

Indian Idols will light up Diwali festival

BY JORDAN COOKE, Staff Writer

CARY - While Taylor Hicks and Chris Daughtry belted out tunes on the fifth season of American Idol in 2006, across the globe Sandeep Acharya and Aditi Paul also sang their way into reality television history on season two of the show's Indian counterpart.

On Saturday, Acharya, winner of the 2006 season of "Indian Idol," and Paul will bring their acts to the United States, headlining this year's Cary Diwali festival.

"It will be nice to have these two professional entertainers perform here," said Tushar Ghosh, a member of the board of directors of the Indian-American organization Hum Sub, which organizes the event along with the town.

Diwali, the Indian festival of lights, is the mostly widely celebrated Hindu festival, marking the victory of good over evil and the beginning of the New Year. The daylong celebration will include music, food, art, handicrafts, cultural performances and a traditional fireworks display.

The free festival, one of the biggest of its kind in the Southeast, will be held at Koka Booth Amphitheatre in Regency Park. Last year's Diwali attracted 12,000 visitors. This year, organizers are expecting even more.

"When we first started this festival, we had a small venue, and about 2,000 or 2,500 attended that year," Ghosh said. "Every year since then, we've grown tremendously. This is our ninth year, and we expect that trend will continue."

The theme of this year's festival is Padharo Mhare Des, Welcome to the vibrant state of Rajasthan,



Sanchita Dance Foundation performs at the 2005 Cary Diwali festival. The event returns Saturday to Koka Booth Amphitheatre.

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Ghosh said. Arts displays will include an exhibition of about 80 photographs of Rajasthan taken by Indian photographer Shivnarayan Joshi. In the morning, vendors will hawk their wares at a handicrafts bazaar. There will be food vendors from local Indian restaurants.

"Rajasthan is the largest state in India in terms of land, and it's got a very long and colorful history," Ghosh said. "The state is a very unique one, and is actually not unlike California here in the United States, in some ways.

"In Rajasthan," he continued, "there's a desert or semi-arid land on one side while the other side is very green and nice. And the people there are very much like Californians, I'd say, because they consider themselves different. They are very colorful in their way of living. We'll capture that at Diwali."

jordan.cooke@nando.com or 919-460-2609

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