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# FILM INTERVIEW: RAHUL NATH

## Indian Dentist Becomes Dancer, Actor, Director, Writer

By: Parimal M. Rohit  
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Dentist-turned-dancer and filmmaker, Indo Brit Rahul Nath is paving his path to Hollywood. Rahul, who starred in *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Hotel Hollywood* prior to releasing his short film about domestic violence, *Foreign*, recently sat down with *Buzzine Bollywood* to chat about his latest work. A promising filmmaker and a Bollywood dance extraordinaire, Rahul dabbled in some Indian cinema as well, working on a pair of Aishwarya Rai international projects in *Provoked* and *Bride and Prejudice*.

In his chat with *Buzzine Bollywood*, Rahul told this writer why he chose to tackle one of society's most sensitive issues in domestic violence with his latest short film project, *Foreign*. A film which he wrote, directed, produced and acted in, *Foreign* also stars Puja Mohindra, Stephan M. Singh, Shruti Tewari, and Ananya Khare; it has been accepted into four film festivals including the South Asia Film Fest in Goa (India), the Venice Film Fest in Los Angeles, the Mississippi International Film Festival, and New Zealand's Yes India.

Below is Rahul's in-depth take about his film and career.  
**Parimal M. Rohit:** You are tackling an issue which South Asians do not like to talk about. How will *Foreign* change the paradigm, so to speak, about how sensitive issues among Indians (and other South Asians) are portrayed in film?

**Rahul Nath:** I think there will be two sides to it. In terms of the audience, there will be our generation who will understand and be sympathetic toward the characters in the movie and possibly hope for more of this side of cinema. Then there will be the older generation who will say traditional comments like "This never happens in our culture" and will probably dismiss it. For filmmakers, it will be a stepping stone to come out of the box and go with real-life issues that Indians face all the time and not to have any fear in making films of this genre. When tackling issues that are sensitive, you have to really lay everything out there so the audiences that are not from our culture can grasp what the characters are going through.

**PMR:** Sometimes it is film that needs to be kind of a "wake up" call and portray an issue at its rawest, as opposed to bringing up an important issue but still having a "Hollywood ending." When is it okay for a film, whether full-length, a short or a documentary, to be that very "wake up call"? Where does *Foreign* land on that spectrum of gravity of seriousness?

**RN:** It is always okay for a film to be a wake up call because sometimes you have to slap it so hard in the faces of the culprits that they are left speechless. Even those who are at fault in real life will never admit they are at fault. A wife-beater will never admit that he has beaten his wife, no matter what social strata he has come from. I think, for some people who have never seen issues like those portrayed, it would be an eye-opener as opposed to a wake-up call. A film like *Foreign* is made with a "care a damn attitude" because I have not fabricated or invented anything in the premise. The points that need to be said are said visually and clearly with an *all* rule. You can't just skim the surface — you need to put it all out there, especially for those who are not of the culture. *Foreign* is serious from the moment go. Everything you see is an honest and truthful take. For the abuse of the girl, I personally wanted to go much further and show more humiliation and more of a degrading attitude aimed toward her, but I feel the whole tone of the movie would have been inconsistent if I had done that. The emotional ride that she goes on will strike a chord with many young women. Even with the husband and the doctor, the revelation maybe a shock, but it is what today is all about.

**PMR:** You and *Foreign* lead actress Puja Mohindra have mentioned, in your own ways, about the "realness" of acting, i.e. an actor bringing a level of believability to a character, or an actor "matching" their roles. What is the "realness" you brought to the film?

**RN:** My character is seen as a golden child. He has everything, and I am sure people in the Indian community want what he has. But as the movie progresses, you see that he is just running the rat race — that is a constant in the Indian community, and though he may be pleasing others, he is killing himself. So I have tried to bring that quality in portraying him. Also, I wanted to add a characteristic where everyone who sees him will instantly say, "He's a really nice guy," and

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