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**India's first classical music channel to launch June; test signals on**

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MUMBAI: After achieving accolades as a professional violinist, Ratish Tagde is now entering the television space with India's first 24 hour classical music channel 'In Sync'.

Already available in test mode on InCable in Mumbai (since 11 April), the channel will see a formal launch on cable digital platforms across the country in June. For the time being, In Sync will be available on digital cable TV platforms. Tagde hopes to be on DTH by next year though. For the first six months of its launch, the channel will be on MSOs on a free view basis, beyond which it will function as a pay channel.



The channel is being beamed from Insat 4A.

Aimed at classical music purists and enthusiasts across ages, the channel is owned by Perfect Octave Media Ltd, an event management company that specialises in organising music concerts.

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"Through In Sync, I want to expand music lovers' horizon. The name itself is a reference to the basic element of music - synchronisation. Through the name we want to communicate that our content is in-sync with what the audience wants," explains a hopeful Tagde.

He and his team carried out research for launching the channel. "According to our research a large proportion of music lovers listen to Bollywood music, the second being ghazals and Indi-pop ranked

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as a third preferred choice. Further to this, our study also revealed that approximately 51 per cent Indians listen to music on a dedicated music channel and around 67 per cent have welcomed the idea of a launch of a classical-based music channel", says Tagde.

On the content front, the channel will be focussing on concerts for the time being. Having a music concert organiser as a promoter, the channel has access to concerts by musical stalwarts like the Late Pandit Ravi Shankar, Late Jagjit Singh and many others. To begin with, it will have four hours of fresh content which Tagde intends to take up to 10 hours eventually.

In Sync has nearly 150 hours of content lined up for its launch. Of this, 40 hours is studio recorded content with the likes of Shankar Mahadevan, Ustaaad Zakir Hussain, Hariharan and Saadhna Sargam. He hopes to increase this to 1000 hours by mid June 2014.



Apart from live concert recordings and studio performances, the channel will also air shows that have semi-classical music to offer. In the future, Tagde is hopeful of airing content that transcends geographies and wants to bring western classical music genres like jazz to India through In Sync. The channel will air two minute vignettes educating and informing the different 'ragas' in Indian classical music between shows.

It will also feature Bollywood songs which have their origins in classical music like 'Laga Chunri Mein Daag' which has its base in raag Bhairavi.

The programming strategy for the channel will be to predominantly air music that is in-sync with the time of the day. "While music channels and news channels usually do not have appointment viewing, I feel that for a classical music channel, it is a good idea to have content (music) according to the mood and time of the day," says Tagde.

The strategy of appointment viewing may also prove beneficial from an advertising perspective. The channel intends to get on board high-end brands in automobile and jewellery to advertise on In Sync. The channel's ad sales duties have been outsourced to Aidem Ventures, while Cira Media is the strategic partner on board taking care of its distribution.

While he refused to reveal the initial investment he has pumped into the channel, Tagde hopes to break even in two to two and a half years from launch. "Apart from my own investments, we have already roped in few high net-worth individuals for investment in the project and for future growth we will rope in strategic investors at an appropriate time," he adds.

Tagde is hopeful, this despite. "Apart from advertising, we also intend to generate revenues through the numerous copyrights we own to concerts and recordings. Also, with digitisation setting in, we hope to go pay in due course of time," he reveals.

He also has plans to take the channel abroad and is already in talks with parties in the Gulf and the United States. Additionally, he also hopes to launch a new channel for Carnatic music lovers in south India.

The channel will be a medium for recognising and encouraging new talent as well. The promoters have called for tapes and recording from upcoming classical singers and performers to be aired on the channel.

“Through this channel, I want to reach out to every classical music enthusiast and make him a part of the music one way or another. I also want to show that there is immense diversity in Indian classical music,” Tagde concludes.

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