



ENTERTAINMENT

Garage Punk Band Celebrates South Asian Roots

BY NIC CHA KIM | WESTLAKE VILLAGE
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WESTLAKE, Calif. – It is the summer music series at Levitt Pavilion in McArthur Park and crowds are gathering to catch the band **Doctors & Engineers**.

Not your average L.A. band, they sing in four different languages: Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi, and English. Formed in 2015, they celebrate their South Asian diasporic experience by reimagining Desi film and folk songs as psychedelic, American garage punk.

“Doctors & Engineers, it is a play on a stereotype,” explained lead singer Sri Panchalam. “It was a moment of trying to poke fun at something that I felt we were stuck with a lot of life and to break that say ‘hey, I want to be in a rock band’ and that should be okay. I can do a whole host of other things at the same time too if I want to but I shouldn’t be stuck with one identity because someone else says so.”

Originally from Chicago, Texas, Southern California, and Dubai, everyone in the band moved to L.A. in their late teens and early 20s spending their formative adult lives navigating the music scene. They eventually met in Little Tokyo during Tuesday Night Café, a monthly Asian-American open mic and public art series where artists and performers get together and share their work.

“We’re American and we grew up with multiple languages and we want people to feel that in our music, that’s this is also part of being American and this is also part of being us and growing up here,” said Panchalam.

This duality is common with immigrant families, especially for the children. A civil rights attorney by day and a singer by night, Panchalam’s duality exists in her professional and personal life. Like the rest of her band, she grew up fighting off bullies, but then grew up appreciating her heritage and wanted to sing about it.

“I think representation really matters,” said Panchalam. “I think that for us to make music that really connects both sides of our worlds. Both South Asian and American because we are both.”

They may not be doctors or engineers, but music both saves and changes lives.

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