



**LAYA PROJECT LIVE** was conceived as a way to bring the music of countries affected by the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami to the ears of the world. **KIM FISHER** speaks to producer **SONYA MAZUMDAR**.

## FROM DEVAVSTATION, INSPIRATION

Proof that the ultimate devastation can sometimes breed inspiration can be found in the Laya Project. Following on from the December 26, 2004 Tsunami that affected people in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand and India, the project brings together the music of these regions, fusing their musical styles, melding them while still maintaining the integrity of the individual traditions. After the release of the Laya Project on CD and on film, the organisers decided to take the idea to the stage.

"We've done an album and a film and after this, the next project is Laya Project Live, which is an amalgamation of the six countries, in a nutshell," explains Laya Project Live producer Sonya Mazumdar down a crackling line – obviously telecommunications companies are not as excited about bringing cultures together as the people as Laya Project are. "The shows have been very successful. In the show itself, what we do is we blend the traditional music with the contemporary. We combine the music with design and video art and create an experience."

Putting the experience of the film and CD onto the stage took some planning and proved to be quite a challenge. "It is extremely difficult, but musicians have to perform, to do their music and producers have to produce, so somehow it all works out," she says, adding that it is important to remember that the musicians would never call themselves that – they are just people who embrace their traditional music. "The Laya Project film and the music in its recorded form featured the people of the communities; they're not really famous musicians. They're fishermen, farmers, housewives, just people from the communities who were affected," she says.



Mazumdar says that it would be impossible to round up all of the musicians featured on the Laya Project film and CD, but has done the next best thing. "What we have done is taken film of community members and arranged it in a way to make an album and film. We take elements from the film itself, because it really is not possible to include many of the people in the film in the travel, they do not have passports and many of them haven't left their house in their whole life," she says. "We also don't have the infrastructure to bring them out for the production, so what we do is take parts of the film and interplay it with the live show."

As musical styles get recycled and renewed every year, Mazumdar says people are getting increasingly bored with the same old thing. She says people are looking more and more to world music for something new and different.

"I definitely feel that the world music category is becoming more popular as the world gets smaller. I also think people are looking for fresher sounds, something new," she says. "We have already seen this happen with Bollywood style music, it has become so popular. I think it's interesting that traditional music, even though it's so ancient, can be in many ways new. It would take more than a lifetime to explore the world's music, but we should try to hear as much as we can," she continues, adding that it is very limiting to only hear music from one area, and after all, popular music borrows from world music anyway.

**WHAT:** Laya Project Live

**WHEN & WHERE:** Friday 13 February at Supreme Court Gardens, 8.30pm.