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With 1413 nominations IRAA 2024 was an
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INDIAN RECORDING ARTS ACADEMY (IRAA) 2024



A Night of Sound Excellence and Unforgettable Achievements Supported by Genelec

In the ever-evolving world of music and sound, where melodies enchant and rhythms mesmerise, the true heroes are often those working silently behind the scenes. **The Indian Recording Arts Academy (IRAA) Awards**, since its inception, has been a shining beacon of recognition for these masters of sound. A testament to technical brilliance and creative genius, the IRAA Awards are the only accolades in India that exclusively celebrate the exceptional contributions of sound engineers and music producers.

On **29th November 2024**, this legacy was elevated to new heights with the latest edition of **IRAA Awards 2024**, held at the **Bombay Exhibition Centre, Mumbai**. Organised by **Hyve India**, this edition was nothing short of spectacular. Supported by **Genelec**, a world leader in professional audio solutions, the evening glimmered with accomplishment as awards were presented to **110 awardees** across a staggering **73 categories**.

NESCO's Grande Banquets transformed into a lavish haven of black-and-gold grandeur. As guests arrived, the red carpet came alive with industry stalwarts, up-and-coming talent, and smiling recipients, all ready to partake in the evening's celebrations.

More than just a ceremony, the IRAA Awards embodied a celebration of

rkar, Raag Sethi, S. Sivakumar, Shantanu Hudlikar, Sreejesh Nair, Subhash Sahoo, Tubby, Vijay Benegal and Yogesh Pradhan.

Pramod Chandorkar delivers a heartfelt address

Pramod Chandorkar, the Director of the IRAA 2024 Jury, opened the evening with a heartfelt address, reflecting on the incredible journey of sound engineering in India. Sharing his insights, he spoke about the immense growth and excitement surrounding the industry, particularly the surge in indie music and the bright future ahead.

"A lot of great work is happening, especially in the indie music scene. This also gives us an opportunity to know a lot of young talent, which is so amazing and the kind of work they're doing. It feels great to know that the future of audio and music is in great hands. Also, I would like to mention that each jury member worked hard. We had a lot of debates about a specific assessment criterion or how each entry should be looked at.

As you are aware, we have a very unique model of assessment where the identity of the nomination or the nominee is not revealed till the end. So that helps us ensure that there is no bias involved. The clear and only criteria



IRAA 2024 Jury present at the award function

craftsmanship, the intricate art of shaping soundscapes that make music and storytelling unforgettable. For those attending, the evening was an emotional journey, recognising the tireless work of sound engineers and producers who ensure every note, beat, and lyric resonates with perfection.

The ceremony also highlighted the critical role of technology in the creative process, with **Genelec** amplifying this vision as a dedicated supporter.

IRAA 2024 was not merely a ceremony but a statement, an unapologetically grand spectacle that stood as a testament to India's ever-growing sound recording industry. The unwavering support of Genelec, for the second consecutive year, underscored the importance of recognising talent at every level, and the ceremony reflected their commitment to the sound engineering and studio community in India.

The prestigious jury, headed by the Director **Dr. Pramod Chandorkar**, comprised a stellar lineup of industry experts: **Ashish Saksena, Donal Whelan** (marking his debut on the jury panel from the UK), **Jim Satya, Mujeeb Dada-**

for the choice of the winners is good work and nothing else. So, to all the juries who have been supportive of this, I would like to thank **Anil Chopra** for really spearheading this whole movement. At the same time, **Smita Rai** (Vice Chairman of IRAA) did a great job handling all the administrative parts of the awards ceremony."

Dr. Chandorkar also passed the baton to Vijay Benegal, revealing him as IRAA Director 2025. Benegal expressed excitement for the role stating, "I look forward to being on the jury every year, and this coming year, I'll be the awards director. The role is challenging, but I still get to listen to the music, which I'm always eager to do!"

Honouring a Lifetime of Dedication, Excellence and Achievement

This year, the IRAA Awards featured three Lifetime Achievement Awards! The **Lifetime Achievement Award for Contribution to Audio Recording**

celebrates individuals who have made outstanding, long-term contributions to the field of audio recording. This prestigious honour recognises their dedication, innovation, and impact on advancing recording techniques, technologies, and artistry. It serves as a testament to their influence on the audio industry and their role in shaping its evolution for future generations. This year at the IRAA Awards, the Lifetime Achievement Award for Contribution to Audio Recording was posthumously conferred on **Nikhil Mehta**. A self-taught sound recordist. An expert music editor. The visionary co-founder of India's first audio website. A pioneer, who had consistently been ahead of his time. His son **Aditya Mehta** and nephew **Sunil Mehta** from **Sudeep Audio** accepted the award.

"I am very grateful to IRAA Jury for awarding the 'Lifetime Contribution Award' given to my father posthumously. It's a great honour because it comes from the fraternity itself and we have a lot of seniors in the jury who have not just worked with my father but learned from him as well. You get to hear the winners work, and it just helps improve your own recording standards.



Aditya Mehta and Sunil Mehta accepting the Lifetime Achievement Award for the late Nikhil Mehta

According to me, it's always a learning exercise," said Aditya Mehta.

The **Lifetime Achievement Award for Contribution to Music** at the IRAA Awards 2024 was proudly presented to **Padma Vibhushan Shri Ustad Zakir**



Ustad Zakir Hussain's message to the IRAA 2024 audience



Ustad Fazal Qureshi accepts the award on behalf of Ustad Zakir Hussain

Anil Chopra's Vision: Elevating Sound Engineering to an Art Form

As the grand celebration of sound excellence unfolded at the **IRAA Awards 2024**, there was one moment that captured the very essence of the evening, when **Anil Chopra**, the **Founder and Chairman of IRAA**, took centre stage. His keynote address wasn't merely a speech; it was a resounding call to action, a rallying cry for the Indian recording industry to embrace its hidden talent and propel it into the global limelight.

"IRAA has been founded and created with the primary mission of recognition for Indian sound engineers and their excellence in the field. And this comes subjectively for me, as I come from, the 1980's, the late 1970's when in India sound engineering equipment was very difficult to get hold of. There was 250% duty. There weren't many imports. It was not allowed, or it was allowed under license. It was very expensive. And the music industry in India was booming. There were thousands. This is not an exaggeration but literally there were thousands of music releases on cassette and India was experiencing music revolution as after nearly almost 100 years of single British company called EMI releasing gramophone records, suddenly India experienced the revolution of cassette and there were thousands of a NR managers, record labels, producers and all the folk music of the country was being recorded.

And one such person, of course, we are honouring tonight, as of you know, his contribution to sound recording in India, he is here, his children are here with us today to receive that award. And those were very difficult days. And you know, sound engineering even at that time, even prior to that, the great sounds of Indian cinema, they have all been recorded by some of the most brilliant sound engineers ever in the world, the songs we love. There is immense sound engineering behind it.

This IRAA has been created to establish that sound engineering is an art form, and that art form should be recognised for the mastering engineer for royalties and that is a long journey that we must go on and keep on persisting with until we achieve that end. But otherwise, IRAA is a community of sound engineers, for sound engineers, by sound engineers. And I believe that the IRAA award for any sound engineer has more meaning for him because it is given by his fraternity rather than any award he might get from any other award platform. So, that's something very great and IRAA has that as a mission

and of course to recognise Indian sound engineering.

As we go forward, we will see Indian music engineered by Indian sound engineers that will have global impact. And IRAA is the platform where we invite, as Pramod said, a lot of independent music to submit their nominations. So, IRAA is a platform for recognising talent not only in sound engineering but even in music talent and it has a great role to play in India especially because there is a lot of content boom in India. There are a lot of sound engineers. I think there are more than a couple of lakh sound engineers in India. We've received 1,400 nominations this year. There's a long road to go.

But believe you me, that as IRAA's credibility and his hard work and the hours of work by the jury play their role and IRAA increases in its reputation, I think very soon we will have tens of thousands of nominations, absolutely. And that will be the day that IRAA will come into its own."



Anil Chopra, Founder of the IRAA Awards delivers the keynote address for IRAA 2024

Hussain, whose exceptional artistry and innovation have redefined Indian classical music on a global stage. Renowned as one of the greatest tabla virtuosos in history, Ustad Zakir Hussain has built an extraordinary career as a percussionist, composer, and cultural ambassador. His brother **Ustad Fazal Qureshi** accepted the award on his behalf and read out a heartfelt message sent by Ustad Zakir from the United States. *Sadly, Ustad Zakir Hussain passed away just as this publication was going to press.*

Ustad Zakir Hussain's illustrious journey is adorned with numerous accolades, including the **Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan**, and the United States National Heritage Fellowship. He was named the **Kyoto Prize Laureate in Arts and Philosophy** in 2022 and received the **Aga Khan Music Award** in Oman the same year, celebrating his contributions to sustaining and enriching musical traditions worldwide. His cinematic accomplishments include composing scores for films like *In Custody* and *Vanaprastham*, earning critical acclaim for his ability to merge classical and contemporary musical styles.

The **Dronacharya Award for Shaping Audio Education in India** at the IRAA 2024 recognised the remarkable contributions of **Manohar Kunte**, a revered



Manohar Kunte receiving the Dronacharya Award for Shaping Audio Education in India

sound engineer and passionate mentor whose work has transformed the landscape of audio education in the country. As the chief conductor and syllabus designer for the **Advanced Certificate Course in Sound Recording and Reproduction** at the **University of Mumbai**.

An alumnus of FTII Pune, Mr. Kunte's career began under the mentorship of iconic sound engineers, the late **Shri Mangesh Desai** and **Shri Vasant Parmar**, at Rajkamal Kalamandir, Mumbai. He has over 60,000 hours of recording experience. His illustrious career includes collaborations with legends such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, and Kavita Krishnamurthy, showcasing



Shruti Jayakrishnan and Rohan Puntambekar accepting the award for Studio of the Year

his unparalleled expertise in the field.

He was also a founding jury member of IRAA. Mr. Kunte's vision and dedication to advancing audio education and recording arts have left an enduring legacy. The award celebrated his lifelong commitment to nurturing talent and setting new benchmarks in India's audio industry.

Manohar Kunte spectacularly surmised his feelings about the award in one word.

IRAA Studio of the Year

The **Studio of the Year Award** was presented to **The Audio Guys – C Studio**, a standout facility that has consistently set new benchmarks in sound and music production. This prestigious award honours studios that exemplify excellence in both their technical capabilities and creative output. The Audio Guys – C Studio, founded by **Jayakrishnan Nalinkumar, Omkar Tamhan**, and **Anupam Sathe**, has become a key player in the industry, known for its cutting-edge infrastructure and a team of talented engineers and producers. The studio has gained widespread recognition for its ability to push the boundaries of audio production, providing top-tier services to a variety of projects, from music albums to sound design for films and advertisements. The team's focus on innovation, combined with an unwavering commitment to quality, has made them a trusted name in the industry. Their work has been instrumental in shaping the sound of contemporary Indian music.

Receiving the Studio of the Year Award was a testament to their dedication to excellence in the audio production space. With their state-of-the-art facilities and forward-thinking approach, The Audio Guys – C Studio continues to inspire the next generation of audio engineers and music producers, and their influence on the industry is set to grow even further.

Industry Insights: Celebrating Excellence with IRAA and Genelec

Vijay Benegal, the future Director of the IRAA July 2025, remarked upon the success of this year's IRAA show and shared a few pearls of wisdom for the next generation of sound engineers.

"I'm really stoked about the fact that we've got so many independent productions now. This country has historically lacked representation for independent music, as it's mostly been dominated by film music, folk, and devotional genres. So, it's fantastic to see such a proliferation of independent productions. Not only are there more of them, but the creativity and quality of the work being produced are incredibly impressive. One of the great things IRAA has afforded me is the opportunity to hear what's happening in the music scene, gain an understanding of who's out there, and see what's possible from all these musicians. After all, it's impossible to know every single artist, so this platform is truly fantastic.

Speaking of tools, Genelec monitors are phenomenal. They're absolutely great. My first major award, the IIFA for Dil Chahta Hai, was recorded entirely using Genelec monitors. While I don't currently own a pair—mostly because



Vijay Benegal wins the award for Independent Music – Recording, Mixing, Mastering – World, Fusion Music

they're a bit expensive and just outside my budget—I would love to. They're fabulous, an exceptional reference set, and I would never say no to mixing on Genelec.

As for advice, I'd say, stay true to your craft. Don't compromise on achieving the best possible quality for the project you're working on. There will always be pressure to finish quickly, but if something doesn't sound right to you, you must invest the time, energy, and effort to ensure it does. Ultimately, it's your job, and you are the final judge of what you produce. So, if something sounds bad to you, do everything you can to make it sound good."

Raag Sethi, who served on the jury and was himself a recipient of numerous awards that night, was ecstatic about his wins and his experience serving on this year's jury.

"This is the second time I've been honoured to be a part of the IRAA jury. The first time I served on the jury was when the independent category was first introduced. Since I primarily work in the independent space, it was great



Raag Sethi accepting one of his many awards for the evening

to see an association like IRAA, which is known for its excellence in technically creative fields, acknowledge what's happening in the independent music scene as well. I feel truly honoured to be sitting alongside some of the stalwarts of the industry as an independent musician and producer.

Regarding Genelec and its role in the audio industry, while I haven't used Genelec monitors myself, anyone in the audio space knows about Genelec. They have a long legacy and immense prestige associated with studio monitors. It's great to see Genelec partnering and sponsoring something like IRAA because it makes sense for such a technical field to be supported by one of the biggest studio monitor manufacturers in the world. That partnership is a natural synergy." Sethi advised artists that are new to the industry by telling them to keep at it and never give up.

"In this industry, consistency is key. You cannot rest on a release you did before, a prize you won, or an award you received. You have to keep working at it and continually hold yourself to a higher standard every single time. If you do that, hopefully, you'll be fine."



Donal Whelan being conferred with a token of appreciation for his service on the IRAA 2024 Jury

Donal Whelan, of Hafford Mastering from the UK, spoke positively about his experience serving on the IRAA jury for the first time this year. He reflects about the changes in the Indian music soundscape, noting that it grows more mature and is evolving to the international standard.

"The experience of working on the jury has been really rewarding. I was very honoured to be asked in the first place. I've known about the IRAA for many years and have attended a few of the ceremonies over time.

The process itself was fascinating. I was given 84 songs from a number of different categories to listen to and judge. The first thing that struck me was what an amazing opportunity it was to experience such a wide variety of music. I selected my winners from those 84, and after that came the final judging stage. This involved a meeting with the other jurors, which was a lot of fun. Reflecting on the Indian music scene, Donal observed, "It feels more self-assured and confident now. That's not to diminish the charm of classic Hindi film songs, which have their



Shantanu Hudlikar receives a token of appreciation for his service on the IRAA 2024 Jury from Gaurav Sood

own magic, but today's studio setups, equipment, and engineers have grown immensely in sophistication. The output from India today is of a very high quality. I think the Indian music scene is going from strength to strength.

Shantanu Hudlikar shares his opinions on Genelec as an industry standard. "While I don't use them personally, I can attest to their outstanding reputation. They are an industry standard in India, known for their exceptional frequency response and suitability for mixing and recording. The representation and support that Genelec provides in this country stand out, making them a preferred choice for many professionals.

To those entering the industry, my advice is simple: stay true to the music. Focus on mastering your craft and being the best version of yourself. This industry isn't a competition; it's about doing the best work possible and making music central to your life."

Urmil Pandya, one of the nights winners, speaks about how the IRAA awards make him feel appreciated and let him know that his craft is respected.



Urmil Pandya receiving his award for Sync Sound Recording – Documentaries from Vijay Benegal, Gaurav Sood and Ramesh Chetwani



Tubby, Independent Music - World, Fusion Music - Music Producer

"It feels truly wonderful to be appreciated, especially when it comes to aspects of work that aren't always visible on the surface. Sound often takes a backseat, hidden behind the scenes, so it's gratifying when someone acknowl-

edges and highlights its importance, bringing it to the forefront. Thank you so much for recognising and valuing this contribution!"

Tubby (Indrajit Sharma) recalled his experience on the jury as enlightening, stating: "I was thrilled to see the entries that came to me. It was fascinating to witness the immense talent present in our country when it comes to music production, mixing, and mastering. What stood out the most was that, despite Mumbai being a hub for music, remarkable work was coming from other regions such as Gujarat, the South, the North, and even parts of the East. As a jury member, it was exciting to assess music that originated outside the typical Bombay film or music scene.

I've been exclusively using Genelec monitors for nearly 10–15 years. In every studio I've worked in, I've always encountered Genelec's main and near-field monitors. I believe Genelec has mastered the intricacies of what professional audio should sound like, enabling professionals to assess their work accurately. Their technology ensures sound quality is optimised across all devices and platforms. Genelec truly understands the requirements of the pro audio industry and consistently delivers innovative and superior-quality loudspeakers. They are, in my opinion, the best in the industry."

JBL PROFESSIONAL BRINGS THE 25TH HORNBILL FESTIVAL...

(Continued from page 17)

overwhelmingly positive. The JBL VTX A12 system, in particular, has received considerable acclaim for its performance, particularly in challenging outdoor environments. Sound engineers have praised the VTX A12 for its advanced waveguide technology and linear array design, which ensures uniform sound coverage across large venues. This design eliminates distortion and provides consistent audio quality for every audience member, even in expansive outdoor settings.

Artists, too, have highlighted the flexibility of the VTX A12, noting its ability to handle a wide range of music genres with ease. From delicate acoustic performances to high-energy electronic music, the system maintains its fidelity and dynamic range throughout, ensuring that every note is crisp and powerful. The VTX A12's robust performance under pressure, coupled with its ease of setup, makes it a preferred choice for large-scale events such as the Hornbill Festival. The ability to seamlessly cover a variety of musical styles with the same system makes the VTX A12 a standout product in JBL's lineup.

In addition to JBL's audio systems, Martin Lighting's solutions have also been praised for their dynamic effects and seamless integration with the audio setup. Martin's lighting technologies are designed to synchronise effortlessly with JBL's sound systems, creating a truly immersive experience for the audience.

JBL's involvement in large-scale events like the Hornbill Festival plays a key role in the company's strategy to strengthen its brand positioning and expand its reach within the Indian market. One of the primary benefits of sponsoring such high-profile events is increased visibility. The Hornbill Festival provides JBL with a unique platform to showcase its products to a broad and diverse audience, both local and international. This exposure boosts the company's recognition and ensures that its products are seen by a wide range of potential customers.

Moreover, by aligning itself with a cultural event like the Hornbill Festival, JBL strengthens its connection to modern lifestyles and youth culture, two key pillars of its brand identity. The festival, with its mix of traditional and contemporary music, perfectly complements JBL's image as a brand that is not just about sound, but also about vibrant, contemporary living. This partnership helps position JBL as a key player in the Indian entertainment scene, particularly in music and audio technology.

Live events such as the Hornbill Festival also allow for direct interaction with the brand's products, which is a powerful tool for building brand loyalty. Attendees at these events experience JBL's products first-hand, whether it's enjoying the immersive sound of JBL's VTX A12 system or using portable JBL speakers in the festival's more intimate

settings. This hands-on engagement creates a genuine emotional connection with the brand, fostering loyalty among both new and existing customers.

Strengthening JBL's Market Position in India with Brand Alignment

JBL's participation in music events also reinforces its identity as a brand deeply rooted in the world of music. The Hornbill Festival, with its live performances from a variety of bands, is the perfect venue to connect with music lovers, performers, and audio enthusiasts. JBL's active presence in such events ensures that the brand is seen as an integral part of the music scene, helping it to build a strong connection with music enthusiasts across India.

Additionally, JBL's involvement in regional festivals such as the Hornbill Festival showcases its commitment to understanding and embracing local cultures. By engaging with cultural events that resonate with local communities, JBL demonstrates that it is not just another global brand, but one that is attuned to the values and preferences of the Indian market. This localized approach helps build trust and loyalty among Indian consumers, who appreciate brands that take the time to understand their unique needs.

Partnerships with events like the Hornbill Festival are not just about short-term visibility. They offer long-term opportunities for growth and expansion. By cementing its presence at such iconic festivals, JBL is positioning itself as a leader in the Indian live events and music entertainment space. This, in turn, opens the door to further collaborations with niche events and new regions across India, paving the way for future opportunities and deeper engagement with the Indian market.

India represents a key market for JBL Professional. By connecting with audiences, aligning with local culture, and offering hands-on experiences with its products, JBL builds lasting relationships with its customers. Its continued engagement with the Indian music and entertainment scene not only positions it as a leader in the industry but also fosters growth and brand loyalty that will contribute to its long-term success in the market.

JBL Professional's contributions to the 25th Hornbill Music Festival exemplify the synergy between cutting-edge technology and cultural celebration. From the unparalleled sound quality of the VTX systems to the dazzling visuals provided by Martin lighting, JBL and its partners brought Nagaland's rich heritage to life. Through partnerships like the Hornbill Festival, JBL aims to demonstrate their commitment to providing world-class audio solutions that elevate live events.