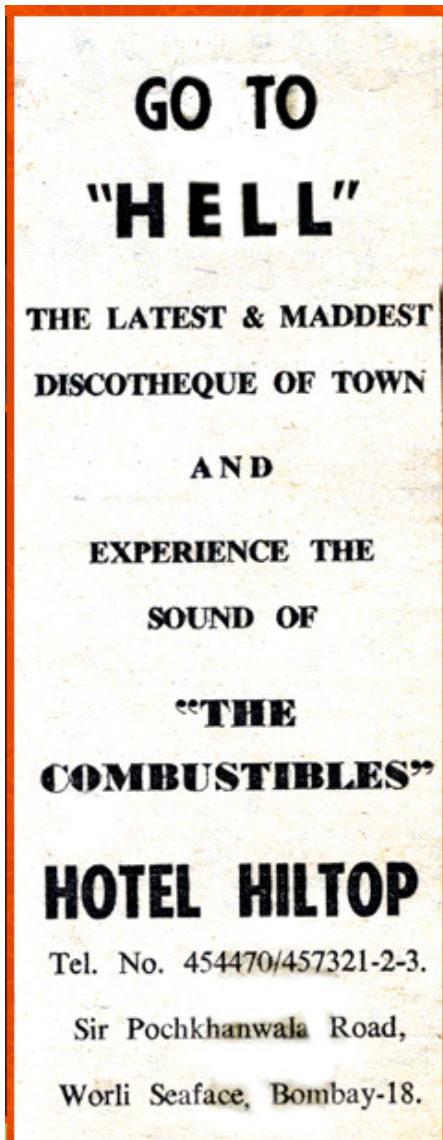


Indian Rock



India has a thriving rock culture. In the last decade or so, bands, small and big and from every genre ranging from heavy metal to death to classic and fusion have sprung up all over the country. Big companies are ready to step forward and sponsor concerts, which bring in the fans.

These young musicians follow in the footsteps of the pioneers of the 1960s and '70s when beat groups (as they were then known) were formed on college campuses in Indian cities. The difference is that while today's musicians have access to the best instruments, the latest musical trends and an entire ecosystem that supports the music scene, in those days it was a struggle at every level. Venues were few and far between, India's tight import policies meant new instruments were impossible to get and there were no takers for original music.

Yet, right from 1963, young musicians persevered. They played in restaurants, night clubs and discos, and along with crowd-pleasing cover versions, played their own original music too. Amplifiers were rigged up from public address systems and valve radios, instruments were fashioned out of parts obtained from here and there. It was tough, but, looking back, it was fun.

My book on the bands of the time has a fund of such stories. It examines how a culture of pop and rock music grew in a country that was shut off from the world and where most of the population – and the record companies too – was only interested in music from Indian films, known now as Bollywood. I spoke to several musicians of the time – now senior citizens, but no less romantic about their music – and the story that emerges is one of persistence, perseverance and passion. The book will be released later this year.

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