

6 DEGREES OF SEPARATION between Boymongoose and Steve Harris

Shalini Singh



This pop singer and Elvis-lookalike is part of a four-member boy band who met in Australia. They have parodied many 'A Christmas Carol', which is also the name of the next film starring...



JIM CARREY

The *Mask* star has multiple roles in the film. Carrey is also reported to be in talks to sign on for a film called *The Beaver* that will be directed by Oscar-winning actor...



JODIE FOSTER

who's come out at # 36 in an American mag's most powerful gay celebrity list. Foster also seems to have a mutual admiration society going on with...



ABHAY DEOL

who she met in LA recently. Perhaps Deol got inspired by his fave actor. He plans to play a gay character in his next film. Will he be able to give...



JOHN ABRAHAM

the *Dostana* actor, a run for his money? The 'Hunk' was apparently a part of the huge crowd at Iron Maiden's Mumbai concert last year, which according to bassist...



STEVE HARRIS

is an important aspect of their just-released rockumentary, *The Iron Maiden Film: Flight 666*, which features the Mumbai concert in the opening part of the two-hour film.

'India is crucial to our film'

Iron Maiden's *Flight 666* takes off with a glimpse of India and Indian fans

Malvika Nanda

STEVE HARRIS, founder member and bassist of the iconic metal band Iron Maiden spoke exclusively to HT in the middle of one of their whirlwind touring schedules. Most of the talk was about their movie, *Flight 666*, that released on May 8 in India. It features over 50,000 miles of travel across five continents and 23 concerts, covered via *Flight 666* a.k.a. Ed Force One. Bruce Dickinson, the band's vocalist, flew the plane.

Everyone here is super excited about Iron Maiden's *Flight 666*. How exactly did the idea come about?

The idea originated about three years ago when Bruce, our singer, who is also a qualified airline captain for Astra Airways, started to investigate the possibility of putting the band, crew and 12 tons of equipment into a giant flying 'splitter bus' — a specially customised Boeing 757 named Ed Force One by the fans — which he could fly around the globe for the Somewhere Back In Time Tour. This meant we could play to more fans, in more cities, including places we'd never been to before. Then, after the months of planning, securing all necessary permissions, satisfying all the safety regulations and so on, we were finally ready to go and we thought, 'wow, we're going to be flying 50,000 miles, playing 23 concerts across 5 continents, all in 45 days and that's just the first leg of the tour! This is an historic undertaking, we absolutely need to document this'. The next question was 'where do we find a camera crew who could take on the daunting task of filming Iron Maiden not only onstage, but off-stage too, something we've never permitted in the past?' In the end we found our answer with the excellent award-winning Banger Films team (*Metal*, *A Headbanger's Journey* and *Global Metal*) headed by Scot Mc Fadyen and Sam Dunn.

What went into making the movie?

Scot and Sam actually filmed 500 hours of footage across the first leg of the tour which had to be condensed down to just

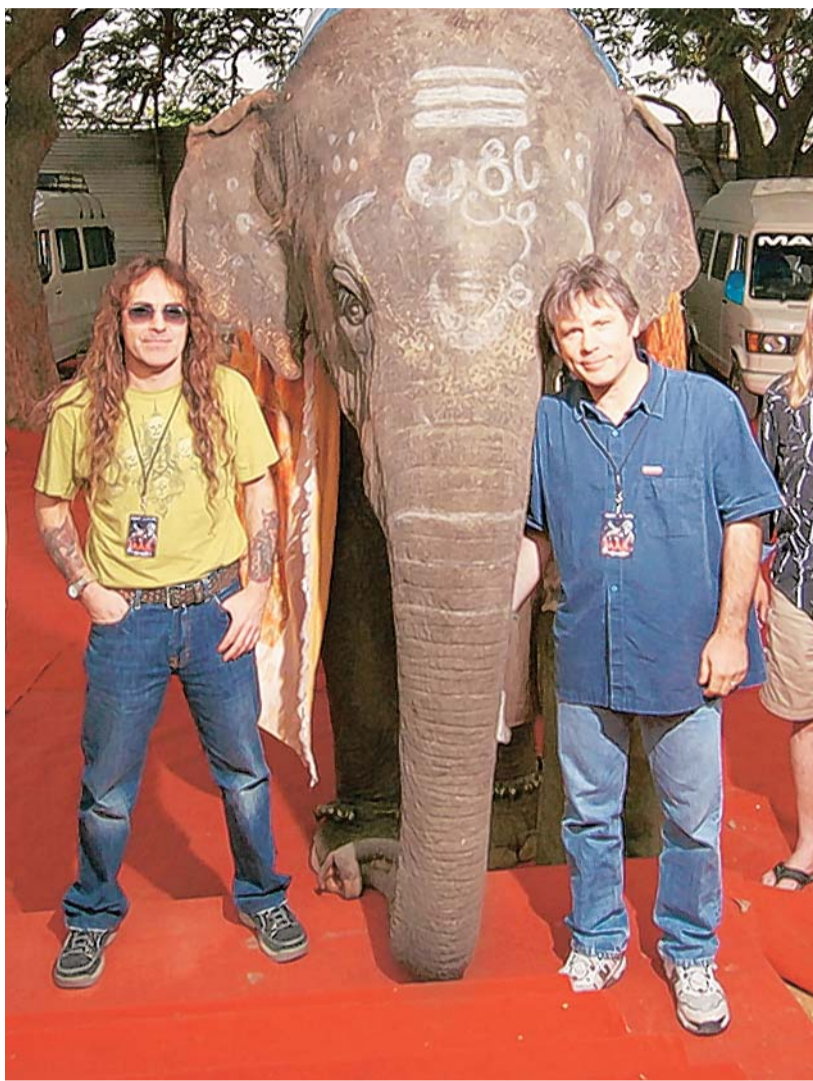
under two hours for the movie. No easy task! They did an excellent job though. The live performance footage is stunning, they managed to capture the essence of the band, live, without a single camera being visible onstage. It's incredible how they managed to do it. The behind-the-scenes footage is also amazing. We were all initially a bit apprehensive of a camera crew filming us 24/7 especially during days off when we're relaxing. But the Banger guys were very professional and Sam, as well as being a trained social anthropologist, is a lifelong diehard Iron Maiden fan so he already knew a certain amount about us.

Saying that, there were a couple of occasions, such as after a 9-hour flight when you're feeling fatigued and out-of-sorts and suddenly a camera's pointing right at you, when Nicko actually did threaten to throw Sam out of the plane, to be followed closely by said offending camera! But aside from those moments I think Sam's love for his subject really shines through, and, as you'll see from the movie, by the end of the first leg of the tour the Banger guys had very much become part of the Iron Maiden family.

MUMBAI WAS THE FIRST SHOW ON LEG ONE OF THE SOMEWHERE BACK IN TIME TOUR, SO IT BECAME THE IDEAL PLACE TO KICKSTART THE ADVENTURE

How and why did you guys decide on featuring the Mumbai leg of your Somewhere Back In Time tour? (PS: we love you for it!)

Mumbai was the first show on leg one of the Somewhere Back In Time tour, so was the ideal place to kick-start the adventure. Plus, the Indian fans are amazing, we're always bowled over by the reception we get when we play there and the dedication you show us. There's some great scenes in the movie from Mumbai, not only with the band, but also where Sam is talking to the Indian fans about why they love Maiden. One guy mentions it was the artwork on the cassette box of *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* that first grabbed his attention. That comment certainly struck a chord with fans around the world. I hear there's even a thread going about it at the moment on our Fan Club Forum bulletin board! And I'm told the current issue of UK Kerrang magazine mentions him in their *Flight 666* article too, so India yes, you guys are a crucial part of this movie!



ONE PUKKA DESI CONNECTION: Founder member Steve Harris (left) and vocalist Bruce Dickinson and the rest of the band members (not seen) on their India tour

What was it like when you sat back and saw the whole journey in a 120-minute film format?

Seeing *Flight 666* in a cinema is a must, it really is. The High-Def 5.1 sound and the big screen makes you feel like you're actually at a Maiden concert. There's been an amazing vibe from everywhere it has been screened already, standing ovations at the end of every showing, not something anyone is used to these days, and certainly not in European cinemas anyway! People say this is a film for the fans, but it's not a film that just fans will go and see.

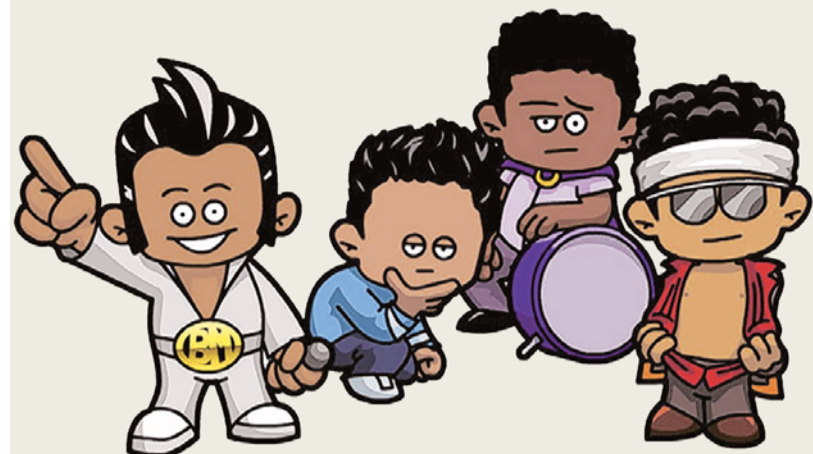
As a band, we first saw the film at a special premiere in Rio De Janeiro on March

14, the afternoon of the day of our show there. That was a wonderful experience but very surreal too, being in the audience, watching ourselves perform for an audience!

What's next from the Maiden men?

We're now all going to take a very well-earned rest for a few months! Later in the year we will concentrate on the 'new' and start putting together material for our next studio album which will be due sometime later in 2010. And of course after that we'll tour the new album, so we'll hopefully be seeing all our Indian fans again then.

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From Brisbane to Bombay, from Jingle Bells to Single Girls

Indian boyband Boymongoose is revelling in its parodies of classic Christmas carols

Purva Mehra

A WEEK from now Boymongoose will unveil their long-awaited third music video on YouTube in which the Indian Christmas popstar learns how to write pop songs for white people as taught by a shady Yorkshireman.

Boymongoose is an animated pop singer, Elvis impersonator, and serious hairspray consumer, who headlines a four-member boyband by the same name. He specialises in comic remakes of classic Christmas carols for which he is joined by Ashwin Segkar (drums), Jay (guitar) and Avin Mathew (piano). "Since carols were a big part of our Christmas festivities, we thought it fitting to make some of our own. Most carols were too old to be copyrighted and made for great parodies," says 26-year-old Jay, an IT professional.

The boys met at a Malayalee Association in Brisbane, Australia and played their first gig as a band at a Christmas event, which sparked off their ideas for spoofs. Inherently Indian themes such as dowries, Internet dating, Bollywood hunks and angels with incredible IT skills are explored on the band's first album, *Christmas in Asia Minor*, launched in 2005. "We've all visited India at some point and it feels like home away from home. We consciously parodied a lot of what we'd heard growing up. While carols are a perennial favourite I think we've used up all the copyright-free ones. From this point on we have to be ready for someone's lawyer," says Segkar, a 29-year-old marketing and PR professional.

Spice Boys, Whyte and Barnaby Joyce were dismissed as potential band names before the trio settled on the very curious Boymongoose, after an invigorating discussion on the peculiar characteristics of mongooses. Soon after, Boymongoose released its first song and music video, *12 days of Christmas*. In this hysterical remake the band has substituted 'a partridge in a pear tree' with 'a totally insufficient dowry', 'two turtle doves' with 'two nosy in-laws', 'three French hens' with 'three butter chickens', 'four calling birds' with 'four

Hare Krishnas' and so on. "Mum got really excited when the video launched and turned into an overnight entertainment publicist, sending out CDs, links and hosting screenings for family and co-workers. It was very funny. In fact Jay and Avin's mum features as one of the characters on the CD," says Segkar.

The second, more recent video put out by the boys from Brisbane is a rock-pop remake of *Jingle Bells* called *Single Girls*. The song features a semi-bald, pot-bellied 39-year-old, desperately urging single women to check out his flattering Internet profile. With an animated character for a lead vocalist, the boys feature in the videos as South Park-esque animations of themselves. "Shaun Campbell, our lead animator, has a great street style but doesn't like noses as a result of which none of our characters have them. We were unable to provide Jay eyebrows because of an animation budget blowout. And I'm told I look like an Indian Pete Sampras," says 28-year-old Avin, who is currently completing his PhD in IT.

The band toured India in December 2008 and is likely to return soon to expand their fanbase. They are also developing a cartoon and a TV show and contemplating Indian parodies of Top 40 songs of all time. They haven't ruled out options for a live gig either. "Ashwin has a grand vision for a live show with holographic Indians, puppets and gymnasts. I've always entertained the idea of an underwater live show with heaps of dolphins," Jay says.

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Boymongoose videos can be searched on YouTube or on their website www.boymongoose.com

Concluding chorus of *12 Days of Christmas*

On the twelfth day of Christmas, My true love gave to me... Twelve cricket ball tamperers... (I was simply correcting the stitching), Eleven syllable name, Ten-minute yoga, Nine telemarketers, Eight Bollywood films, Seven-11 workers, Six IT graduates, Five minutes of fame, Four Hari Krishnas, Three butter chickens, Two nosy in-laws And a totally insufficient dowry

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Mani Kaul does what he must

Paramita Ghosh

IF JEAN Luc Godard was mashing genres as part of the New Wave cinema movement in 1960s France, Mani Kaul along with Kumar Shahani and John Abraham was doing that in India in the 1970s. Kaul's meditative 'high art' film-essays on the philosophy of aesthetics (*Uski Roti*, *Ashad Ka Ek Din*, *Duvidha*) were so many reels removed from the mainstream, that in his new role as Director General of the Oasian film festival, it hurts a bit to have him invested in all kinds of popular cinema.

"I shouldn't confine the industry to what I expect of cinema," says Kaul with a smile. "Our films have a special idiom, they are half musicals, they don't follow the Hollywood narration of stories. Our characters often drift somewhere else, say Holland, to do a dance among the tulips and come back again... In *Hum Apke Hain Kaun*, for 15 minutes, it was about the bridegroom's shoe — the characterisation, the story, everything was forgotten. There was even a song about the shoe — I was delighted."

'I SHOULDN'T CONFINE THE INDUSTRY TO WHAT I EXPECT OF CINEMA. OUR FILMS HAVE A SPECIAL IDIOM'

The film-maker turned festival organiser says, "I may not make mainstream films, but I'm happy that we can tolerate moving away from the main story... We must recognise that we invented this non-linear form which prevented Hollywood from coming in." But is Bollywood really free from Hollywood's influence?

Meeta Vasishth, the actress of one of Kaul's most well-regarded film, *Siddheshwari*, asks, "How far should we go to embrace the popular? If I could I would do 20 more *Siddheshwaris*..."

At the 11th Oasian film festival, Kaul will be creating a platform for directors Vishal Bharadwaj, Anurag Kashyap and Intiaz Ali, among others, under the branding 'New Stream'. It's an interesting concept and Kaul says he is in no hurry to judge individual works. "Vishal is excited to be on stage. The interaction between directors and actors will open up new ideas," he adds. "I see something common between them when compared with the old mainstream of India. They are not afraid of the literal. Earlier you had to say things through metaphors, insinuations. They

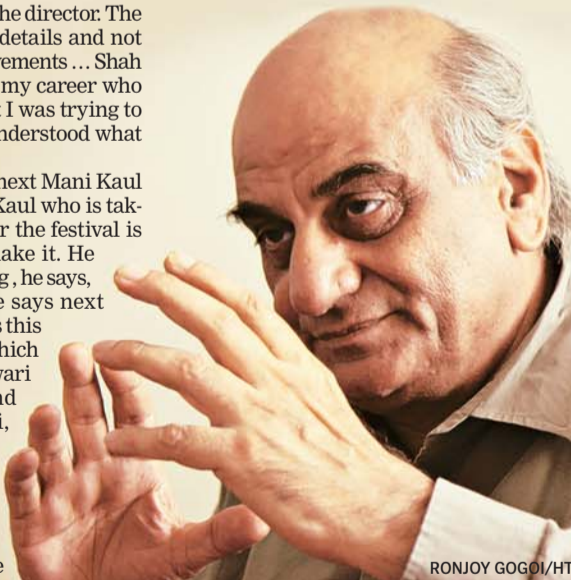
are closer to what India is now."

The actor-director relationship has always been an important equation for Kaul and on prodding, he talks of Shah Rukh Khan (in Kaul's filming of the Dostoevsky story, *The Idiot*, he played the lovesick Pavan Raghujan). "The actor on screen is not the clone of the director. The director has to give him details and not take over his intuitive movements... Shah Rukh is the only actor in my career who decoded for himself what I was trying to say while directing. He understood what I was doing."

So when do we see the next Mani Kaul film? Soon enough, says Kaul who is taking "an unpaid leave after the festival is over and going off" to make it. He won't say more. The timing, he says, is not right, but what he says next warms the heart. "There's this line from *Siddheshwari* which I identify with. Siddheshwari is talking to her friend Koumudi. 'Koumudi, humein nahi maloom kaun ga raha hai. I don't know who is actually singing.' I'm struck by that line. An artist, if he is an artist, has to sing like

that, paint like that, make a film like that. When I make a film, I will be compelled to make it my way. It's not my choice." Despite Mani Kaul's belated regard for the mainstream, we can sure that film will not be another *Jab We Met*.

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RONJOY GOGOI/HT



HER PET PASSION: Mulya is a pioneer of the Indian film society movement

Gargi Gupta

SHE'S FAIR, with a shock of white hair and a kindly expression on her face. She's 88, but looks 20 years younger — her voice is strong, her laugh full-throated and her memory sharp. She's Vijaya Mulya, director, producer, scriptwriter of *Ek, Anek Aur Ekta*, or *Ek Chiriyaa*, *Anek Chiriyaa* as it's generally called, the short educational animation on national integration and the need for unity which aired on Doordarshan in the 70s and 80s and which continues to be a firm favourite even today. Just look up YouTube and you'll find around 25 pages on it. There are several clips of the film (the oldest uploaded in November 2005 boasts an impressive 310,873 views); videos of children — Kukku, Rohan, Sana, Stuti, age between 3 months and a year — dancing or gurgling to it, and even one

of a mime act by students of MDI, Gurgaon. Clearly, the film with its simple tale, simply told, struck a chord with lots of people.

Mulya says even she is sometimes struck by the film's popularity. "I was in Lucknow recently as jury for the International Children's Film Festival, and interacting with mediapersons... they had grown up on *Ek chiriyaa*, they said. And when I said something, one of them answered, *samajh gaya didi*, a dialogue from the film. She apparently knew all the dialogues," Mulya laughs.

Ek Anek may be what Mulya is best known for, but there's far more to her. Mulya is a pioneer of the film society movement in India and definitely among

the country's first women documentary filmmakers. Mulya's made her first documentary, *The Tidal Bore*, in 1967 on the phenomenon in the Hooghly river, with encouragement from Louis Malle (she got to know him well when he came to Kolkata) and Satyajit Ray (he did the voiceover for the film).

While films may be her passion, education is the field that Mulya has mostly worked with, through long stretches with the NCERT, UGC and Centre for Educational Technology. A masters in education from the University of Leeds —

her husband pushed her to take the scholarship when she refused to leave her two young children behind — Mulya's experience in films came in handy when she

was hired by UNICEF in 1975 to make films for children under a newly launched programme to use satellite communications to connect with teachers and students in the rural outbacks. Thus came *Ek Anek*.

Ironically, NCERT, which produced the film, no longer has a copy of the print. "Bombay Labs, which had the print, informed NCERT around 10 years ago that they were closing down and that it should get it. NCERT did nothing," Mulya is scathing. Thankfully, Films Division had a copy — that's where the YouTube clip came from.

Mulya's latest venture, a project close to her heart and one she has been working on for close to a decade now is a book with the long, self-explanatory title — *From Rajas and Yogis to Gandhi and Beyond: India in International Cinema*, where she talks of over 900 films made

between 1901 and 2000 in countries all over the world — Germany, France, Japan, Russia, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Sweden and others — that refer to India in some way or the other. Quite a project to take up in her seventies, especially as she had no one to help her, and little resources to pay for her travel to the countries and archives where she could see the films. "Edith Kramer, director of the Pacific Film Archive at Berkeley, asked me how many people were working in my team," Mulya writes in an article. "When I told her it was a one-woman team, she laughed, 'Talk about fools rushing in.' I promptly responded, 'You're so right, Dr Kramer. One such fool is in front of you.'" The book is ready now, Mulya is expecting the proofs and hopefully it will be out this year. Its author can hardly wait.

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