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- News Update

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- Corporate
- Markets
- Info-Tech
- Marketing
- Money & **Banking**
- Agri-Biz & Commodities
- Industry & **Economy**
- Logistics
- Government
- Opinion
- Variety
- Columns
- Index
- Archives

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- eWorld
- Catalyst
- Mentor
- Life
- Canvas
- Praxis
- Urban Pulse
- Brand Quest

#### **Stocks**

- Quotes
- SE Diary
- Scoreboard

## Subbulakshmi's voice still bestseller for Saregama

#### Sriram Srinivasan



Chennai, Dec. 14

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4/1/2011 2:31 PM 1 of 3

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TIME hasn't been able to wither the popularity of M. S. Subbulakshmi's music. Her first full-length album for the Gramophone Company of India (GCI), which was recorded over 40 years ago, still manages to sell over 2 lakh copies every year.

The album — `Sri Venkatesa Suprabhatam,' which is a wake-up call for Lord Venkateswara — was recorded in 1963 by GCI, Saregama India's earlier avatar, in the LP (or long playing) format.

The company says it manages to sell at least 15,000 cassettes and CDs each month in South India, with between 2,000 and 3,000 more coming from the rest of the country.

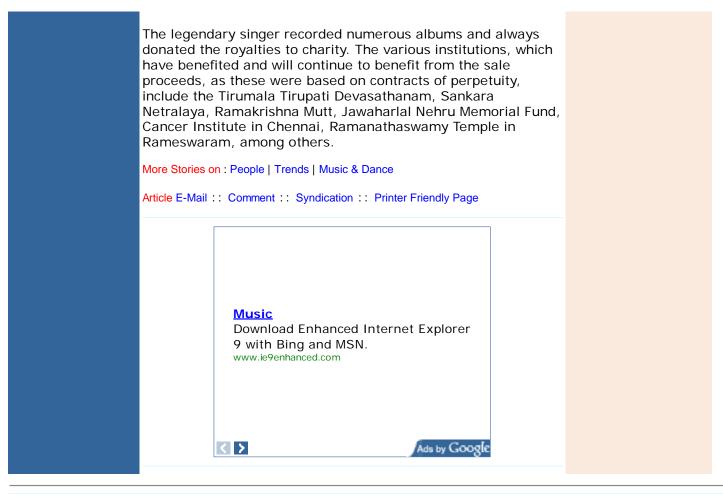
"It has been this way for years now. It's a product that has a very long life," says Mr Chemmal Manian, Marketing Manager-South, Saregama India Ltd, who finds the response to this product "amazing." He doesn't even want to significantly alter the design of the cassette pack or the inlay card, as distributors and retailers are familiar and comfortable with it. The blue-coloured face of the cassette, with Subbulakshmi's image in the foreground, has remained so for nearly a decade now. It is also one of Saregama's oldest albums to be still presented in the same form as it was originally made in. In other words, it's not an album that has been repackaged along with content from other albums.

The RPG group company, which claims that a majority of Subbulakshmi's albums, other than those done by public broadcaster AIR, was recorded under its banner, also lists the other works that are still popular: `Vishnu Sahasranamam' (which means thousand names of Lord Vishnu), `Balaji Pancharatnamala,' `Popular Melodies,' and `Meera Bhajans.'

The company has "digitally remastered" most of her works, which means cleaning the original audio of unwanted noise and making it more compatible to the high-tech audio systems of today. The audio cassettes of the four films in which Subbulakshmi acted don't sell high numbers; currently, their songs are repackaged and sold.

Saregama plans to bring out the "best" of Subbulakshmi's Carnatic and devotional songs under its `Immortal Legends' series next month. It will also have sound bites of prominent people.

2 of 3 4/1/2011 2:31 PM



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3 of 3 4/1/2011 2:31 PM