

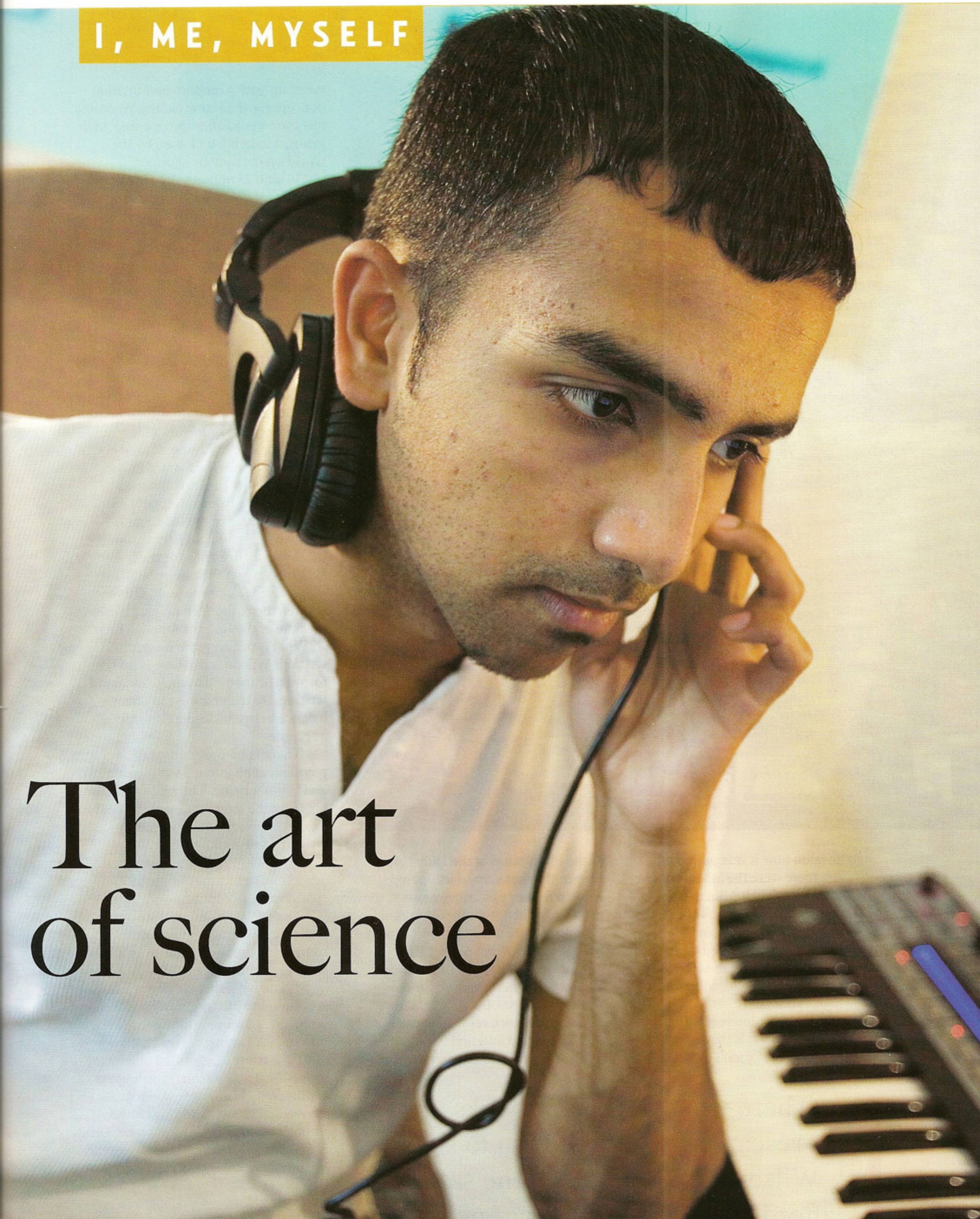


MARCH 20-26, 2009

# Friday

Dress  
for two

Stunning style statements  
for mothers-to-be 46



# The art of science



**A**T 24, JUNAID FARUQ IS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR of a Dubai-based biotech organisation and the CEO of another company. **Preethi Janice D'Sa** meets the wunderkind. Photos by **Grace Paras**

Engaging in conversation with Junaid Faruq for the first time, you may find his Irish sayings a bit confusing. But on learning the meaning of 'sweet and savage' – slang for 'amazing' – you may soon find yourself replying in a similar manner.

'Sweet and savage', Faruq has a lot going for him. He has proved to scientific-minded intellectuals and roving artists that both worlds can meet and successfully at that. Coming from a family of doctors, the artistic streak was a surprise component in his genetic make-up. It is what has propelled him to indulge in a highly interesting form of creativity for a living, among other things – the rendering of DNA band patterns, through his business named DNA-DX. In doing this he is creating quite a stir in Dubai.

This young man captures your attention due to his passion and zest for all things beautiful, whether artistic or scientific.

## I, ME, MYSELF

**I am originally from** India but I grew up in Ireland as my parents, both of whom are doctors, were living there. As such we moved around a lot within the UK. [Living in Ireland] was great because it enabled me to visit many other countries and meet people from different cultures.

I have a brother and a sister. My brother is currently attending Cornell

University in New York and my sister is at the University of Toronto in Canada. We moved to Dubai in July 2007. My mother is a gynaecologist and works at the Jebel Ali Hospital. My father is a laparoscopic/bariatric surgeon. My parents met at medical school. Though my parents are both in the medical field, I chose not to opt for medicine as a career because I discovered that biotechnological sciences offered a lot more scope for research.

**I am a pragmatist** and the understanding of biological sciences came naturally to me at school. Studying science helped me think critically. While I was in college, the Human Genome Project had just been completed and that achievement was the breakthrough in modern science as we know it today. It eventually drew me to molecular biology. With the Human Genomic map, we had the blueprints to life and it gave us more information about ourselves than ever before. Molecular biological research is the basis for a lot of applied medicine and bioprocesses these days. Many breakthroughs in food technology, industrial bioprocessing (for example, biopetroleum) and other disciplines have molecular biology at their core. The field holds enormous potential.

**I came up with the concept of DNA art** when I was studying at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. I used to do countless gel electrophoreses



**Faruq is very close to his father** (above) and they share professional interests. He is also an avid snowboarder who enjoys music production (left).

to hike back up. In Dubai, I have been to Ski Dubai. It is an amazing place to practise.

**I am passionate about** music production. I have tried mastering playing the guitar but I couldn't quite crack it. Instead, I found that I preferred music arrangement and production. As I am a dance music fanatic, I appreciate good synthesised beats and rhythms. Music production software is so good these days that I can create music tracks that employ the sounds of a variety of instruments but which are manned by me. I have a good grasp of music production and would love to meet any musician who needs help with recording his tracks. I love going to electronic concerts. I feel the musical tastes of Dubai have become more interesting and I love the growing electronic music culture that I see happening here. We also seem to have some very talented DJs visit this region and this brings promise for the growing music culture.

[a method using biochemistry and molecular biology to separate DNA] for my theses. One day my father and I were discussing some of my work and the idea of turning it into art sprung to mind. About a year later, DNA-DX was born and subsequently our flagship GenePortrait genetic art designs came to life. Art is not the only thing that relaxes me but the DNA-DX paintings hanging on my wall do just that and I think they look great.

I do have interests apart from science and art. I used to visit the French Alps often before I moved to Dubai. I like snowboarding there. Very few things beat racing down a mountain on an off-piste untouched powder run, even if it only lasts a couple of minutes before you have

## I, ME, MYSELF

### Me and Dublin

Growing up in Ireland for a major part of my life helped me to have an easy-going personality and a generally laid-back outlook to life. I spent my childhood and school years in a small picturesque town on the west coast of the country called Sligo. Subsequently I took a break, and finished my education in Dubai. I returned to Dublin to attend college at the Dublin City University and graduated in biotechnology. I can safely say that a significant part of who I am can be attributed to my amazing experiences and people who I befriended both in Sligo and while at college in Dublin. I had some of the best times of my life there and I see myself as Irish at heart.

### Me and Dubai

I find Dubai very different from Dublin in some ways – the two places are almost opposite in a way. Firstly it doesn't rain here like it does in Dublin. Life in Dubai is very fast-paced whereas everything in Ireland is rather mellow. I feel that one can achieve a lot in Dubai in a shorter space of time than in most countries because of the basic drive that people have here to excel and succeed. Dubai is becoming a hub for global commerce and culture and this is a major attraction for many people, not to mention the perennial sunshine! If you find the right group

of people to socialise with, there is no place in the world quite like Dubai. The lifestyle here is often taken for granted. When I travel abroad, I miss the sheer variety of foods that we have so readily available here. I like any type of food – Thai, Mexican, Indian – you name a cuisine and I have probably tried it.

### Me and my father

My father is an incredibly active and forward-thinking person. He is not only a highly renowned surgeon in Dubai but he is also the CEO of Eastern Biotech where he is able to realise his future visions for healthcare. I am very close to my father and we are constantly discussing new projects and new ideas for Eastern Biotech, DNA-DX and many other projects. He has definitely been a major influence in my life and I have never taken an important decision without seeking his advice.

### Me and Eastern Biotech and Life Sciences

Eastern Biotech and Life Sciences was founded by my father. The company's vision is to bring the best genetic testing products developed worldwide to the Middle East. I am currently the marketing director of the company. Our focus has been on pioneering private genetic testing in the region. Genetic conditions are prevalent in this region too and this suits our analytical projects. Genetic testing is a relatively new form of diagnostic healthcare. Many people do not realise the importance of these projects and one of our missions is to educate the general public in what results can be expected from genetic testing and how it can benefit their lives.

We understand that prevention is better than cure and our products offer a better understanding of the issues related to genetic problems. We aim to raise awareness pertaining to what the risks are and how symptoms can be identified early on. The company ethos has been to give people the chance to become more educated about their inherited medical traits and to act before it is too late.

DNA-DX falls under the umbrella of Eastern Biotech. Using the expertise of our highly educated scientists, we developed the GenePortrait DNA Art range. I find it very exciting marketing this range.

### Me and DNA-DX Art

I love all things modern, chic, trendy, sharp and minimalist. I love the abstract nature of genetic band patterns. What the art represents is so close to my professional life that the concepts and ideas arise naturally. That is how DNA-DX became more of a passion of mine than work because I have the freedom to create the designs, design the website as well as the marketing material. There is endless room for creativity.

## I, ME, MYSELF

### What is so special about GenePortrait?

I always look at other artists' work and have respect for the time and dedication that goes into a piece. I understand the emotion portrayed in paintings. Having said that, I take a different stance when it comes to defining artwork. The GenePortraits I create are a digital snapshot of DNA. Every individual's DNA is unique – it's what makes us different from one another. Each band pattern is unique; there is no other band in the world like it. When we run DNA through the gel, a pattern emerges that is as singular and unique as is a fingerprint. It is this uniqueness I want to portray in my art. This is where the beauty and abstract nature of GenePortrait announces itself.

I need to make it clear that after the DNA is taken from the person and used, we keep the DNA for up to three months after which time it is destroyed. This is one of the conditions that we mention clearly when we take samples of cells.

### How did you become interested in graphic design?

Sometime during the design process of the DNA-DX website, I started experimenting with Photoshop. I hadn't attended classes or workshops but I got some help from a friend who is a web designer. There's so much that can be done with this programme that eventually it became a hobby of mine. I design all the material we use for DNA-DX.

I also do digital retouching of the GenePortraits themselves. I am fascinated by graphic design.

### What are your plans for the future?

I am thrilled to have been accepted two weeks ago to do my PhD in algal biotechnology at John Hopkins University in Baltimore. My main interest in this subject stems from seeing the damage we are doing to the environment. Though the world's oil reserves are depleting at an alarming rate there is still going to be a need for oil. Are we going to abandon these technologies when oil runs out? What is the alternative? I am a firm believer in searching for alternate solutions.

Bioethanol is already being used in South America as a source of fuel but it is not going to be enough to feed all the engines of the world. There is a new source of petroleum and diesel called biopetroleum and biodiesel. This is made from the green 'scum' that we sometimes see on stagnant lakes, which is commonly called algae. This technology is very new but I feel that it holds the key to meet our energy needs. ■

For more information e-mail [junaaid@dna-dx.com](mailto:junaaid@dna-dx.com) or visit [www.dna-dx.com](http://www.dna-dx.com) and [www.easternbiotech.com](http://www.easternbiotech.com)

– Preethi Janice D'Sa is a Dubai-based freelancer

## HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN MASTERPIECE

**Step 1:** Select the kind of portrait you wish to have through an online order at <http://www.dna-dx.com>

We have many attractive colour schemes for you to choose from, such as tuxedo olive, neon shock and even something as simple as Monochrome. You can decide to have a family size portrait or just a couple or a single one.

We will send you a collection kit where you will need to follow the instructions to scrape your cheek cells and send the sample to us.

**Step 2:** We send your data to our laboratory. We collect data by taking a few cells from the

inside of your cheek. The DNA is run through a process of gel electrophoresis.

The separated band patterns are photographed. Your DNA sample and gel are then destroyed to protect your privacy.

### Step 3:

The photo of the DNA is sent to our design team who take into account the band colour, frame size and other such details. A high-quality image is printed on to canvas, which is then carefully mounted on to your chosen frame and inspected until it is deemed satisfactory by our quality control team.

Your GenePortrait art is then posted to you without delay. **Step 4:** You can now sit back and enjoy your masterpiece!