

CD to be released soon

# A BAMBAS:

## Breaking silence after 42 years in music

CHAMIKARA WEERASINGHE

During the time the music of Shadows, the Supremes and Ventures, Tony Brent and Ricky Nelson dominated the world music and fascinated Sri Lankan music fans in the early 60s, the drummer (Congo) Brian Fernando's Trevor went on to form a group called The Vampires.

There were but a very few beat bands in the country at the time. "Wheels and Becons were among them," remembered Brian, the leader of La Bambas as he leaned against the chair with his eyes shut, diving into a musical past that most young musicians and music lovers of Sri Lanka have scarcely opened their minds to.

There was bass, rhythm and lead guitar and drums. There were no keyboards. In fact nobody knew that keyboard existed at the time," he exclaimed. "But the sound was full and complete even without the keyboard."

Brian, his Thomian schoolmates Priya Peiris, Erinton Perera, Malsiri Wijesuriya and Rollinson Ferdinando, all members of the Labambas were in an interview with In Tune last Tuesday about their evolution as a group in the 60s and their music. La Bambas stands out as the best group that emulated youth harmony in their rendition of songs in the Sinhala language.

The genre is popularly known as three and four part harmony in Western music.

La Bambas was special because they carried originality with their creations inasmuch as to represent Sri Lankan identity in their songs at a time the popular demand for another Elvis or a local Tony Brent against their music. The members of the group were met at the residence of Interior designer Yohan Fernando, who plans to promote the band in 2009.

La Bambas have produced four EPs (extended play records) for record labels, Paradise in 1968, Philips in 1970, Soorya in 1971 and Mactern in 1972 including their popular hits such as *Enna Yanna Nelum Wile, Kurulan Piyambala, Lak Nades* and *Piyakara* (Lak and also evergreen singles in



La Bambas after 42 years in music scene: (from left) Rollinson Ferdinando, Malsiri Wijesuriya, Erinton Perera, Priya Peiris and Brian Fernando.

Sri Lankan pop such as *Cock A Doodle Do* and *Navara Menikela*. La Bambas have produced over 30 songs, among them "Welcome to Sri Lanka, Ayubowan and Cricket Love Jaya Apatai", which they released just after Sri Lanka winning the World Cricket Cup in 1996. They also gave life to the Sri Lankan tea with their song "Wake Up Sri Lanka To A Nice Cup of Tea."

As pointed out by La Bambas members they did not have a front line singer because their style of music did not need one for they were singing harmony.

NEW CD

They have remained unplugged for over 40 decades in spite of the advent of electronic guitars and amplifiers in the late 60s into the local scene by various beat bands and now planning to release a CD album with a selection of their original songs, which they plan to have from their shelves reserves as well as from their discography of "best loved singles."

Brian started his musical career as a congo drummer in the early 60s with Vampires before he decided to form La Bambas after seeing a performance by La Ceylonians in late 1964 at Moratuwa Buddhist Hall. This is how Brian explained his La Ceylonians experience.

"This was amazingly new and soothing to the ear. La Ceylonians played a style which was quite different to what other musicians have



been playing or singing at the time. I was wondering to which category of music that one can assign their music. Their music was initially Western with a Spanish blend with some characteristics of Sinhala folk. I would say although it was difficult to describe."

"I can still remember how they came out with their single titled 'Hoiya Hoiya'. A single like Hoiya Hoiya had never been heard. There were songs by H.R. Jotipala and Milton, but this song was never to be identified with that category of songs. It was completely different."

"I became an admirer of La Ceylonians, thereafter. And with that influence I wanted to start a band that could play something similar to that of La Ceylonians' flavour of music, which is the reason for the appearance of La Bambas. This was the opportunity presented itself on a newspaper, The Observer Talent Contest for the first time. "Welcome youngsters,

The Radio Ceylon did not broadcast, *Cock A Doodle Do* because it had a line "half past two" in the middle of the song in 1971 stating that the rebels might use it as a time signal.

apply, here's the coupon. I knew Priya whom I called over and went out together in search of a guitarist. We found, who had a guitar and was trying to pick up his first few chords. We opted Rollinson to play the lead guitar and we found a singer in Lasla Fernando, the present Choir Master of Holy Emmanuel Church in Moratuwa."

"Thus the band was formed and we wanted to compose two original songs. So we composed Poya Da and Menika to show tempo compound duple meter for



Priya Peiris. This was a too heavy a blow for a young musical outfit. "However, we recovered from that incident with determination to make a name for us. We did not let that debacle to pin us down. Instead we made it an opportunity to come out with best results," he added.

COCK A DOODLE DO

The main figure behind the creation of La Bambas' smash hit *Cock A Doodle Do* was Priya Peiris. *Cock A Doodle Do* was not aired by Radio Ceylon (present SLBC) during the time because there of the security situation prevailed in the country under JVP insurrection in 1971. Priya said, "Radio Ceylon did not broadcast, *Cock A Doodle Do* because it had a line "half past two" in the middle of the song in 1971 stating that the rebels might use it as a time signal. They said, the rebel might use it to blow a police station or something."

After Labambas' experience at the Coconut Grove, Erinton stayed close with the band playing occasionally on their stands whenever somebody was absent or sick, playing bass or rhythm instruments such as guiro, kaitiham, marakas (shakers) or temple bells while providing baritone for their songs who eventually becomes a permanent member.

THE AUDITION

La Bambas applied for the Observer Talent Contest. They were asked to come for an audition prior to the event. The audition was held at Louise Brown Studios in Colombo. Brian, Lasla, Priya and Rollinson had to wait for months to get their letter of invitation for the audition. Minonne Ratnam of Jetliners was conducting the audition together with the rest of the members of the Jetliners.

La Bambas passed their audition under the supervision of Jetliners. They got through the test just after singing the first two or three lines of their songs and were asked to come and perform at the Coconut Grove night club at the Galle Face Hotel, Colombo on May 25, 1966.

La Bambas' performance at the Coconut Grove was only to be rejected by those patronized the club for all the others sang in English that night although they were not originals of those artists who performed them.

"We went there that night with a lot of expectations which turned its back on us very badly with the crowd shouting at us in disapproval with our music and appearance," remembered

Hi folks,  
Can technology enhance music?

Music does not wait for no one. It develops with electronic devices, and computer software to enhance music recording, playback, composition, storage and performance.

One can argue that people have always wanted to devise new expression of musical thought through various electronic and non-electronic devices.

Many revolutions have taken around music on the time of Pythagorean studies carried into the sphere of sounds. As put it by Western musicologists Pythagoras was the first person to study the relation of string lengths to consonance.

However, much the things have changed around music, one thing has remained unchanged - the theory of music. There is a way in which each musical sound refers to another sound, the sounds between intervals of the intervals between each sound to another or to the same sound which one would call unison in music. There are specific changes in sounds to which we respond differently from others.

This is what music is all about or the sphere of music, although one will see thousands of words from technological jargon to describe music.

Computer technology can enhance the quality of sounds but not the quality of a well arranged musical sentence, which could be played with a bamboo flute by a good player to produce the

expected mood in a piece. The amplifier may carry the sounds afar, but the music is the same except for a few buzzes they could be expected from that apparatus.

Have you heard music that is played without using electronic instruments. Don't they sound good. They do, if their music is good. Why don't some musicians like using modern sequencing software on their music? Is this because of the generation gap?

One might say that some music stay better the way they were than getting mixed up with technology. Must we then not admit that technology is of no use to some styles of music?

Let's not make things too complicated here. Technology is of great help whether one likes it or not. It must be used and it should be able to enhance any style of music.

If the music is good, that's where the danger is.

A teacher of music, a music genius who passed away recently, Suriyakumar Weerasingam told me that a computer or technology, when in the hands of a good musician helps enhance the quality of his creations. But when it is in the hands of a bad one, it will only make his music sound worse beyond his imaginations.

Chamikara

AC/DC, the 7th hardest rock act



MTV named AC/DC the seventh-hardest-rocking hard rock act of all time, saying, "Their unsophisticated, uncluttered songs made AC/DC the ultimate party band: the space between Angus and Malcolm Young's blaring guitars and thunderous beats provided a stunning sense of tension and release, and the slow, steady rhythm made the songs perfect for headbanging."

**Song bank**

**Illegal** -shakira

G A  
I tried so hard to be attentive  
Bm  
To all you wanted  
G A  
Always supportive, always patient  
Bm  
What did I do wrong?  
G A  
I'm wondering for days and hours  
Bm G A  
It's here, it isn't here where you belong  
A Bm A G  
Anyhow, anyhow  
Bm  
I wish you both all the best  
A  
I hope you get along

**CHORUS:**  
D Bm  
But you don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"  
G A  
You said you would love me until you die  
Bm A  
And as far as I know you're still alive, baby  
D Bm  
You don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"  
G Bm G Bm D  
I'm starting to believe it should be illegal to deceive a woman's heart  
D Bm  
You don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"  
G A  
And as far as I know you're still alive, baby  
D Bm  
You don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"  
Bm A  
You said you would love me until you die  
Bm A  
And as far as I know you're still alive, baby  
D Bm  
You don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"

Mini Biography

Shakira

Grammy-winning Latina rock singer Shakira was born in Barranquilla, Colombia, on February 2, 1977. Her father is a Lebanese immigrant and her mother a native of Colombia. Shakira began her musical career at age 12 and quickly captured fans throughout Latin America. Singing in Spanish, she is often called the "Latin Alanis Morissette" due to her hard sounds. She won the 2001 Best Latin pop Grammy for her "MTV Unplugged" album.

Trivia Announced engagement to Antonio de la Rúa, son of the present President of Argentina. [March 2001] Is the youngest of eight siblings. Shakira is Arabic for "grateful" or "full of grace." Named her album "Laundry Service" because when she is in love she feels "clean and fresh" Fluent in Portuguese, Italian, and English, in addition to Spanish. Hates to wear jewelry.

Her Lebanese grandmother taught her the art of Arabian Belly Dancing so she can stay true to her middle eastern roots. Has perfect pitch (the ability to recognize any note upon hearing

it or sing any note without prior to hearing it) Her manager for Latin America, Patricia Tellez, the woman who helped her go from being a local artist to Grammy-winning global artist, died of a heart attack in Bogota on 17 August 2004. She likes chocolate. Father's name is William Mebrak Chahid and mother's name is Nidia del Carmen Ripollí Torrado. Steven Spielberg offered her the role of Elena Muno in *The Mask of Zorro* (1998) back when he was originally in talks to direct it. But, she turned the offer down because she felt that not only was she a bad actress, but her English wasn't good enough.

Lists John Lennon as her #1 musical influence. "Hips Don't Lie" instantly soared to the top of the charts in many countries and has been at the very top for many months. It has won countless awards and is currently being performed all over the world along with Wyclef Jean. Ranked #38 on the Maxim magazine Hot 100 of 2007 list. Ranked #33 on VH1's 100 Sexiest Artists.



**Song bank**

**Illegal** -shakira

**VERSE:**  
G  
Who would have thought  
A  
That you could hurt me  
Bm  
The way you've done it?  
G A  
So deliberate, so determined  
Bm  
And since you have been gone  
G A  
I bite my nails for days and hours  
Bm  
And question my own questions on and on  
A Bm A G  
So tell me now, tell me now  
Why you're so far away  
A  
When I'm still so close  
CHORUS:  
D Bm  
You don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"  
G  
You said you would love me until you die  
D Bm A  
And as far as I know you're still alive, baby  
D Bm  
You don't even know the meaning of the words "I'm sorry"  
G Bm G Bm D  
I'm starting to believe it should be illegal to deceive a woman's heart  
VERSE:  
G