



the weekend
RANT
Francis H D'Sa

No time for patience, doc

“Mary, I need an appointment,” I said sounding on the edge. Mary is the doctor’s secretary. She loves playing god for those three hours in the evening and we generally allow her to be so.

“Sorry, all full till next week. Doctor’s just back from his foreign trip and will be going out again,” she informed gleefully.

“So what do we do? Just curl up and die?” I ask! Or maybe I can die next week?

“Mary, this is like a ‘no hope zone.’ My intestines are in a ‘twist’ and I thought he’d better see them before they do the rock and roll.”

“I think you said that last week but I’ll let that pass. Come at 9:00 pm and we’ll take it from there,” she said condescendingly.

I am at the clinic sharp at 9:00 pm. It is full of fat *behenjis* and their even fatter *behenjas* (translated hubbies) who appear as if they have all come here to watch the *Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* serial that is currently being aired loudly.

“Mary! Is this a clinic? Ever heard of a silence zone?” “Doctor said sick people who come here need some entertainment to distract them from their illness. Vaastu, you see,” she says knowingly, twisting her neck to get a better view of the screen.

Vaastu, here too? I thought there was enough of this happening in office. This serial is for morons and guess what; they are all here by the dozen, transfixed.

The patient inside with the doc is taking an eternity to exit. This is going to be a long night. It’s 9:45 pm already.

The doc’s kids (10 and 15 years) decide to make an entry and generally create a nuisance, with the phone, the magazines, changing of TV channels, much to the shock of these *bahus* here and give me a baleful stare as if to say, hey buddy, can’t you wish us or do we go in and whisper your misbehaviour to my dad?

The door opens and another two patients enter and look around for a place to sit.

Oh god! Who are these guys now? Six burly medical reps with their rasping breaths enter to see the doc and boy, is it getting claustrophobic too? Oh yes, the doc will see them first. Didn’t you hear of those free pharmaceutical company seminars in Singapore, Bangkok, China? Competition you know!

It’s 11:00 pm and his lordship, the doctor finally graces us with his presence, smiles at all and draws, “I’ve an emergency, so sorry, but maybe tomorrow? My patient at Lilavati has decided to go into a coma, so...”

Dammit!

“What’s taking you so long there,” thunders the wife over the cell phone.

“Patients, honey,” I say.

“And remember to get the twisted rolls on the way home, or else...”

At 11:00 pm! And I’m allergic to ‘twisted’. Maybe I’ll just curl up and die after all! It’s easier.

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<http://www.mangolanguages.com/>
This website is perfect for those interested in learning new languages. It provides the user with tutorials in 12 different languages including German, French, Spanish, Russian and Italian. The lessons are simple and generally teach daily conversations. The teaching method engages the learner in real conversation between two natives.

<http://www.fixitclub.com/>
The tap is broken and the plumber is on a holiday. Then fix it yourself. Fix-it club gives you detailed description of how to repair household things ranging from upholstery, apparel, jewellery to electronics and plumbing. It gives an illustrated description of the repair process and makes things easy by informing the user how these machines function. It explains fixing basics and tips to the user.

The song, dance and entertainment world of Bollywood is luring many foreigners to join the film industry

Humaira Ansari

A chef in California who tossed salads is now in Mumbai, albeit, not as a chef but to try his luck in Bollywood. Eddie Sonnenblick, was happy being a chef until he watched the Hindi film, *Lagaan*. The Oscar nominated film set against the colonial backdrop spurred Eddie’s interest in Bollywood. “*Lagaan* changed the entire course of my life — *Main bawarchi se actor ban gaya* (From being a chef, I became an actor),” he says jokingly speaking in Hindi with an American accent.

He began reading books about India and seeing a lot of Bollywood films thereafter. “I had watched at least 70 to 80 Hindi films before I came to India,” says the hazel-eyed 38-year-old sitting at his Bandra home. However, what brought him here was not Bollywood but Vipassana (meditation) to which he was introduced in his homeland. “I decided to come to India,” states Sonnenblick. He travelled extensively in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to places like Sarnath, Shravasti and Rajgiri. “I wanted to visit the land where Lord Buddha had walked,” he says. A self-taught student of the Hindi language, Sonnenblick speaks Hindi almost effortlessly.

After coming to Mumbai, despite his interest in Bollywood, he did not think of taking acting as a career until a few of his friends goaded him to explore the option. “I asked them if they really thought I would be able to work in Bollywood,” he recalls. Now three years later, he has worked in many ad film commercials like LG, makemytrip.com, IPL, Citibank etc. He also played a small role as one of the office staff in actor Priyanka Chopra’s upscale fashion house office in Karan Johar’s film *Dostana*. Despite doing some blink and miss appearances until now, Sonnenblick has a few substantial roles in some upcoming projects. In the age of crossover cinema he says, “Over the last five years a lot more opportunities have opened up for foreigners.”

For 26-year-old Australian Harry Key, his future lies in Bollywood. Unlike Sonnenblick, Key had studied theatre and media in Bathurst before coming over to India. Even though he is full time into acting at the moment, he eventually wants to move to directing, he admits. “Acting is so much fun. You can just be anything,” says the young lad, clad in black T-shirt and jeans at his Versova home. Harry has also worked in a few commercials like Airtel, Smith and Jones and a Bingo ad that is soon going to go on air. He played the auctioneer in the film *Dostana*. His upcoming project includes a Malayalam film that has many foreigners and superstar Mammooty. “It’s a big film. It’s like their *Mangal Pandey*,” says Harry visibly excited.



BEYOND BORDERS: Australian Harry Key (left) in a still from the film *Dostana* (below), US-born Eddie Sonnenblick now based in Mumbai (right)

Crossover to Bollywood

He is especially looking forward to its release and says, “It’s going to be the first film where I play a substantial role.”

Having grown up in Scione, a sparsely populated region in Australia, Key found Mumbai a total antithesis and was absolutely taken aback initially. “There are only about 3,000 people in Scione, so you can imagine how I felt bumping into one person every minute in Mumbai,” he laughs. Nevertheless, he soon got adjusted to the Mumbai life. “The people here are very open and friendly and the city is buzzing with energy all the time,” he states.

His colleague James Lee (45), from San Francisco is one of the oldest foreigners working in Bollywood and is also part of the same Malayalam venture. The two are also part of another film with actor Govinda titled *Showman*. While Harry plays the presenter of a reality dance show in the film, Lee plays a bar owner. Lee, who was on his second world tour, came to India in February 2004. He was in Goa, when he met his Indian wife Christine, recalls Lee



while sitting at his Mahim residence, sporting a Ganesha and Durga tattoo on his arms.

His first commercial was a Pepsi ad. He didn’t know the person with whom he shot the commercial until once when he and Christine were out on some errands and he chanced upon a poster of Lay’s chips. “I immediately pointed out to Christine and said this was the guy I worked with and she said, ‘Oh my God that’s Saif Ali Khan,’” he says with a smile.

In the last five years, he has worked with

Makeover MAGICIANS

Tinkering with metal to create customised snazzy bikes and All Terrain Vehicles are a passionate few

Sugandha Pathak

Actor John Abraham treats it like his baby; industrialist Gautam Singhania is very particular about it and rallyist Neville Poonawala just cannot have enough of it. We’re talking about these famous men and their love for their mean machines — their world class bikes. Giving a makeover and creating such high-end bikes for them are a passionate few living across the city.

“I have been tuning John Abraham’s Yamaha R1 for the last two years. I have seen him maintaining it like his bike. He says his bike is like a baby and the more you love it, the better it performs,” says Dinesh Shetty, chairman, Twin City Motor Sport Club. Their club is involved in extreme motor sports and customising bikes for almost two decades now.

It’s a similar tale for brothers Timothy and Joseph, hailed as the Arlen Ness (USA



Custom designed 350 CC Bullet and Trike (below) with bullet engine made by Timothy and Joseph



based pioneers in the custom motorcycle industry) of India. Operating from their thatched garage in Bandra, the duo are masters in their job. “From making our own custom parts like wheels, forks, disc brakes, starters to paint jobs, it’s all in-house,” informs Timothy. Their company - Tim Motor Craft racing systems (TMC) has been customising bikes for over two decades now. Timothy, a racer and a stuntman and Joseph, a cycle wheelie gave up their respective professions to pursue their passion full time.

Their run down garage may make you wonder how they manage to create custom made All Terrain Vehicles (ATV) for people like Gautam Singhania and Neville Poonawala, but look no further. For, from the pile of raw material they create beauties like the automatic ATV with an Activa engine which is priced at around Rs 1.5 lakh which goes upto 90 km/hr or the dune buggy styled ATV with a Maruti engine for around Rs 3 lakhs which can go upto 140km/hr or the modified Enfield for Rs 3 lakh.

While Tim ideates and makes the design, Joseph does the fabrication and painting of the vehicle. They don’t own work on a computer, and all their designs are indigenous. “I still like to make my designs on a piece of paper,” says Timothy. Bikes and ATV’s are their forte although they have also created an Amphibian, MPBS jeep which can run on water. This was made with the intention that it can be used as a rescue jeep for people stuck in floods.

For Akshai Varde, founder of Vardenchi Motorcycles, it was a hobby which has turned into a profession. It’s been four years now and he is a known name among bike enthusiasts. Customising bikes for him means knowing his clients and their taste thoroughly. “There is a detailed discussion about what exactly my client is looking for, his lifestyle, likes and dislikes apart from the usual height, weight, body mass etc,” he says.

When it comes to bike modifications there are strict rules and regulations. “Modification of bikes is illegal, but this question arises every time Dilip Chabria modifies a car. The laws are same for every one. Modification of bikes is legal only for motor sports,” says Shetty.

For Timothy and Joseph what is saddening is that their MPBS jeep is still lying in the garage for two years now. “I am not getting the permission to even test drive, despite running from pillar to post. I just want a few hours. It’s for a good cause,” says Timothy.

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Actor John Abraham, a bike enthusiast, seen here with his Suzuki Hayabusa 1300 CC.

Burning passion

Bharatnatyam, the classical Indian dance, is considered to be a fire dance as the movements of an authentic Bharatnatyam dancer resemble the movements of a dancing flame.

Saif Ali Khan in *Salaam Namaste*, *Tara Rum Pum* and in another ad for Lenovo computers.

He also worked in television shows and a few ads in USA and in a Hollywood film *War of the Worlds*, though he was in the background all the time. He was there in the opening scene in *Dhoom 2* playing the security guard in the train sequence, he has played a business executive in *Partner*, a scientist from the future in *Krrish*, a cameraman in *Billu* and a party animal in *Om Shanti Om*. Recounting his encounter with Shahrukh Khan, Lee, who can barely speak Hindi says, “I walked up to Shahrukh and said *Aap kaisa hai* and he replied *Main aachecha hoon*. I was so nervous that I landed up asking him again, this time in English, How are you? And he replied with a smile, ‘Dude you just asked me that.’”

For Sonnenblick, living in Mumbai has been a liberating experience as he can explore himself freely and the expectations are far less here. A self-confessed Bollywood fan, he says, “I like the films of Hrishida (Hrishikesh Mukherjee), Manmohan Desai and even the angry young man stuff.” It is difficult to choose his favourite Bollywood number but he likes all Mohammed Rafi songs. “I love the dance and music and the *mujras* like those in *Umrao Jaan*. I like the song *Chhaiya Chhaiya*’s music and picturisation.”

For Key, who has travelled extensively on his motorbike almost all over India right up to Leh and Ladakh, filming his journey on his handycam is yet another passion. “I just shoot, edit the stuff and upload it on my Youtube channel,” he says, adding that he would want to explore the medium of documentaries as well.

For Lee, “I am going to spend the rest of my life here.”

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Celebrating dance in varied forms

Joanna Lobo

Get ready to enjoy the varied classical and contemporary Indian dance forms.

To commemorate International Dance Day being celebrated on April 29, the Lasya Centre of Dance Education and Research will host the 7th annual two day dance fest called Yatra. “It is our way of celebrating dance and showing what it really means to us,” says founder director of Lasya, Rajeshree Shirke. This 57-year-old sprightly Kathak danseuse started Yatra as a means of, “associating with other institutes and performers, forgetting all ego and competition.” Yatra is essentially a choreography fest that features groups of dancers (minimum four). Solos are a strict no-no.

Yatra will see the Lasya team of eight dancers attempt to revive the old story telling tradition (Kathakari), via dance. “Earlier,” narrates Shirke, “Kathakari was performed in temples. Once the Mughals came, the temples were destroyed and this art moved into the darbars where it got more intricate and refined.”

This year’s concert will feature five dance groups, hand-picked from all over India. The Natya Stem Dance Kampni (NSDK), Bangalore is all set to create ripples here with their contemporary dance performances. Madhu Nataraj, a trained Kathak dancer who studied contemporary dance in New York started the Kampni to showcase India’s unique contemporary dance potential where tradition and modernity co-exist. Her dances take inspiration from Buddhist texts, Sufi poetry, martial arts and even sports.

Chhau, the tribal dance from Orissa will find expression in the four pieces that will be performed by Shashadhar Acharya and his group. Chhau is a masked dance that was traditionally performed only by men. Seraiella born Acharya explains, “Chhau makes the maximum use of body movements.” Since Chhau is performed to instrumental music, four people will play traditional instruments like the *dhol*, *nagada*, *shehnai*, *chadchadi* and the flute.

Classical apart, contemporary dances will also find a place in this years list of performances — Asim Bandhu’s group will be performing a contemporary Kathak piece called Ghungroo. Other performances will include Odissi dancer Aruna Mohanty’s group perform Glimpses of Orissa, Pune’s Kathak institute Nad Roop performing Nishabda Bheda inspired by the French documentary *Le Monde du Silence* (The Silent World).

Yatra will take place on April 28 and 29 at Ravindar Natya Mandir, Prabhadevi. Contact: 2431 2956
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Dancers from the Natya Stem Dance Kampni