

## 'Rocking' through life



**SECRET WEAPON:** A winner of a voice

**THE X FACTOR:** Unafraid of risks

**MEET THE MEMBER:** Rock 'n' Roll in India is a tough business and, in 1985, it was even tougher. Venues were limited and an audience was only available at colleges and rock festivals. Getting good instruments was a struggle — at times, they were smuggled from abroad — and there weren't many good sound system companies around. This was when Indus Creed (earlier known as Rock Machine) came to be, making BG member Uday Benegal, its lead vocalist, a part of India's rock origins. The 'Obedient One' as he was known for being the youngest in the band, Benegal and his crew of trailblazers have set the bar of success for today's rock wannabes.

**THE PRELUDE TO HIS CAREER CHORUS:** Benegal decided to join and front a rock band when it made no sense to form a rock band, and yet here he is, still standing. A huge part of his success lies in the fact that he never failed to take chances. For instance, Indus Creed was the first band to come up with original songs. "It was just something we thought needed to be done. Like all bands in those days, we played cover tunes but were eager to write our own songs." When opportunity knocked, in the form of R.V. Pandit, owner of CBS Records India, asking them to come up with their first original album, they let it in. "We never set out to prove anything. It just happened," he says. Even his joining the band was a thing of pure providence. "They heard me coach someone in singing and, since the lead singer was leaving, asked me to join."

**BEYOND BORDERS:** When, in 1998, the band disbanded and went their separate ways, Benegal moved to New York and formed Alms for Shanti with former Indus Creed guitarist Jayesh Gandhi. Having completed a course in cinematography and filmmaking at New York's School of Visual Arts, he returned to Mumbai in 2008 to make a movie. He's kept this dream on hold and, in the meantime, teamed up with Mahesh Tinaikar to form alternate rock band Whirling Kalapas. While in New York, Benegal started writing for various publications such as *The Village Voice* and *Mid Day*. Now he writes music-based columns for *Forbes Life* and *GQ*.

**CLUB TIMES:** Benegal has been a BG member for nearly 44 years and reminisces about the good old days when he'd go swimming with his mother. "I used to love the chicken sandwiches, fat potato chips and huge coke floats." Asked if he has ever played for the Gymkhana, he's quick to answer that the club has never asked him to!

**KRYPTONITE:** There's no secret formula for Benegal — it's just important to accept change and keep looking ahead. "As an individual, I try to discover new things about myself — spiritually, organically, materially, psychologically. I want to do things which make me happy. As a musician, I try to perceive my experiences and express them in a way I understand best." **BG**

~Aaron Rodrigues