

## Hot in the city with Samba Masala

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At its 10th anniversary performance, it's clear that the SMU's resident percussion group, Samba Masala, isn't just a bunch of kids happy to bang on drums and raise some noise.



The SMU resident's percussion group, Samba Masala, led by by music instructor and founder, Idham Budiman (bottom to left)

“Sambal (Malay chilli sauce)? And Masala (Indian spices)! Quite hot, isn't it ?” mused the graceful senior as she joined the youthful line of supporters of the Singapore Management University in filling the seats of the 10th anniversary performance by the university's resident percussion group, Samba Masala.

Having performed at street festivals and international events, it's clear that the ensemble isn't just a bunch of kids happy to bang on drums and raise some noise.

Led by music instructor and co-founder, Idham Budiman along with Riduan Zalani, the 20-somethings belt out pulsating rhythms that are also well choreographed, thanks to Bryan Lee, the resident mastermind of movement.

The 10-year celebration performance, ending Sunday night at the Singapore Airlines Theatre of the LaSalle College of the Arts, is an entertaining 90 minute ride through time.

Divided into five parts, each movement depicts a period of time in the lives of most Singaporeans - from school (Childhood Memories) to National Service (Green Days) and

working adulthood (Concrete Jungle) - laced with pulsating exuberance that offers a jolt better than caffeine to any in the audience who might be jaded at life in the Lion City.

The ode to National Service saw good use of old army boots on the feet of some of the young men performing, as they stomped out a beat along with claps, clicks and body slaps.

It was one of the rare acts that saw, for a short while at least, the absence of drums.

The young men, and women, in army fatigues proved that if one has the rhythm, then music can be made no matter what.

Another noteworthy act was Childhood Memories.

While it was cute to see the undergraduates back in school uniforms, it was not cutesy but classy to see them turning old school tables and chairs into musical instruments, along with tattered books and chewed-up pencils.

As plastic and metal trash cans became drums and cymbals, it was happy to note with a quick glance through the audience, that there was no one below the age of 10 who could go home similarly inspired.

As the 'school kids' melt away, and the school's very mod 'uncle' comes in with a broom - - it's rather inspiring to see how floor cleaning can become pretty funky. And yes, you can safely try it at home the next time the vacuum cleaner dies on you.

A good portion of the performance was dedicated to the sounds of the Brazilian snare or Caixa, the deep sounding Surdo and the hand-beaten Timba - three good sized drums that the performers carry to belt a fiery beat, while putting in some fancy footwork with good precision at the same time.

Add a dash of the small Brazilian hand instruments like the Tamborim, the Chocalho and Agogo Bells, along with the double-side Indian drum - the Dhol - and you get Samba Masala - - a fusion of the heady beats of Brazil and the pulsating sounds of Asia.

Is the show hot? Yes, as hot as sambal and masala.