

# In Focus

**PARENT'S MEAL KID'S DEAL**  
**After 4 p.m.**  
 Ask us for details at these participating  
 Surrey McDonald's Restaurants only:  
 Newton — 13565 72nd Ave.  
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THE SURREY/NORTH DELTA LEADER • PULL-OUT SECTION

B1



BOAZ JOSEPH/LEADER

Dal-Dil-Vog's band members include Exx Singh (left), his brother Av, Dal Hothi, Dave Mills, Jas Singh and Craig Burdes. The group's new sound, a swirling blend of language and musical styles, is reaping them national awards and accolades.

## Music first, color second

Lois Belluk  
STAFF REPORTER

Don't judge this band by its colors. Dal-Dil-Vog, Surrey's award-winning bhangra-rock band, insists it's not riding high on the multicultural bandwagon. The "seven brothers from two cultures" are making rock and roll music and just happen to have members from two distinct cultural groups.

"It's straight rock 'n' roll but it's played by brown guys who've taken it and made their own sound," says electric bass player Jas Singh, one of the four Singh brothers in Dal-Dil-Vog.

The band, still aglow after seizing first place during the National Rock Showdown at the Hard Rock Cafe in Toronto's Skydome this spring, gathered in the midday sunshine this week behind Panorama Country Market on Highway 10.

Jas, who owns the fruit and vegetable market, his brothers Av, Exx and Ranj,

keyboardist Dave Mills, drummer Craig Burdes and singer Dal Hothi, are on the cutting edge of the trendy New World Beat — a musical style that's sending sound waves around the planet.

Driving the band's characteristic

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- Dal-Dil-Vog's bass player Jas Singh

rhythm is the dhol, a traditional North Indian drum played with sticks. The dhol also drives the energy behind bhangra, a rural folk music that's danced, says Burdes, "with hands in the air like you're screwing in light bulbs."

Combining ancient with new is what the septet wants as its draw — rather than the predictable discussion of white-and-brown racial diversity.

"In high school we were in a stage band. Then we were a heavy metal band. Then we took a five-year break, and then we were a traditional Indian folk band," says Jas of himself and his 20-something brothers. After folk came rock, and the Singhs joined with established singer Hothi and brought on Mills and Burdes — not because they're white but because they needed a couple of musicians.

Dal-Dil-Vog may be symbolic of a cultural shift taking place in the Lower Mainland, an area where 30 per cent of the population is non-white. They've combined two dominant cultures — Indo-Canadian and Caucasian — into a contemporary pop form.

Having endured raised eyebrows and racial insults, they're determined to educate: "We don't want people to think

we're just for an Indian audience. Our music crosses musical and cultural barriers," says Hothi.

Their current CD, *The New World*, demonstrates an eclectic mix of heavy metal, dance, pop, funk, folk and rock — enhanced by synthesizer-produced traditional and new sounds.

As they tour the club scene this fall, they'll also target the youngest of audiences, the school kids. In cooperation with the Surrey School District and other districts in B.C., they'll be artists in the schools, teaching the value of blending cultures and music.

"We're just encouraging them to be members of gangs," smiles the long-haired Jas. "Music, basketball, bands — we're all members of gangs."

Dal-Dil-Vog will be featured on MuchMusic Aug. 25 and at the Niagara Hotel night club in Vancouver Aug. 6 and Gastown Music Hall Sept. 15-16.