

Actor Rampersad embraces chance to work in T&T



Actor Valmiki Rampersad plays the scheming Nikhil in the film Scandalous.

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stuff, the railings and steps of the curving staircase have more taped over them.

Shooting stalled after the musicians gathered to play turned up with asitar but no sitarist. Director Todd Kessler wants real playing and real sound from the instrument and most of the calls and shouts in immediate shot are about finding one.

When I finally encounter Machel Montano in the makeup chair, he's on the phone charming someone into sending a player over to the set, agreeing that the actual music could be a sample, but no, they need a player. Now.

Two hours in, a shot is finally being set up; the film crew having turned 180 degrees from the original shot by the poolside to another looking in at the house.

A young man stands sternly looking at the camera, legs spread wide, his best intimidating glare set on his face.

Behind him, extras are placed and guided, fake food is arranged on the table and the set is readied to capture some footage.

This party will go one for the week, shot in the dozens of little visual slices that build a scene. It's work of a very particular sort, that seems to inch along before ramping up to film speed before dropping back to much slower prep time again.

As I walk out the door, I hear the magic words for any film production in process, the sharp bark that signals the start of a movie being made, "Quiet on the set!"

The actor is sitting quietly in the makeup chair, looking keenly out the window.

Valmiki Rampersad was born in T&T, but migrated to the UK at the age of 14. His family still lives here, and he's particularly keen to note that he maintains an ongoing link with this country, returning every year for what he describes with some relish as his "fix of callaloo."

Rampersad plays Nikhil, the scheming villain at the heart of Scandalous, the upsetter of the bodi cart, as it were. He came to acting backward. He'd been working in PR and marketing for Ralph Lauren, a job he'd enjoyed, but didn't feel confident about his public speaking and presentation skills. So he went to night school to build confidence and discovered acting and his life's passion. He decided to pursue it and applied to several schools of acting, sure he would be turned down and prepared to return to his day job.

Rampersad was accepted by all of them and chose the Royal School of Speech and Drama, an institution with a rich alumni of practicing thespians.

He began getting roles while he was at school, though after graduating in 2007, he discovered that such rich veins of opportunity were often followed by passages of none at all.

So he works at his craft, accumulating an impressive collection of credits (<http://ow.ly/HnHTP>). Among them he is fond of the 2008 short film Open Secrets and 2009's Hotel as examples of his craft, and he now has three films in post-production and shot 123 episodes of a series, Cloud 9 in just seven months in 2013.

"I got here by luck," he admits.

the contact led to a reading in 2013 and the chance to work in his homeland, something he's been enjoying immensely.

"You have no idea how amazing it's been," he says with a broad smile. "It's been way beyond what I expected, the professionalism, the attention to detail, the way you're treated. I can't

sleep at night!"

We've been squeezed into a hold moment before shooting and the call to be ready comes. Rampersad stops for a moment, thinking.

I wonder if he's getting into character before he says quietly, "I work hard; I do a lot of projects. It's been really intense!"

"You have no idea how amazing it's been," he says with a broad smile. "It's been way beyond what I expected, the professionalism, the attention to detail, the way you're treated. I can't sleep at night!"

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