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## Pro Tools - Bollywood Style

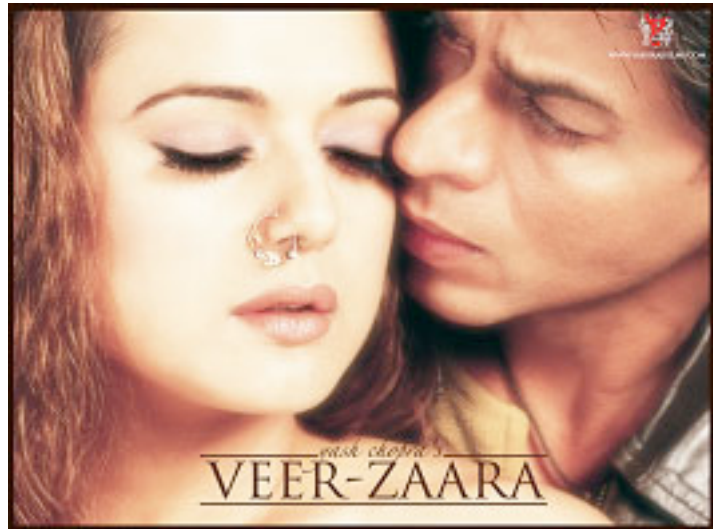
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By Stephen Bruel

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A journey of a son completing his father's work against a backdrop of technological challenges in an exotic Eastern location - and this is just behind the scenes!

Welcome to Bollywood, the film-making hub of India where over 1000 feature films are produced annually. A place where the national pastime of going to the cinema is only interrupted by the other national treasure, cricket.



And welcome to Pro Tools – Bollywood Style.

India's current number one movie at the box office is Veer Zaara, a film produced by Yash Raj Films, and directed by Yash Chopra. Yash Raj Films chief executive officer Sanjeev Kohli, is the son of highly respected Hindi film music composer, the late Madan Mohan.

Throughout his career Madan Mohan composed music for over 100 films. Although proficient in all genres, his forte was light classical music, which earned him universal respect from the stalwarts of Indian classical music. His use of traditional Indian instruments, especially the sitar, has also been widely acknowledged.

When Sanjeev realised he had a collection of previously unreleased Madan Mohan recordings from the golden era of Indian music and cinema, it became his dream to share the masterpieces with today's audience.

"Some of the compositions were alternative tunes my father had composed for his well-known hits - dating back almost 30 years," says Sanjeev.

Sanjeev discussed his ideas with renowned film director Yash Chopra who was "only too delighted to bring alive the melodies of a musician unparalleled". Although they were from the same era in filmmaking, Yash had not had the opportunity to work with Madam Mohan before the musical legend passed away at a young age.



The late Madan Mohan

Yash listened to the collection and identified a film that would best showcase the maestro's work.

"He selected those tunes from that collection that went in perfect in sync with his movie theme," says Sanjeev.

To ensure the modernised recordings would remain as faithful as possible to his father's original recordings, Sanjeev contacted Pramod Chandorkar, chief engineer at Mumbai's Studio One which boasts a Pro Tools HD3 system and is housed in Mumbai's famous Empire Studios building.



Classic Bollywood "old world" charm – Monogrammed Mixing, Editing and Monitoring Room doors within Mumbai's famous Empire Studio's Building



Beautiful marble staircase at Empire Studio Building entrance

Owned by Mushtaq Nadiadwala and Feroz Lakdawala, the Empire Studios facility also has a film mixing stage featuring a Pro Tools Mix 3 system on the ground floor, and on the second floor is an additional music studio called Sound City that uses a Pro Tools Mix 3 system.

"To engineer and work on compositions by such a great person was a great honour and responsibility," says Pramod.

"We could only dare to think about such a technologically challenging project because we had ProTools HD3 in our studio."



Impressive space where Veer Zaara recording took place

The recordings were old and on a spool with a lot of hiss. And due to degeneration of the tape there were pitch problems in places. So modernising the musical style or arrangement of these recordings was not the only challenge for Pramod. As some of the analogue recordings were 30 years old and saved on quarter inch tape, sonic problems also had to be overcome.

Furthermore, the final mix would need to be in 5.1 surround to accommodate modern theatre sound systems.

Pramod says ProTools was optimally used in almost all the aspects of the recording.

"For the 5.1 music, the Neve was hardly used, it was entirely done on ProTools and the plug-ins used were predominantly TCX and Pitchshift. Other than the Lexicon, minimal outboard gear was used."

The result is a powerful fusion of old and new. A dramatic and faithful reproduction of music by legendary Hindi film composer Madan Mohan produced in the digital Pro Tools environment and now being enjoyed by Bollywood film goes around the globe.

Perhaps the impact that Pro Tools has had in bringing a golden era in Indian music and cinema to modern audiences is most evident through the response by Lata Mangeshkar, who sang on some of the the original compositions 30 years ago.

"Lata was almost in tears with joy, on listening to these tracks - this is the best compliment one could have," says Chandorkar.

Such an emotional response can only be music to the ears of devoted son and film producer Sanjeev Kohli.



Studio One Veer Zaara Production Team (standing from left to right – Mr Anwar, Mr Yusuf, Mr Pramod, Mr Vijay, Mr Dinesh, sitting – Mr Ahhijeet, Mr Pranav)

### Studio One – Veera Desai Rd, Mumbai, India

Studio One is truly a world-class music studio. Situated above the famous film-based Empire Studio, Studio One features a Pro Tools HD 3 system, an impressive recording space with acoustics designed by M/s Recording Architecture (U.K.), large Neve console, a state of the art Genelec monitoring set up in it's control room, and an impressive range of effects and microphones, ensuring quality work.

Located in a city where there is no shortage of music studios to accompany the frantic pace of the "Bollywood" film production schedule, owner Mushtaq Nadiadwala is justifiably proud of his facility.

"Today there is no lack of studios. Every musician and music director has a studio today." says Mushtaq, "I would say that Studio One is aimed at anyone who wants to do quality work."