



This was a review recently sent to us by a Suroop Gopalakrishnan from a show that happened last Fall, we love your feedback , blogs and artwork , please send them to [evadowd@motherjane.in](mailto:evadowd@motherjane.in)

### **Motherjane ~Hard Rock Café, 24 Sep 2009**

In the dim light of the rather sterile Hard Rock Bangalore, I sat and wondered – how will a band seemingly tailormade for the big arena adapt to the relative intimacy of the up front and personal audience of a rock café ?

I had been listening to Motherjane for close to two years now. A late entrant to the fan community, no doubt. All my previous encounters with the band were at the stadiums. The Megadeth show, the odd college fest here - the persona of the band was arena rock, not Unplugged.

I had got in early to reserve my favourite single seater at the Hard Rock. Definitely three beers between now and the concert.

8:00pm. Suraj does the rounds before the show, feeding off the pulse of the scattered audience. The band is impatient and once the sound check of Chasing The Sun is done with , they loll around on the sofas sipping their juices and meeting janiacs. Deepu is bored with the wait and he wishes the show had started earlier as he has an early morning flight to catch....

8:30pm. The crowd is yet to trickle in. I check with Lalboy, attending my table and he assures me that when the time comes, all will be well. Was it the unseasonal rains or had Bangalore completely lost it's somewhat flaccid mojo ? I remind myself that this is a Thursday, after all.

9:00pm. I am on my third beer and the need to be rocked is overwhelming. However, the chase, as Lemmy succinctly observed, is better than the catch and I am savouring the band's company while waiting for the caviar.

9.30pm. The thayambaka intro rips in and in a flash, the Hard Rock is full. There are the faithful janiacs, the corporate cynics, the journeymen Lonely Planet toting tourists, the odd expat and the surprised couples who planned a quiet evening only to land in the middle of a supremely loud show.

As Suraj rips into “Chasing The Sun”, it’s clear to everyone around that this is not your average mid-week busk session by a wannabe Metallica. Motherjane are technically accomplished and note perfect from the word go. One felt that Baiju’s sound was a tad low but hey, when did you last attend a concert where sound was perfect ?

“Questions” and a somewhat sedate “Mindstreet” follow quickly and Suraj is working the crowd with his Indonesia stories. A thick German accent asks him to talk less and play more. Suraj obliges only to have the accent disappear into the loo on the next song. Suraj remembers and does not forget to chide him !

The band does an excellent “Maya” and “Soul Corporations” and pulls into the Maktub setlist. There are screams for “Broken” and Baiju. Baiju obliges with his trademark Vande Mataram waltz and they are on their way again. The rhythm section is tight as ever and Clyde’s intensity on the bass is frightening at times.

They close with an outstanding Karmic Steps, the sweeping grind of the number offering a fitting and majestic finale to a classic set . The crowd is insatiable and wants more. An encore of Chasing The Sun and then their managers herd them down .

This then is a picture of a band approaching it’s prime. Gone is the debutante awkwardness of the Insane Biography days, the do-i-sound-like-rush or do-i-sound-like-DT journey into the discovery of their sound. This is an assured band, at ease with the music they play and their own existence as a band. They know each other well . Suraj writes from the bottom of his heart and with a lyrical maturity unusual for Indian bands. He speaks to be heard and we hear him because his is an Indian voice, speaking about the travails of our own Indian times and the vagaries of our very own Indian personal demons.

If there is one word which describes their music best, it is HONESTY. While there are nods here and there to their inspirations, not a note is artificial, not a riff has been ripped off and put in place to complete a song. Each song has completed it’s own organic journey into a natural life form. Finally, the core of any great band is it’s rhythm unit. I go out on a limb here, but Clyde, John and Deepu are probably the best rhythm section playing in India today.

I learnt in my random exchanges of notes that they are all grounded Malayali boys without big city affectations and that is neither an attitude to throw nor a cross to carry. It is the way they are and they are comfortable wearing those clothes. Whether they planned it or not, it is clear that the emphasis on melody in Malayalam music, the lyrical intensity and existential concerns of Malayalam poetry and the metaphoric colourfulness which typify Malayali literature all resonate in their music, directly or indirectly, and contributes to the evolution of the Motherjane sound.

Are they the first bona fide Indian rock stars ? I say yes because no one, no Indus Creed, no 13AD, no Shiva or Parikrama – all kick-ass bands in their own right, have done what they have done – create a unique signature sound of their own which breaks free from all crutches. Motherjane need not look anywhere for references now. They are the new reference point. Goodbye Route 66 , hello NH 47 !