



Bird reaches heady heights

Before this performer burst on the scene, the country had no real superstar. **Veena Thoopkrajae** reports how his popularity is now unsurpassed

Ever since his debut album in 1985, followed by a number of instant hit albums, fans have worshipped Thongchai “Bird” McIntyre. Twenty-one years later, he remains the country’s only superstar.

Bird released his first album “Haad Sai Sailom Song Rao” when the local music industry was still in its infancy, as was his label Grammy (now GMM Grammy). Yet it is by no means the lack of competition that has won him popularity. Bird has defied pretenders who have come and gone. Among them are dancing queen Christina Aguilera, Mai Charoenpura,

Somchai Khemklad, boy bands like Nuvo and UHT, rock groups like Micro, Loso, and Body Slam, rapper Joey Boy, and Thai-turned-international artist Tata Young.

In spite of the growing influence of foreign music, including recent waves of J-pop and K-pop, Bird remains the darling of the masses. This year when many rising Asian artists, including Tata, won MTV Asia Awards, Bird won the prestigious “MTV inspiration Award”.

Although Tata comes close to Bird in popularity, she falls behind when it comes to having a following across a diverse section of people, from school children to senior citizens.

Tata may have won many fans abroad after having turned into an international artist under the Sony label, but in her home country, her fans mainly consist of young people in big cities.

Bird also holds an album sale record in Thailand. His 1990 album, “Boomerang” sold more than two million copies, holding the record for the biggest selling album in Thai music history. He has performed in hundreds of concerts. The legendary “Baeb Bird Bird” (literally meaning Bird Bird Style), which started in 1987, has enjoyed tremendous success, bringing all fans together in a show.

Even though each “Bird Bird Style” show features over 20 performances, tickets are always sold out shortly after the sales start. This year, with reports that Bird is planning a show, his fans have been on alert and have followed the news closely.

His biography reads like a fairy tale. Born into poverty to James and Udom McIntyre in December 1958, Bird, also known as Albert, grew up with eight siblings, and experienced much hardship in his early years. It was difficult until he became successful with his first album at 27.

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