

VINCE COSTA

## Musicians are entrepreneurs, too

Says singer and songwriter Vince Costa while talking to RACHEL FERNANDES about the business of making music on the sidelines of the release of his debut album, 'Saint and Sinner'

Pic: Fabio Carvalho

Vince Costa

**T**hey say some are born with music in them. For the rest of us, the music is all around and we get influenced in various ways. One such person is Vince Costa. Singer, songwriter, audio engineer and music business management expert, Vince is all these rolled into one. So if I tell you that he's never formally learnt to play an instrument or read the musical scale, it will definitely leave you surprised. This, however, was a small hurdle for Vince. "I grew up listening to the old standards of country music – Chad Atkins, Jim Reeves, Willie Nelson, etc. Another influencing factor was my mother's side of the family who are all musically inclined. As I grew, close family members playing in various Goan bands became my idols," says Vince adding that he never really got down to learning music formally simply because he had neither the aptitude nor the ability to be consistent. "I remember my mother literally teaching me how to count the beat as I had no sense of timing," he quips.

As Vince progressed into his teens, he began developing more

**“Music is not looked upon as a serious business or musicians as entrepreneurs. What we do is entrepreneurial, only the vehicle is different, musical notes as opposed to steel or bricks. The album is an entrepreneurial effort. As independent artistes, we rely on the community which should strongly back us up”** VINCE COSTA

of a focus on music. College life introduced him to a range of musically inclined people. However, after completing class 12, he figured he didn't want to study and so, dropped out. "Interestingly, I knew what I didn't want to do more than what I wanted to do. I knew I didn't want to pursue college, but be involved in music. I was drawn to the technical aspects. I wanted to be an audio engineer. Back then, scant little was known about what an audio engineer did. Hence, I packed my bags and took off for Mumbai," he

says. While still in Mumbai, Vince secured a coveted seat at the Bombay University on their diploma course in audio engineering. Once done, armed with a better understanding and more technical experience, he returned to Goa and for the next six years, worked in live sound. "This helped me understand a lot more about audio and sound. However, after a point, I was saturated. I found a course in Australia on the business of music management. It focused on a range of subjects including artiste management, copyrights, production, basically everything that goes into running a music company or a record label. That apart, I also worked with a band there. When I was done, I understood the business of music from a larger perspective and also boasted technical knowledge of how to record," he says.

So what inspired him to come back from Australia in 2001, despite having good job offers? "It was my dream to start a record label in Goa. I wanted to work with fresh Goan/Indian talent. I wanted to be in A&R (Artistes and Repertoire), the guy

who goes out, finds talent and develops it," he says.

Talking about his transition from the technical side to the creative side, Vince says that for about five years, he took a complete sabbatical from music. "I was going through my own personal evolution. My creativity was taking shape. During the sabbatical, I consciously didn't listen to any music. It was a very painful process, but out of the solitude and dislocation, I was able to hear my own voice and thoughts. The only music I connected to was the stuff that I was creating. It wasn't planned, but it was a very important period for me," Vince says. The song that literally broke the creative dam for Vince was the single Home Before Christmas. "This song started everything. It happened so fast, within just 10 minutes I had the entire song. The creative pressure that had built up over so long finally burst open," he says. Even better was the response the song received. "I had people from all parts of the world tell me about hearing my song. One and a half year later, I wrote another song. This one,

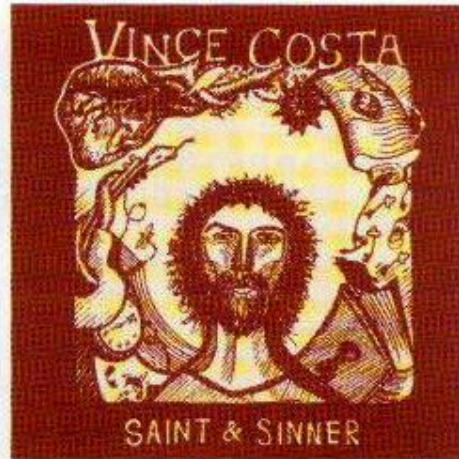


Singer, songwriter and audio engineer, Vince Costa loves his music with an unparalleled passion. It is this very passion that has been the driving force behind his debut album, Saint and Sinner which, though just a month old, is already into its second print

too, I recorded and shot the video myself. This helped me kind of establish my self confidence and my song writing ability. From then on, I was continuously writing. That's where all the songs of Saint and Sinner came from," he says.

Elaborating on the making of Saint and Sinner, which hit stands about a month back, Vince says the process took him five years of which, about three were spent only on writing. "In fact, in the last eight months before release, I worked for close to 17 hours in a day," he says. Another feather in his cap is that the album has been recorded live, in his own studio and, with Goan musicians.

Veering to the topic of the realities of the Goan music scene, Vince says that as a business, music is today facing numerous challenges, mainly due to the Internet. "While on the positive side, technological advances have made it easy for anyone who wants to express



themselves to be heard, the flip side is that it has dried up the money in the business. So, while platforms such as Youtube.com or Soundcloud are becoming ideal places for talent to be discovered, which in turn is encouraging for young budding musicians, today, the business model has changed to innovative ideas like giving music away or allowing people to pay what they feel is the best price. A lot of the onus lies on the artiste itself. The good thing is that there is plenty of talent in Goa, but the need of the hour is mentorship. People

with experience in music need to come forward and share their knowledge," he says.

Vince rues the fact that neither is music looked upon as a serious business, not musicians as entrepreneurs. "What we do is entrepreneurial, only the vehicle is different, musical notes as opposed to steel or bricks. The product (album) is an entrepreneurial effort. Musicians should look at themselves as entrepreneurs because there is definitely a business angle and one mustn't forget that," he says.

How is making music profitable in this day and age of ease of downloading music off the Internet? "One can't stop people from downloading. However, it is all about respect. If someone respects what you are doing as a work of art, they will not hesitate to pay its worth. There is a total misunderstanding about the investment of time, life and effort that goes into producing an album. That needs

to be addressed and moreover, respected. As independent artistes, we rely completely on support from the community which should come out and back us up strongly," he says.

The entrepreneur in him is elated at the response to Saint and Sinner. "The album has been out for a month now and we've already run out of the first print and gone in for a second one. A response like this is very encouraging, as when one puts out an album, it's all about acceptance versus rejection. The album has been a feel good factor, because, more than anything else, I was able to produce it in Goa, with my Goan friends. The target was outlandish, record everything live and no sequenced stuff. It was challenging, but we overcame it," says a visibly elated Vince, whose passion for music is showing signs of maturing into a successful entrepreneurial venture ■