

THE BALLAD OF DEEP ROY

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN, MYTH AND SCREEN LEGEND

By LEELA SHANSON



When someone who is 4ft 4 inches tall walks into a room you would think that his height would be the first thing you'd notice. With Deep Roy, it wasn't. The first thing I noticed was his presence. I was at the premiere for *The Ballad of Sandeep* and in walked a confident but modest, friendly and funny man who people were flocking towards. His height was simply another characteristic. I'd seen him play parts in films such as *Planet of the Apes*, *Star Trek*, and every single Oompa-Loompa in Tim Burton's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* –all of which were in elaborate costumes. Today we were seeing him not only out of costume but also as the star. The film is a short one, but funny and enjoyable with epic music and an endearing main character. It has a David and Goliath-esque story underlying it which makes you not only root for Deep's character but also, perhaps, identify with him. Who is this man who has managed to overcome prejudices and establish himself within a famously judgmental industry? What is it about him that draws people to him? Deep Roy leaves his indelible mark on *The Ballad of Sandeep* and I wanted to know more...



You have acted in many films set in fantasy worlds. If you could live in any of them which would it be?

I'm happy with reality but if I had to choose a fantasy life I would want to be a King. I did a movie called *Roots of Evil* which is Tim Burton's favorite movie, where I played a mafia boss, I had power, not that I'm power hungry, but I had power because I was the brains, and I also had muscle power, because I'd just flick my fingers, and say "go and give them hell". I wouldn't do it myself, I'd just have my goonies do it for me. That's a fantasy that's my fantasy. Another fantasy is to live in a chocolate factory, yes live in a chocolate factory and eat chocolate. Because I love chocolate.



You often wear very elaborate costumes. When you watch a film back do you prefer seeing yourself dressed up as a fantasy creature or as a human?

The thing is, whether I am in a suit or without a suit, I don't like looking at myself because I'm very critical of my performance. I'm a very shy guy and very critical of myself- and I say "you could've done better, you could've done much, much better", and people say to me "no you are too hard on yourself". Many people have told me that, but that's my nature. I don't like looking at myself even at the theatre.



When acting, which do you prefer?

You have to work doubly hard, when you're in a costume, because you've got to work doubly hard so that it at least feels like what you're trying to portray in the costume, the emotions, come through on the outside. Through the costume. As for my preference, work is work, that's how I look at it, it doesn't matter to me. Probably without costume, but writers have a tendency to write for an average guy, not to say that I'm not an average guy, I mean that writers don't write glossy parts for me. You see even

though I'm 4ft 4 I also think that height has never bothered me, I never look at that, in my mind I'm 6ft 4, but writers have a tendency to write for an ordinary guy. I'm having to overcome that, that's why I've developed all these scripts and screenplays through my production company Teeney Weeney Productions inc. Even though I haven't produced anything, it's my ambition. But it's tough, it's new to me, although I do know what the mechanics are. Then again money is very hard to come by because of the economic situation, but I'm still very positive and very optimistic, that things will happen in the future.



Tim Burton has been quoted saying that you're "the hardest working man in show-business". Would you say you're especially driven? Where does this drive come from?

I have always been like that, I don't have to prove anything to anybody but I have to do it for myself. And then the drive comes because I'm very passionate about the business, and what I want to do. I've had a tremendous career so far, I have, but I'd like to do even more. One is never satisfied. One has to keep going on and on and on. Don't get me wrong, I'm a very content person and I think that if it's meant to be, it's meant to be. I try but I'm not perfect but I learn every day. My dad used to say to me "never say you made a mistake, that was a learning experience", and another thing my dad taught me was "be nice you've got nothing to lose". That's the way I was brought up.



Have you always wanted to be an actor?

My family, my dad, wanted me to be an accountant. See I was born in Nairobi, Kenya, my parents were from India. And I grew up, the whole 4ft 4 inches of it in Nairobi. And my dad sent me to London for further education; he wanted me to be an accountant so that I could look after his business in Kenya. I went into accountancy, I was pushed into it. My mind was there but my heart wasn't there. You have to be in sync with your mind and heart if you want to achieve anything. I found it boring, so I gave up and I said I wanted to be a comedian. My family was so upset- especially my dad. I went to drama school for 6 months, I quit that, that upset my dad even further, and I went to a writer who wrote me 20 minutes of stand up – that's how I started in the business, and the rest is history. I'm glad I did *The Ballad of Sandeep* because in some way it portrays who I am in real life: I'm driven and I never give up. Retirement is not in my vocabulary.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON *THE BALLAD OF SANDEEP* VISIT
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THE BALLAD OF SANDEEP

You can source him out, but you can't size him down



Starring
Deep Roy, Gil Damon, David Amadio,
Steve Kuzmick, Brian Gillin & Bud Damon

Written by THE MINOR PROPHETS • Produced & Directed by DEREK FREY
Music by MIKE HIGHAM & ANDY RICHARDS
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