

## Music that is personal

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Lucas Van Merwijk from Netherlands shares his insight on jazz music and what got him hooked on to it

Lucas Van Merwijk has been at the forefront of the European Jazz, Latin and Percussion scene for over 25 years. The award-winning musician from Netherlands was in the city recently to play to a packed crowd at Indigo Live Music Bar with his band the Van Merwijk Music Machine.

A master of his own signature style, Lucas blends a mix of Cuban, Brazilian and North American rhythms, characterised by powerful percussion and splendid technical skills, into a unique music experience.

Excited about playing in Bengaluru, Lucas says he was really looking forward to this gig. "The music scene in the city is really fresh and I will check out as much of it as possible during my stay here. This is my second time in India but the first time I'm playing here. Music lovers can always expect a contemporary approach to our Cuban-styled music since it's very swinging and groovy. It's very adventurous music and we try to make the experience different every time."

Lucas adds that he will be very glad if his listeners leave after each gig feeling better than how they were before entering the room. "Our music is positive and musically interesting. The fun thing about this music is people who are not into jazz too will enjoy it."

Presently, the virtuoso is the initiator and bandleader of four ensembles: the world-percussion ensemble Drums United featuring musicians from across the globe, Van Merwijks Music Machine, Drumix! with master percussionist Aly N'Diaye Rose, and the 20-piece salsa and Latin Jazz formation - The Cubop City Big Band. Besides this, Lucas is in great demand as a drummer with various groups and artistes throughout Europe, in particular with the internationally acclaimed group Nueva Manteca.

On how he manages to juggle his various bands and projects, Lucas says juggling is the right word.

"I like to play different styles of music. And some are flexible enough to tour with so I am happy to travel with them. Maybe I will spot someone here in India and we can do a project here too. I would love to do an Indian collaboration."

Outlining his musical journey, the prodigy says the spark was already there when he was a young kid. "I was always fascinated by the drums. I used to carry a toy drum around my neck and beat it after watching the parades on the streets. I was always one of those kids beating on my mother's pots and pans. I come from a very cultural family so being artistic came naturally. I just kept going. I discovered I could potentially make a living out of it. So I continued to grow and live my dream."

A teacher for drums and percussion at the World Music department of the Rotterdam CODARTS conservatory and the Jazz department of the Amsterdam Conservatory, Lucas tells rising jazz musicians that it's difficult to find anything new in original jazz which is American music.

“It had almost become like classical music,” he laughs. “The word jazz has become much now and signifies improvisation. Jazz music has gone global now across countries and cultures with immense transformations and processes.”

So his advice is to check out the masters. “Listen to the greatest drummers. Take a moment and see what has been done before. At a certain point you will have to put in something of your own. That’s the great thing about jazz. It’s honest and you put your own personality into it. If you don’t do that, people will see you as a copycat. You wouldn’t have understood the real essence of jazz which is very personal music.