

ARJUN 101

INTRODUCTION TO THE R&B SENSATION

Initially influenced by his mother's love for music and later on learning to play numerous instruments himself, Arjun did not need lose much sleep over the decision to enter the music industry. However, interestingly enough, singing was not his first choice as a career; nor did he particularly like his now famous R&B style of singing. Arjun was into music production and composition, and was head over heels in love with Heavy Rock. This writer sat down with the British-Sri-Lankan heartthrob over Skype and email to talk about his journey into the music industry, how social media helped him break though into the industry, and more.

Is there any specific incident that you recall to have had affected your career heavily till now?

When I was around 17 years old, my friends forced me to enter a talent show at university in London. Back then, even though I played a lot of instruments and was part of a lot of 'musical groups and bands', I was too shy to sing on stage. I personally preferred music production and composition. Hence, the talent show was the first time I sang live at a show and I actually went on to win the competition. With this backing me up, I gained some confidence in my singing, and as a result I started to sing more and more. After finishing university, I continued making more songs but this time I started uploading videos at YouTube. I think the big break came when I started doing fusions of Indians songs. When I did *Why This Kolevari Di* it immediately launched my career. Now when I look back, funny enough, the one aspect which I was the most uncomfortable with has now come to the forefront.

What do you think helped you make it this far in the industry till now?

Well I still have a long way to go! But I think whatever success I have had has predominantly been down to hard work. One of my favourite sayings is: 'The harder you work, the luckier you get'. Not everything will go your way but the more effort you put in and the more things you try, the more doors will open for you. Experimentation has been the key for me! I'm also lucky to have a great team around me who not only provide support but also push me to keep achieving more.

Since R&B renditions have turned out to be your trademark, how do you deal with the copyright issues of the songs you choose to work on? As you became more and more popular, you might have attracted attention in this issue in equal measures?

Yes and funny enough it was exactly this situation that lead to me signing my first record deal with T-Series in India. I was initially just putting the remixes on YouTube for fun and not monetising the videos so as to avoid any copyright issues. However for one remix (my version of the hit song *Tum Hi Ho*) a third party claimed the rights to the



Since you have officially signed a contract with T-Series, do you think that your freedom as a music-producer and the overall control over your work might ever get compromised? But then again, it would be a completely different scenario if this issue has already been taken care of in your contract.

T-Series are a very forward thinking company, always trying to break new ground and try new things. Thus far, they have allowed me to experiment as a music producer and have trusted my judgement. I'm on a mission to bring R&B to India, though of course there is a limit to how far you can push the envelope and these things take time.

video, so I accepted their claim on YouTube, thinking that the rights were theirs. Next thing I know the video was taken down and my fans were tweeting in a frenzy asking what was happening. The next day the video was restored and I received a message from T-Series apologising for the misunderstanding as they had realised the rights had been claimed by a third party and not by myself. We then began talking further and the T-Series team said that they in fact loved my remixes and could see the potential for them to be marketed on a bigger scale. One thing led to another and I ended up signing a record deal with them. We have now released three official singles together plus a song for their movie *Creature 3D*.

Why don't we talk a little about the online "Urban Music Drama Series" that you did? Correct me if I am wrong, but it was based on the novel "The Overnight Fame of Steffi McBride" by Andrew Crofts? How was it like acting?

Yes it was based on that novel. To be honest I had a very small part in the show and acting is definitely not my forte! I am first and foremost a musician and don't plan to get too involved in acting, although we have received some great offers for roles in India. It's good to step outside your comfort zone but I will be sticking to singing for the time being.

You were also selected to sing the Official ICC Cricket World T20 2012 theme song. What was that experience like?

That was a real honour. The only think I love as much as music is cricket! And to be able to combine the two was a dream come true. I remember hearing my voice in the stadium while the winning team (West Indies) lifted the cup. That was an amazing feeling!

If I am not wrong, your mother acts as your manager while you are working. How is it like working so closely with your mother?

Yes, she does indeed. I think no one cares about you and your happiness more than the people who created you. So it seems natural that so many artists from the east and west (including Beyoncé and Shreya Ghoshal) have had parents as their managers. Trust is something you cannot replace and in this industry it's a real comfort knowing that your career is in the hands of the person you trust the most. Not to mention my mum is no ordinary mum! She is extremely multi-talented in her own right (especially in the arts) and unlike me is amazingly organised!

Over time you are starting to have a packed schedule like so many other celebrities. How do you find time for yourself to just unwind? What do you do during those times? Have any hobbies that you like to fall back on? Yes, life is getting more and more demanding but it's important to make time for people and things that are important to you. I try to see my friends as much as possible and what's great is that most of my close friends work in very different industries to me so I get to hear about a wide range of different experiences. I think if I was only ever exposed to people working in music I would start to go crazy. As I mentioned I love cricket which I play or watch whenever I get the time (World Cup is here which is exciting!). My other major passions are Art and Digital Media, both of which I get to utilise in my job, as up until recently I have designed all my own artwork and have always had a lot of input into all the visual aspects of my career (music videos, branding etc). I also personally manage most of my social media accounts.

I recently found out that you are working on a new song! Can you please tell me and the readers, what kind of a song you might be working on?

We have just shot the video for a new song in New Delhi; it's another T-Series release. Can't say too much at this stage, but more will be revealed soon!

INTERVIEWED BY RAISA ASHRAF

The full version of this interview can be found on the Next Step website.

WATER COOLER CHRONICLES



PANIC AT THE CUBICLE the dos and don'ts

Music invokes the deepest emotions in me. That must be the reason I have the most intense feeling of rage and fantase of scenarios reminiscent of Fight Club where certain people's faces make intimate acquaintances of their computer monitors every time someone starts playing annoying Hindi music on days when assignments are due and concentration is of paramount importance. This fantasy ends with a few broken bones and a massive bill from the guys at finance for destroying office equipment. Don't just hate it when emotions need to remain repressed?

There are times when subtle hints work and there are times which call for passive aggression. Sadly when the next cubicle blasts *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* from a built-in CPU speaker, it is almost certain the person is devoid of any common sense to pick up on either. And as much as one would like to uninstall the sound drivers from the computer, this is not a long term solution when the office has an IT department which gets to it even if a week too late.

Of course I am not against music, I would gladly hum along to the chorus of a good song playing at a decent volume and tap along while working. There is a time and place for everything. A slow day, your colleagues seem a little down, you play *It's My Life* and chances are whether they love Bon Jovi or not, they know the words and will hum along. Running on a deadline, curses everywhere and people are one step away from becoming the next psychopath – definitely not the time to start up *My Heart Will Go On*. You don't want to be the person who walks in to the office and everyone has to jump for their ear plugs.

At times though, listening to music helps. Need to get recharged – there's surely a track that gets you pumped up be it *Party Rock Anthem* or *Sharp Dressed Man*. Need to concentrate and you got your fancy synth thingies that frankly I never understood. I even knew a guy who plugged in his ear buds, cranked up *Stairway to Heaven* and took power naps in his cubicle before tackling particularly gruelling days. In cases like this, think of the poor unfortunates around you and be sure to invest in some good headphones. A decent headphone, be it from A4 Tech or Beats should do the trick. Or since everyone carries around a pair of earphones anyway, just put them on and let the office get on with their work. Be sure not to crank up the volume too high though – and I speak from experience – a boss calling you while you are playing air guitar to *Metallica* does not end well.

Music has been known to add to productivity. It makes repetitive work easier according to studies. There are debates on whether lyrics are distractions or if classical music actually improves concentration. Ambient music seems to be the sweet spot and dance music has been known to increase efficiency while proof-reading. If your boss is annoyed because you perpetually have headphones on, point out the pros and be sure not to mention that some studies have claimed music can interfere with learning.

To get back to our annoying colleagues, the most you can do is to keep dropping subtle hints that are not so subtle. Leave that pair of Nokia headphones that your mom never used on their desk, mention aloud how music feels so much better when listened to via headphones, delete all their music and leave *Zepplin's IV* on their computer. And if none of that works, politely asking to turn down the music has been known to work. Sometimes.

MOYUKH MAHTAB

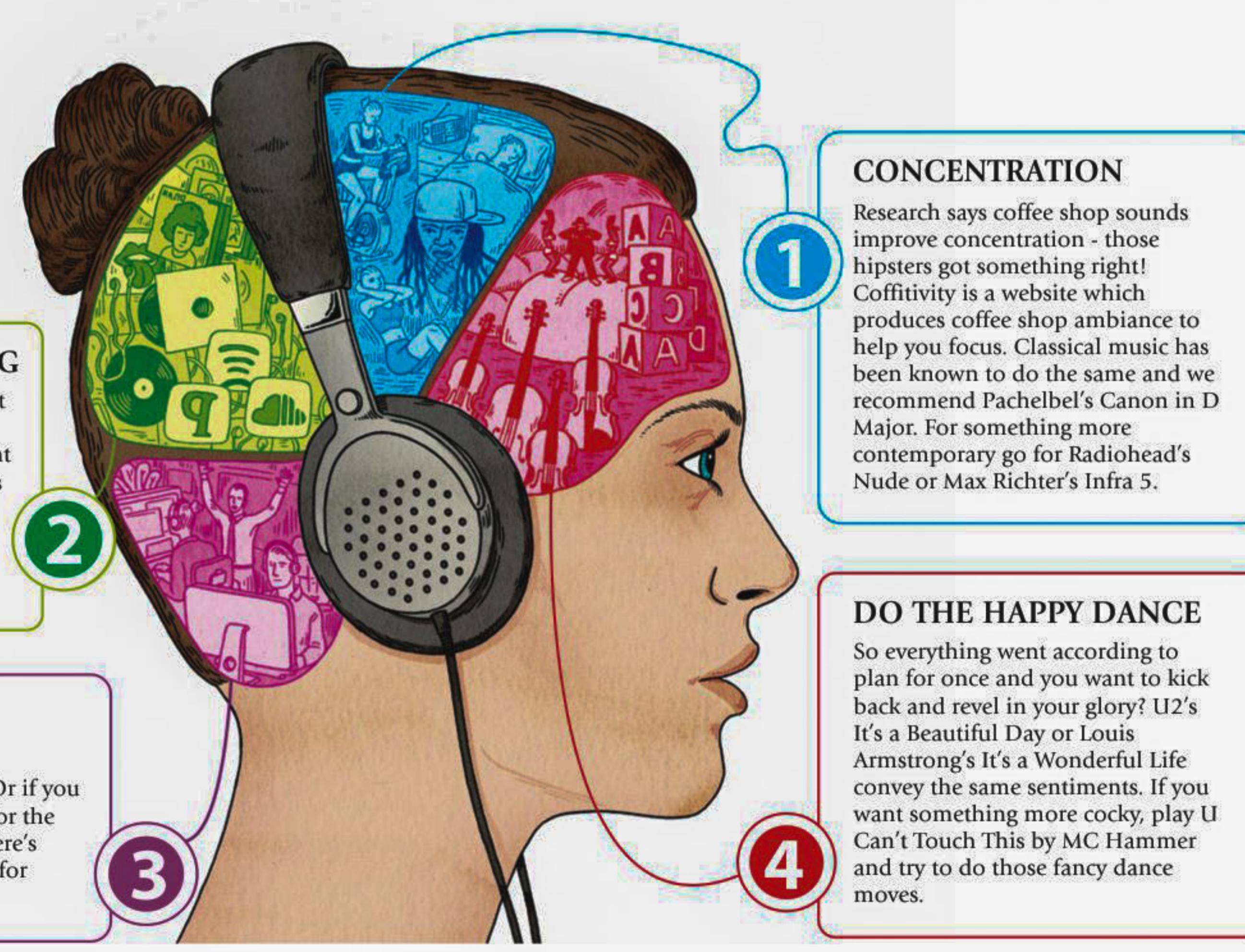
Workplace PLAYLIST

PRESENTATION/ LONG MEETING

Yes we know what you are expecting here. But just to spice things up, start out with *Seven Nation Army* by the White Stripes. If you want something more mellow, go for *Bryan Adams* indomitable *You Can't Take Me*. Queen's *We Will Rock You* is a great song to get pumped up. If all else fails, there's always *Survivor's Eye of the Tiger*.

WANT TO KILL YOUR BOSS (BUT CAN'T)

Angst? What other than Nirvana's *Lithium*? Or if you are feeling particularly like a sociopath - go for the Moriarty-ish *Thieving Magpie* by Rossini. There's always *Flyentology* by EI-P feat Trent Reznor for something more recent.



CONCENTRATION

Research says coffee shop sounds improve concentration - those hipsters got something right! Coffitivity is a website which produces coffee shop ambiance to help you focus. Classical music has been known to do the same and we recommend Pachelbel's Canon in D Major. For something more contemporary go for Radiohead's *Nude* or Max Richter's *Infra 5*.

DO THE HAPPY DANCE

So everything went according to plan for once and you want to kick back and revel in your glory? U2's *It's a Beautiful Day* or Louis Armstrong's *It's a Wonderful Life* convey the same sentiments. If you want something more cocky, play *U Can't Touch This* by MC Hammer and try to do those fancy dance moves.