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Guwahati to immortalise the ‘Iron Man of Metal’



[editor](#) · 12:06, 5 Jun 2010 · 12198 views · 5 min read



If Shillong is renowned for the Bob Dylan fest which is presently into its 38th year, Guwahati – the gateway city to the Northeast – may very well be regarded as the new “tribute capital” of the world. Thanks to a few noble souls, musicians and music lovers of the city have actually immortalised a number of legendary musicians from different parts of the globe. However, the buzzword in music circles, of late, is the tribute to the “iron man of metal” Ronnie James Dio on June 11 next.

A pall of gloom seems to have got cast over the entire rock fraternity worldwide ever since news about Dio's demise passed around. For Ronnie can very well be said to be the man who shaped the growth of the metal genre. If Michael Jackson brought to the world his famous "moonwalk", Dio will be remembered for popularizing the famous "devil's horn" hand gesture, which went on to become an inseparable component of metal culture. Dio passed away due to cancer on May 16 last.

Ronnie James Dio was a man who, throughout his life, strove to keep aloft the metal banner, which he did with powerful and consistently excellent music marked by deep lyrical thoughts. A thorough gentleman to the core, the rich tenor of his baritone still continues to haunt his countless fans spread throughout the world. As such, it was not surprising to see rockers of all hues in remote corners of the world, even in our seemingly far flung Northeast India, line up to pay tributes to a musician who is now being referred to as the "Michael Jackson of Metal".

Rich tributes will be paid to Dio on June 11 in a Pub Rock fest that has been organized by the Eastern Beats Music Society to pay homage to the man and his music. The event, which will feature six bands from Guwahati and Shillong, will also feature Dhruva Sharma – frontman of the oldest rock group of Assam Friends – and Lucid Recess – one of the most popular bands from the region.

Talking about the celebrations, founder secretary of Eastern Beats Music Society Aiyushman Dutta said, "Ronnie James Dio has been an inspiration to so many musicians spread all over the world. It is unlikely that the music community, especially followers of the metal genre, will easily forget him. If I were to quote a musician friend of mine, the volume of work and reputation Dio leaves behind ensure that he will always be a 'Rainbow in the Dark'." The society's co-founder David Koch elaborates, "This is sure to be a great evening of music for each band will play at least one or two Dio songs. We will also have a number of senior musicians from Guwahati, Shillong and Dimpur taking part in the celebrations."

The tribute celebrations in Guwahati have caught the notice of music lovers all over the world. Mumbai-based musician Harish Ramakrishnan says, “The initiative to hold a pub-rock fest in the memory of Ronnie James Dio is simply brilliant. I can hardly think of anybody paying a tribute to this legend, even though he’s been such an inspiration to other vocalists. His end seems so much like the song he sang... Die Young... If only I could be there.” Similar views were also expressed by Abe Thomas, the Business Development Director of Suzuki Musical Instruments, who sighs, “I wish I could somehow be there!”

This is definitely not the first time that musicians in Guwahati have got together to remember musicians in this manner. At the initiative of Rockarolla and Eastern Beats Music Society, local musicians have gone ahead and actually immortalised several legendary musicians in the city. From Jimi Hendrix and Cliff Richards to the more recent Mark Knopfler birthday celebrations – tributes have been paid to all. At last count, almost 42 pub rock fests have been organized to pay tributes to musicians of various hues and colours.

Musical genres and lyrical sensibilities don’t matter much for the musicians then; it’s just the music that matters. As David Koch says, “Our chief aim is to promote rock ‘n’ roll. Till a few years back, pub rock fests were literally unheard of in Guwahati. We want to promote rock ‘n’ roll and also make Guwahati the new tribute capital”. Aiyushman Dutta adds, “These pub rock fests have a dual purpose. While we are paying tribute to a well-known musician or celebrate his birthday, the local musicians also get a platform to play in front of an audience and better themselves. The bands here hardly get the opportunity to play in front of an audience. In a place where there is no jamming room till date, this is the best possible way to keep the music scene alive.”

Besides these tribute celebrations, the city also has the John Lennon and Jimi Hendrix tribute celebrations that are organized on an annual basis.



editor

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