

Desiclub.com's Top 50 Coolest Desis of 2008

A year filled with greater success, happiness, but with the reality of life around us, 2008 was, as cliched as it sounds, a memorable one.

by Peta Cooper and Mandeep Banga

Here we go ladies and gentlemen, the fifth annual Desiclub.com Top 50 Coolest Desis list for the year that was, 2008. This year, we witnessed the usual on-goings of the world but with two major changes impacting the globe, perhaps like never before. Of course, the first being something that has probably effected us all one way or another, the economy. The saying that South Asians are recession proof was indeed put to the test as countless people lost their life's investment while others no longer had employment. But all in all, South Asians as a whole, in the US anyway, have made out ok financially with little damage incurred, when compared to our cultural counterparts.

Of course, it would not be a proper acknowledgment to 2008 if we didn't recognize the actual change that took place. The election of Barack Hussein Obama II as President of the United States. Did you ever think you would see the day where the President of America would have such a name? Of course not! But the change took place and with great support from Americans and the globe itself. South Asians as a whole can take credit for this achievement as the entire election process of 2008 involved more South Asians than ever before. It was a validating indicator of the now permanent presence of Desis in American life.

As has been the case since the dawn of mankind, we were again confronted with major global threats and horrible acts of violence. Not only did we have the on-going massacres in Africa, the hijacking of ships across the seas by pirates, but death hit home when in November, the heart of South Asians, Mumbai was attacked by a bunch of savage criminals, who once again hijacked the Islamic religion as a guise to inflict evil and pain to thousands, if not millions of innocent lives. But the unity of peace and the strength of Mumbai was shown as it overcame the siege and gained worldwide support as yet another victim of global terrorism.

The South Asian world in 2008 also saw an unprecedented success in mainstream arts & entertainment. With the runaway hit Slumdog Millionaire and more Desi faces on TV than ever before and with Bollywood becoming an even bigger global attraction, we broke even more barriers and moved way beyond the stereotypes of Hollywood. This phenomenon, which also exists in the financial, medical and technology industries will no doubt increase in 2009.

The emergence of the NRI became even more apparent in 2008 as almost all Desi products and businesses were overwhelmingly supported by the 1st generation community, where as the 2nd and 3rd generation of American Desis moved even further away from the basics of South Asian essence. The 1st generation, no doubt, still rules from a marketability stand point and maintains its leadership as being cutting edge, dynamic entrepreneurs who are the bedrock of the growth of our community. This year, that is our primary focus, the members of our community who are really the foundation of our existence in both, mainstream and cultural settings. Let's get started before another year flies by.



37. George Mathew

Location: New York, USA

Who is He: Conductor

Why is He Cool: Singapore-born Indian-American conductor of Western classical music, George Mathew has not only been a talented presence in the world of music, but he has lent his name and time to many good causes over the years. In January of 2009, Mathew is back with the biggest of his charity concerts called "Mahler for the Children of AIDS" at Carnegie Hall. The premise of the concert is to raise funds and public awareness for pediatric AIDS and the Prevention-of-Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV worldwide but especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The evening will serve as a memorial for the millions of mothers and children who have lost their lives, a tribute to the resilience of the survivors, and an urgent call for help to the global community. It

doesn't get any better than promoting such worthy causes through your talent.

What's Next: We can all expect to see him doing what he does best on January 12th, 2009 at Carnegie Hall.

Cool Fun Fact: George Mathew made his Carnegie Hall debut in January of 2006 as Artistic Director and Conductor of BEETHOVEN'S NINTH FOR SOUTH ASIA (BNSA), a benefit concert organised to raise funds and public awareness for survivors of the devastating earthquake of 2005.