

Spotlight on FILM|Valmike Rampersad

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As we start a new year, the possibilities are looking as bright as ever for Caribbean native **Valmike Rampersad**. From TV to the silver screen, Valmike is making waves in the industry as are his films. BahamasLocal.com **Entertainment & Events** Editor, Vanessa Mott, interviewed Valmike about what it means to be on the scene.

Vanessa: So far you've been in 6 award winning films. What is it like having films at all these different festivals around the world? Is this the actor's equivalent of being on tour?

Valmike: *It is exciting to have films being seen by people all around the world and being accepted into such excellent film festivals. It really is icing on the cake when they actually win an award. If I were able to attend all of the festivals for the films I have been in, yes, I would consider that being on tour – that could be a lot of fun. I did manage to make it to Trinidad for the International premiere of 'Bazodee' earlier this year though.*

Vanessa: Many persons look at actors and filmmakers in the "festival stage" if you will, as being in the minor league so to speak, however, in some cases actors and filmmakers at this level often feel more connected to the true art of theatre and production. How do you feel? Like a "starving" artist trying to make it to the big screen or do you feel like more of a "true" thespian able to work on projects for their merit and not just the big money or promised fame?

Valmike: *I look for projects that I connect to regardless of the budget. The lower budget films tend to have characters that are less of the stereotypical Indian/Middle*

Eastern roles and those castings are usually colour blind. I try to seek out characters that are far removed from me, that challenge me. Characters that I have to work hard at developing in order to be able to play them convincingly. Even the big budget films are often launched at festivals, for example at Cannes and Venice. A number of my feature films have thankfully made it to the big screen and several are now on DVD, Netflix or amazon. Filmmakers want their films to be seen by as many people as possible, as do I, which means getting it screened at festivals and subsequently picked up by distributors for the big screens worldwide.

Vanessa: At the Bahamas International Film Festival (BIFF|December 2015) we actually had 2 films that you were featured in, a rare occurrence for someone who can be considered a relatively new actor. Do you think this is a direct indicator of your marketability, talent, and future success as an actor?

Valmike: *It was pure coincidence that U.S. film ‘Bazodee’ and British film ‘Meet Pursuit Delange’ both got into BIFF. They are both ensemble pieces, each with a very big cast – I don’t know if this this is an indicator of my marketability but it definitely reflects the quality and appeal of the film along with the talent and hard work of the cast and crew. I do hope as an actor that it would help with my future success, as BIFF is a very renowned festival.*

Vanessa: One of the films, the critically acclaimed Bazodee, a Trinidad/Hollywood feature, was directed by Todd Kessler a 6 time Emmy nominee. The film was actually nominated for best feature at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival. What was it like working with such a well respected director in the industry?



Valmike: *Todd in is one of those rare directors who you trust from the onset. He knows what he wants out of a performance, is willing to listen to suggestions and he knows how to get the performance out of you. He is*

very hands on and approachable, which made filming 'Bazodee' all the more fun.

Vanessa: With all the talk about diversity in film, how does it feel to represent the Caribbean and more specifically your home country of Trinidad and Tobago at all these different venues?

Valmike: *Although I grew up in the UK, I have always been proud of my Trini roots. People are usually surprised when they learn that I am from the Caribbean because they don't think I 'look' Caribbean, whatever that is. I usually play British, American, Middle Eastern or Indian roles, so when anyone sees my work, they don't realize that I am Trinidadian. I would love to be able to play a Trini role with a Trini accent, that would really represent Trinidad and Tobago.*

Vanessa: Where can we expect to see you next, and are there any specific filmmakers or fellow actors you would like to work with in the future?

Valmike: *I am currently shooting a thriller called 'Immortality', a very unique story about a man who is 173 years old. My feature film 'Mile End' (nominated Best UK feature at Raindance) is also doing the festival circuit at the same time as 'Bazodee' and 'Meet Pursuit Delange'.*

The list of fellow actors and filmmakers I would like to work with is longer than both my arms put together! There are so many. I would like to work with actors and filmmakers who I can continue to learn from. Some of the names on my list are Nicole Kidman, Naomi Watts, Kate Blanchette, Eddie Redmayne and it goes on and on....told ya, the list is long!

Vanessa: Finally, what word of advice or inspiration do you have for aspiring actors trudging the same road or trying to get there?

Valmike: *I don't really know if I am in a position to give advice, but would say that if acting is what you want to do, go for it. Have other avenues for creativity so that you can be busy in the 'resting' periods. Always remember that nothing good comes easy. There is a motto at my gym which is now etched in my brain – quitters never win and winners never quit. ♥*



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