

A FIERY PERFORMANCE (Part 2)

TQR INTERVIEWS CANNES FILM FESTIVAL RED-CARPET ACTOR-MAGICIAN

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B: There are 4 parts to this movie...

- a) It is the true life story of me in real person.
- b) It is about humanity. It is about today's parents going through physical and mental stress in bringing up their children.
- c) The movie could motivate others to be strong and stand up to the challenges.
- d) I hope that the children of today will realize that their parent's will do and give everything to ensure that they do well in life.

EV: What is the synopsis of this movie?

B: A magician-father who is an alcoholic is not able to perform his shows and starts living on a meek income working as a cleaner in a pub. He is now left with a son to be looked after. He drowns his sorrows with drinking to escape from the harsh realities of life. He consumes the leftover drinks at the pub and gets free drinks by performing bizarre magic. His boss discovers that his helper is able to endure pain. He takes up a challenge, through his boss, from a customer for a large sum of money. He decides to use mind-over-matter to accomplish all the acts for the love of his son because the son needs money for his school and daily expenses. All the bizarre magic is real, no stunt man, no special effects and no gimmicks.

EV: When can we expect the release of this film?

B: The movie will be released in Singapore sometimes late this year, perhaps during the school holidays in December so as to give an opportunity for all

Singaporeans to watch it.

EV: From magician to actor. Describe your process of acting.



B: Well this is a typical, made-in-Singapore movie. The dialogue is 80% in Tamil with a little bit of Hokkien, Cantonese and a little Malay. Even though I speak Tamil, I had a difficult time getting some of the pronunciations of the words right. Some of my script was given to me at the last minute. And to make matters worse, I had to digest it which made it even harder. During one stage of the shooting, my director has to pull me aside and tell me, "Francis what is wrong with you." Well from then on, it was smooth sailing, partly because my director decided to cut off a big chunk of my dialogue. I felt bad about it but the story line remained unchanged. It was totally different from performing magic as the ball was in your court. In acting, the ball is in the director's court.

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EV: How was that similar to your profession as a performer?

B: Well as a professional performer, you are in control of your own situation. You can make the changes through experience and at your own pace. You have time on your hands to plan and decide how you want your routine to be.



In acting, it has to come naturally according to the situation you are in. You cannot see yourself, how your expressions are, at the moment in time. You have to memorize your script and evolve yourself with the environment you are in. You have more than 30 people working with you to ensure that everything goes right. You make a mistake it has to be retaken all over again, that means wasted material, time

and money.



EV: What was most challenging about it?

B: Well in India, the Fakirs will pierce the tongue of a child with a skewer while he is seated on a stool. They normally use a fake

tongue to accomplish the effect. When I did that, my director told me that it does not look good. So I decided then to really pierce my tongue and all the crew watching me freaked out. I staked my life for the movie. There is a scene that I damage my nerve on my left hand. I still do not have any feelings around the region of my left thumb, up till today. So I live with it now. I believe that when you do something you have to put your heart and soul into it or not.

EV: What was like working with director, Eric Khoo?

B: Well it was a wonderful experience working with him. I would not hesitate to do any movies for him if I am asked again. He is a man of great vision. A man who will pursue his thoughts with determination, despite all odds, because he believes in himself, He is a simple, down-to-earth person. However, he is a pessimistic person in real life.

EV: What was he like as a director, and as a friend?

B: One day in late November last year, he sends me an SMS saying “Francis I am doing this movie just for you.” I was so touched and was filled with emotion. I



could not offer him anything in return. So I decided to stake my life for this movie. I went through lots of injury and pain and I did not tell my director at that time, that I was in the early stages of diabetes for which I was using my mind to control. Well, all my injuries were healed. So my diabetes did not prevent the healing process of my wounds. I feel that he is more a friend than a director. He is a person with emotion like you and me. I am so very happy that I

contributed in a very small way, in fulfilling his dreams and for him to be able to walk on that 60-metre-long, red carpet at the Cannes film festival 2008 in France.

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EV: Let’s get to your co-star. Tell us more about this talent. What was your experience like with him? Has he made you his god-father?



B: The co-star Jathishweran was an excellent choice that we made after interviewing a few boys. Jathis has played in TV dramas roles varying from gangster to a disabled child. He was recommended by Mr. Kumar - the popular Singapore comedian. I felt ashamed working with him. He was fluent in his Tamil and could memorize the script within minutes. Jathis has experience performing in dramas, so it came as an advantage for him. It was an excellent choice for me to work with him. He was so amazed at my performances that he followed me to my commercial shows. He is now interested to take up magic.

EV: What are your expectations of this film?

B: It is a small-budget film and shot over nine days in a tiny country called Singapore. We cannot expect much from a film like this at all. This film went against all odds in being selected as one of the 23 films, singled out from amongst 4025 films from 31 countries. It is now taking us to walk the red carpet of the prestigious and coveted Cannes film festival 2008, in France. It is the ultimate dream and destination for all film directors and the people who are in the film industry. It is everyone's dream to have their film showcased in the 'In Competition' (main competition) of the Cannes film festival. This film has achieved much beyond our expectation. It will be an added feather to our cap to win any one of the awards there and *My Magic* will go down in history. We made history by being the first Singaporeans to walk the red carpet.

EV: How do you and your team expect it to fare at the box-office?

B Well, the film rights have been taken over by a company called Wild Bunch for the distribution of the film internationally. We hope that we can showcase the movie in Taiwan, Korea, Japan, India and other countries. Another company, ARP, will be distributing the film in France. I believe that Golden Village in Singapore has taken over to screen the movie *My Magic* in local theatres. I would be more than happy if it could break the box office in Singapore. I hope many Singaporeans will watch the movie, so that they too can be motivated to achieve the things that they aspire in life. At the end of the day, if you put your mind into whatever you do, you are bound to achieve it. It is called *Mind over Matter*. To all those who believe, no explanation is necessary. To all those you don't none will be possible. They say, *seeing is believing*, but you may not believe in what you see in *My Magic*. (As of today, we have sold the movie to 6 countries, including Singapore.)

EV: How do you feel about walking the red-carpet with Eric at the Cannes Festival?



B: I cannot imagine this at all. It is a privilege that I got to know Mr. Eric Khoo and the confidence he had in me. I have no money to pay him but I can be proud to walk beside him, with my head up high, on the 60-metre long red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival 2008. It is an experience beyond words, being in the limelight to the whole world.

EV: Is Eric buying you a suit? I hope that it is a branded one. Who bought the first round of drinks after you received the news of your nomination in the mainstream category?

B: Yes. Mr. Eric has gotten Jathis and me a full tuxedo each, to wear at the Cannes Film Festival. Eric has always been buying the drinks non-stop since the results came out on Wednesday, 23 April 2008. There was a celebration party thrown for all those who were involved in the making of *My Magic* at the boiler room of the St. James Power Station recently.

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EV: Here's a tough question: How is it like to be a larger celebrity now?

B: It is not a tough question. It was even more difficult to have the movie *My Magic* selected for the Cannes film festival this year. No, I do not consider myself a celebrity. I am what I am. It is the media that has made me a celebrity. I am happy that I have contributed in a small way to make Singapore proud. It is not only about being a celebrity in Singapore, but also a celebrity to the whole world.



EV: Since the wide interest in your film from the press and public, what has the response been like from the public?

B: Many of them have already asked me for autographs and they are all excited and looking forward, to watch the movie in Singapore. All those who have asked me to give autographs; I will give them, the signed photos of Eric, Jathis and me walking on the red steps at Cannes. The movie moved those who watched it to tears. I had tremendous feedback from the people on the streets. Many were sad that we did not win any awards. Metro Cannes newspaper featured *My Magic* on their headline and even predicted that the Best Actor to go to Francis Bosco.

EV: What an honour it must have been. The French press is one of the most critical in the world when it comes to art and film. AB, here is your chance to say something lasting and impactful. What would you like to get off your chest?

B: The movie *My Magic* has worked for all of us. When the film was being shot, they wanted rain and it poured cats and dogs. They were shooting at the railway tracks, they wanted the train to pass by and it did. Adrian dislikes his father as much as my son dislikes me. One day after the live interview with Channel News Asia, we were outside, when all of a sudden Adrian made me promise with him one thing. He said, 'I will patch up with my father if you will patch up with your son.' I was shocked and paused for a moment. I looked at him, someone who disagreed with me with my way of thinking about a father-and-son relationship before the shooting of the film, was now putting out his hand to bridge the gap in that relationship. I took up his offer.



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EV: My son is married to an Irish girl and is not in Singapore most of the time. He came back on Friday, 2 May 2008. As usual, we did not talk though he stays in my house. My wife, my second son and his wife, and I decided to have dinner at the Newton hawker centre. My second son called his elder brother and his sister to join us. Though we were eating together after a lapse of so many years gone by as a family reunion, we did not talk. The following Friday, my wife and daughter were at work and I was watching television. My son walked by me, as though I never existed. I told myself, I had made a promise to Adrian that I will patch up with my son. I asked myself: How am I going to do it? I then thought up of an idea. When he passed by me, I called him and said, "Shawn, daddy made a movie called *My Magic*. It is about an alcoholic father trying to bond with his son. This movie is dedicated to you." He was immediately engulfed with emotion, he came and hugged me tight and kissed me on my cheek. After so many fruitless years and efforts by many people including my own relatives, *My Magic* has worked. I was even more surprised to know that it happened on the 9 May which also happened to be his birthday. I have now patched up with my son. Adrian, whose father is going through a difficult time has also patched up with his father.

I hope all those who watch the movie *My Magic* will be motivated by it and have their lives changed for the better.

EV: On a selfish note: Since I am not invited to the Cannes screening, do I get an invite to a preview of this show?

B: Well, it is my privilege to invite you to the Cannes Film Festival to tag along with us; however you have to bear all your own expenses. It may seem that it is an expensive proposition but take note that, money cannot buy you the walk on the red carpet of the Cannes Film Festival. On the other hand, I am sure I will be able to put my hands on a few tickets if there is a premiere show here in Singapore. You will be one of the first on my list to get it, if I am able to put my hands on the tickets.

B: Thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to express myself in your monthly newsletter 'The Quantum Ring' on the recent developments that came about in the media about the movie *My Magic*.