

## The First Time for Bhaskar

ACTOR and writer Sanjeev Bhaskar will appear in Sky 1's *The First Time*... series at Christmas this year.

The concept of comedians talking about a specific theme has been taken from the 2010 series *Little Crackers*, in which Bhaskar's wife Meera Syal among others such as Victoria Wood, Bill Bailey and Stephen Fry wrote and directed pieces about their own childhoods.

Head of comedy Lucy Lumsden, who announced deals with Bhaskar, Shappi Korsandi and Jane Horrocks, among others, said: "Last year *Little Crackers* was a fantastic success for Sky 1 HD, but there were always more names that I wanted to be a part of the show. I'm delighted to have secured such brilliant comedians for the second series."

## Global sound for new album

PANJABI HIT SQUAD are releasing a single from their forthcoming album *World Famous* which will be out in September.

By mixing commercial house and dubstep, Harleen Akkter and Dee believe they have given the track *Miss Soniyeh* a different dynamic.

Asked about the single, the duo said: "It represents the diverse sound and the range of vocal collaborations that we've got featured on the album."

"Global artists include Alyssia, Raghav, Krishna (singer of *Maula Mere* from the film *Chak De India*), Richa Sharma (who has sung *Sajada* from *My Name Is Khan*), Saini Surinder, Jaspinder Narula and two 'secret' artists who we'll be revealing on August 25 on our Twitter page!"

## Film festival seeks entries

BUDDING film-makers are being asked to submit their films for one of the largest South Asian International Film Festival (SAIFF) in the US.

The sixth annual SAIFF takes place in November 9-15. Submission deadlines for film-makers is September 30.

Feature films, documentaries and short films are the categories for the festival. Five films will compete for a festival prize, with the winner receiving a cash award from HBO, one of the largest premium subscription channels in America, and a chance to have their film shown on the channel.

SAIFF was founded in New York City to promote films from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and the diaspora from those communities. Visit [www.saiff.org/2011/landing.php](http://www.saiff.org/2011/landing.php) for details.

## Tuning in to radio success

SUNRISE RADIO is the most popular Asian radio station, beating the BBC Asian Network.

The station achieved one of its biggest-ever audiences with a weekly reach of 586,000 listeners. Since the last quarter, the west London-based station has added 117,000 new listeners nationally.

The BBC Asian Network weekly figures averaged 471,000, which is 20,000 down on the previous quarter.

The average BBC Asian Network listener now tunes into the station for 6.6 hours a week - up from 6.1 hours in the previous three months.

# Shivali: Praise the lord



## BHAJAN SINGER BHAMMER IS BREAKING BARRIERS

by IMRAN CHOUDHURY

**SHIVALI BHAMMER is far from the stereotype of an artist singing devotional hymns in praise of God.**

By day, she is a high-powered city derivatives stockbroker but by night, she devotes herself to spirituality and music.

She has also been likened to talk show host and cultural icon Oprah Winfrey for her role as an unofficial agony aunt and confidante to troubled women and teenagers who relate to her and her music.

Bhammer is a rising star of the traditional and fusion music scene with her debut album *The Bhajan Project* released last November by Sony Music India. And she is set to make more waves with a video next month called *Hanuman Chalisa*.

However, her role as agony aunt surprised her at the very start of her music career, when she began to receive dozens of messages from girls around the country asking her for relationship advice. She even got one from a married woman 10 years older than her.

Bhammer told *Eastern Eye*: "It's an honour to be doing that and I enjoy it. But I always have to make sure that I am objective. I get a lot of relationship questions which is bizarre because I don't see what connection people make in me solving their relationship problems."

"I do have women in troubled marriages who say they wish to work. I get questions asking how I do my music and work at the same time."

The 24-year-old, who is based in

Knightsbridge, London, grew up in a liberal household and always felt she had more of a traditional personality than her family members. She has a degree in economics and philosophy from University of Nottingham.

Her sound is a mixture of classical bhajans mixed with pop, hip hop and r'n'b styles.

Bhammer's inspiration comes from her devotion to God and her best friend Arjun Coomaraswamy, an up-and-coming r'n'b singer who helped her produce *The Bhajan Project*. They have been making music together since the age of 15.

"He was so talented and I also wanted to be involved in his musical world."

"Because of the general crisis in the world spirituality is coming back in fash-

ion and a good way to relate to that is through music.

"I wanted to express music in the way people could identify with, with something that's more modern and fresh."

"There no reason why you shouldn't have a guitar, a western drum kit, hip hop and r'n'b when praising God. There should be no reason for not doing that."

Bhammer admits that it was "difficult" staying within people's expectations especially when her music is suited for all types of audiences.

"People will be surprised when they see me at a party. They'll be like, 'oh, we never thought you wanted to party!'"

■ *The Bhajan Project* is available in stores across the UK and India and can be found online at iTunes and Amazon.



## LONDON MELA TO FEATURE BRITISH-ASIAN MUSIC STARS

A STELLAR line-up of British-Asian music stars have been announced for the up-coming London Mela.

The main BBC Asian Network stage at the event on Sunday, September 4, will feature headline acts including bhangra superstar Jazzy B (pictured). The singer is returning to the London Mela for the first time since 2002 to perform his exclusively from his new album.

New sensation Garry Sandhu will make his Mela debut, Southall-based Bollywood playback star Ash King will perform hits including *Te Amo* and Mumzy Stranger will be

joined by protégé Junai Kaiden with a live band. Jay Sean will also be performing in his first Asian event for more than three years. Other acts include Hunterz, Surinder Rattan, Roach Killa and Joga.

Station presenters Tommy Sandhu, Noreen Khan, Sonia Deol and Murtz will host the main stage throughout the day.

In other highlights, the Asian Network's Mix Tent, hosted by BBC Asian Network and Radio 1's Nihal, features urban Asian talent including Metz & Trix, Shinde Boss, Pure Music Generals, Kamal Raja, Jags

Klimax, Donae'o and Jernade Miah alongside station DJs Kayper, Sonny Ji, Dipps Bhamrah, Kan-D-Man & Limelight.

BBC Asian Network's Bobby Friction hosts the BBC Introducing Stage at the London Mela, which showcases the best in emerging and unsigned talent for a second year.

The BBC Asian Network will also film the main stage for a BBC TV Red Button special, to be broadcast from September 5-18.

There will also be the usual array of food stalls, children's activities, funfair and other attractions.