

KID ROCKER

Words Hamish McKenzie

Meet Indy Shome: record label owner, filmmaker, metalhead, and Harvard student. Not bad for a 17-year-old.

It started a year ago with an email from a 16-year-old Hong Kong boy to Anton Newcombe, the mildly psychotic frontman of notorious psychedelic rock band the Brian Jonestown Massacre. The boy, in Boston at the time for summer studies at Harvard University, was starting a record label in Hong Kong. He wondered if Newcombe was interested in distributing his albums in the SAR through the new label. Newcombe's reply read:

"hey
indy.
sounds
great."

And so began Concrete Lo-Fi Records, just another side project for Indrayudh Shome, a student at the Hong Kong International School.

Sitting in the bc magazine office in jeans and a Kyuss T-shirt with tidy short black hair, Shome, now 17, comes across confident but modest, and articulate beyond his years. In a neat American accent, the Indian-born/Hong Kong-raised teenager explains that he started Concrete Lo-Fi to hear more of the music he loved. "After getting involved with some of the people locally, musically, I noticed that the type of music I like wasn't being listened to – it just wasn't really here." Couple that with an interest in business, and setting up a new label seems pretty logical – aside from the fact that, you know, he's not even old enough to legally set foot in many of the venues his favourite bands play. But for him, the age thing was no impediment. "I thought it was big and ridiculous for a kid – but it's not really," he says in casual dismissal of his feat. "It's just something you can go out and do."

So, with no start-up capital (aside from the odd small loan from dad) and a lot of enthusiasm, Shome set about establishing his boutique label, dedicated to producing and distributing alternative and psychedelic rock in Hong Kong. Aside from the Brian Jonestown Massacre, Shome also signed up another of his favourites, Swedish psych-rock band Sgt. Sunshine. Again, cyber waves did the trick. "I sent them an email and said, 'Listen, I'll be straight with you: I'm a kid from Hong Kong but I think I've got my head together and I think I can make this work.'" Once more the response was positive, and soon Shome had sold all 100 copies of the band's self-titled album in Hong Kong through non-mainstream record stores. The band's lead singer, Cuban-born Eduardo Rodriguez, says he signed up with the label because he liked the way Shome operated. "Indy and I have developed a cool, honest and brotherly friendship and I never met him face to face before, but I don't think I need to meet him to be able to trust him," Rodriguez said in an email interview. "Something just tells you when the person is out to fuck you up or not."

Going by what one of his best friends and bandmates says, that's an accurate assessment. Ben Gagnon plays bass with Shome in metal band Molten Lava Death Massage and says Shome is honest and hardworking. But that doesn't mean he had his doubts at first. "In all honesty, I was like, a 16-year-old starting up a record label? This isn't going to work," says Gagnon, 17, a fellow student at the International School. "I underestimated him."

As well as being lead singer and guitarist for Molten Lava Death Massage, Shome has had major roles in several other Hong Kong bands. This year he's especially focussed on "psychedelic jam band" Queen Elephantine, but in recent times he's played anything from grunge to folk to stoner-doom-metal. One of his projects, Fashionista, which plays Indian/Western fusion and alternative rock, is also released on Concrete Lo-Fi.

And if that sounds busy enough, consider this: on top of all the music stuff, he's also president of his school's student senate, he's in the film club and the music club, and he's the editor of the school magazine. He also recently made his first music video – for local rockers 22 Cats. Of course, when it comes to the label, he's had help from his friends, and he's thankful his parents – dad owns an art gallery and mum's a dance teacher – have lent so much support. Yet on the business side of things, it's all Indy Shome. It's just a wonder he didn't do it earlier. Says Shome, "I wanted to do this for a while but I guess it required me to reach a certain maturity."

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