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10 Questions for A.R. Rahman

How do you think your career will change now that you've won two very well-deserved Oscars? Rue Roy, LONDON

I have been getting a lot of offers from Hollywood. A lot of my aspirations — like I wanted to work with an orchestra — are possible now. Collaborations are possible with pop artists and icons and all that stuff.

Do you plan to go West and work outside Bollywood? Jay Bee, TORONTO

I think I partly want to do that, but I don't want to just desert this place and go. It won't be fair on my musicality. I will probably balance out both.

What was the difference between making the music for *Slumdog Millionaire* and the music for Indian films? Divyam Gupta, LIMA

Each director [has] their own kind of rapport with other artists. When I work with Mani Ratnam, there's one kind of rapport. When I work with Ashutosh Gowariker, it's different. So with [*Slumdog Millionaire* director] Danny Boyle, automatically a different sense came in. He had his own taste of music and I was very interested in knowing what he liked about my music.

Do you believe in a universal music? Kimberly Choi, SEATTLE

I do, because all of us are, in a way, getting multicultural in our ears. All of us are listening to different kinds of music and the bottom line is most of us love melodies, most of us love grooves. So there is a kind of universality, and when you focus on it you can find it.

As a convert to Islam, do you view your career in a spiritual light? Zainab Sheikh, NEW YORK CITY

I believe that when good vibes come from people, like prayers and love, it changes your destiny and that's what I always felt about my life. [I've had] a lot of goodwill from family and Sufi peers. Getting those two Oscars — I definitely feel that I have to thank all those people.

Some Islamic fundamentalists forbid music. What's your view? Syed Qadeer, LAKE IN THE HILLS, ILL.

I have personally discovered that love and music cleanse your mind and heal you and these are my explanations and reasons to follow music. I can't answer the question of whether it's right or wrong, but I know that whatever I am doing is being loved by people and I do get my prayers answered.

I recently heard the remix of "Jai Ho" featuring the Pussycat Dolls and was surprised that you consented to have that done to such a beautiful song. What motivated it? Mayank Keshaviah, LOS ANGELES

I didn't want [the *Slumdog Millionaire* soundtrack] to die as a film soundtrack. I wanted to extend it to a younger audience, too. We made sure that we told [the Pussycat Dolls] that this was a song about destiny, about love and all that stuff. [It's] about victory, so don't make it obscene. Make it lovable. And I think they did a very good job ... It took almost eight different tries to get it right.

Where do you see yourself fitting into the modern scheme of music? Grant Wilder, HOUSTON

I love to embrace new technology and new ideas. But I think melody plays a very important role in my sensibility in music. Melody and harmony — that never changes. All the classics are always classics.

What do you listen to on your MP3 player? Katie Hires, BETHEL, CONN.

What I listened to yesterday were the *ghazal* [a Sufi song form] of Mehdi Hassan and then I listened to Tchaikovsky, and then I listened to an Irish artist — I don't know who it was. So it's like three weird things. I was traveling from Bangalore to Chennai.

Is there any way you could beat your Oscar success? Hannah Pederson, PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA

Some people have been nominated 38 times and not won. Some composers 10 times, 11 times. I have been really lucky to have been nominated [in three categories] in the same year and then got two of those. It's really amazing. To beat this record musically? I would love to but [it's more important] to get the spirit back in writing music.

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