** Charlotte Beaumont, Fanta Barrie, Catrin Aaron, Nicholas Khan and Samuel Gosrani  
**Director:** Melly Still

by ROSHAN DOUG

THE stage adaptation of acclaimed 2002 novel *The Lovely Bones* returned for a new UK tour earlier this month and opened at the Birmingham Rep theatre.

Set in 1973, the thriller-suspense story revolves around a 14-year-old Pennsylvania girl, Susie, full of life and ambition. On her way back from school, Susie is raped and killed in a brutal assault by Harvey in an underground den. Before she enters heaven, Susie visits her family and friends on earth to help them locate her bones hidden in Harvey's den.

As she narrates her story - and while trying desperately to communicate with the living - she observes the differing ways her death has impacted family and friends. It examines how individuals in

Susie's life come to terms with grief, loss and learning to let go. Even though chunks of the story are edited, this stage production remains faithful to the novel in many ways.

There is a lot that is pleasing about this production from the swift and dynamic scene changes to the pace and movement of the performance. The selected soundtrack of the 1970s and the convincing way the production moves between life and death also works.

But the dramatic flashlights at the beginning were disturbing and added very little to the story.

The cast collectively did a good job bringing their characters to life, but at times the American accents did seem a tad dubious and less convincing. Nevertheless, such anomalies, did not detract anything from the story.