

# TVTimes: The first keep-all-week guide

BY SANATH WEERASURIYA

June 3 is not only the anniversary of the Sunday Times, but also of the TV Times and Entertainment which celebrates its 19th anniversary as the Sunday Times marks its 25th.

It was way back in 1993 when I joined the Sunday Times, that editor Sinha Ratnatunga was toying with the idea of having a separate section for entertainment, to give television viewers the full schedule of TV programmes and related news.

The idea was to have a handy magazine with them in front of the good old television set, to which they could refer all through the week.

Quite excited, I started to build contacts with the TV stations, (there were only five including the two state-owned channels, Rupavahini and ITN along with MTV, TNL and ETV) in existence at the time. So we had plenty of space to play around within the 16-page magazine-style TV Guide, Sri Lanka's very first entertainment and TV guide. Radio programmes and an

amateur radio section were included.

The 'TV Times and Entertainment' mag was an overnight hit and the first month saw a 5000 jump in sales for the Sunday Times. I was even granted a salary raise of Rs 1000.

'TV Times and Entertainment' set a trend. Apart from the small screen, it featured news of the music scene, films, fashion and other entertainment related events. The TV Times logo was soon seen on travelling bags, school bags, key tags and T shirts. Soon all newspapers started to follow suit with similar TV guides.

We were fortunate to have writers of calibre. The film scene was covered by veteran Kumaradasa Wagista popularly known as Wagi, till his demise at the turn of the millennium. Susitha who took the baton from Wagi is still on the run with silver screen stars.

During the early days, there were back-to-back entertainment events sponsored by TVT. We started Sri Lanka's very first 'Teenage Sensation' a teen disco dedicated to teenagers. The Battle of the DJs, Man of the Year, Dance Fiesta 2004/5/6, Miss Tourism Concert (World Pageant), Street Dance Fest, TVT Talent Contest 1999, 2001/2 are some of the outstanding events, TVT has been involved in.

TVT is also a leading information provider on travel and destination news and has featured over 500 newly established hotels and resorts and restaurants around the country.

I owe my thanks to Pathi, Wagi, Dunstan and Emma who have been my staunch support along with the layout guys from the 'pasting time' to modern 'In Design' time not forgetting Sarath, Priyantha, Sam, Sandun and the rest, who call Wednesday (our deadline day) 'maha siva rathriya'. Kuru still waits till 2 a.m. until I finish the pages on Wednesday.

A big 'thank you' also to our transport section for all their support in my travel around the country.

Since 2010, the TV Times has had to amalgamate with the Mirror Magazine in the new Sunday Times Magazine. To all our TVT fans, who have kept the show going for the past 19 years -keep your fingers crossed; TVT probably will be back in its original form in the near future. Who knows?



The first TV Times cover

# Music makes you happy!

How a column on the world music scene began and has continued for the past 25 years

BY MILES BROHIER

The country was on the brink of another uprising back in June 1987. I was at a loose end in the pre-digital age, with time to spare and it was a friend Prasanna Meegama who on seeing the first issue of the Sunday Times suggested I make a contribution towards music news from the international perspective.

We soon contacted the Sunday Times Editor Vijitha Yapa, who gave us an appointment for June 30, a Tuesday morning at the Park Street office of the Sunday Times. The one face that I recognised on entering the newspaper office was Keith Noyahr, who was then the librarian. Our intention was to do something different, avoid the gossip and cover the facts and offer insights to the industry, the new releases before they became popular or made the artist popular.

We also observed a lacuna in our newspapers concerning the coverage of the two biggest charts from the US and UK. These two charts were largely responsible for making and breaking careers in the music industry.

Before long we were called into the room to meet Mr. Yapa who was with Lucian Rajakarunanyaka.



Miles Brohier: Contributing the longest-running column in the ST

Mr. Yapa quizzed us both on what we can do for the paper in terms of an international music page. We spelt out our views and suggestions and instantly came the response that a whole page would be ours in the Mirror Magazine tabloid. There was pin-drop silence as we looked at each other totally lost for words. We were asked to report on July 2 to work out plans with Jenny Barthelot of

the features section.

Raine Wickrematunga was the Features Editor who was also our first teacher on the job as our first columns were published under the page called Showbizz. We were given a free hand with what we published as long as it passed Raine. What we did first was help beef up the picture library. Keith helped us out assigning the late Kumara Dayawansa to copy out album covers of artists and groups who were the news makers of the day from the collection of Lucky Weeramantry who was always accommodating.

For older readers we used to occasionally publish a nostalgia chart from some years back. In the early days we had guest writers such as El Ce Em, Nakavita who contributed from Singapore, Tariq Mahushukeen and Stuart Chapman who helped us make it through.

BY DEECEE

Sri Lanka's renowned political cartoonist Wijesoma was having an exhibition at the BMICH in October 1997. Having known him from my earlier journalistic days, I went to see the exhibition and we got chatting. He was lamenting on how he had donated the original drawings to the Sri Jayewardenapura University in 1990 hoping they would be preserved for posterity, but months later found them lying in a corner in a few boxes. He brought them back and was negotiating with the Department of National Archives on conserving them.

## Aniche for

I thought it was an interesting story. Being an "admirer" of the 'Sunday Times' I thought too it may be a good start for a column on local arts and met editor Sinha Ratnatunga. "Good idea", he told me and wanted me to meet Renuka Sadanandan, the features editor. That was the start of 'Kala Korner' which I have been writing for the past 15 years.

The primary aim was to create an interest about what was going on in the realm of Sinhala theatre, cinema, arts and literature.

The inaugural column (it was first titled All that Jazz) had 'Punchi Singho's problem' as the main item and also referred to the release of a Sinhala book on cricket by veteran radio commentator Premasara Epasinghe, and publisher Sirimevan Godage hitting the