

CRUNCH magazine

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grandeur of Southern India's principal city. Employed or not, we would get two days worth of dahl for sitting around a set.

The Madrassi film industry is Bollywood for the Tamil language. The plots, therefore, revolve almost exclusively around a beautiful girl falling in love with the wrong guy, a straight-laced father disapproving, and misconstrued bad boy dancing his way into parental approval on an Alpine mountainside. But *Kaadil Desam*, or

"Learn these words," said the unit director, casually. "We will run through the song a couple of times, then we'll do a take. You're the English speaker, right?"

"Erm, excuse me...?"

"Oh, you only have to mime. Sit at the monitor and on the first beat, turn to the face this camera and keep your head still. Yes?"

My rap will live with me for an eternity. In fact, it's practically an epitaph:

"THIS IS ROMANTIC RADIO,

2000KH.

THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGE IN THE AIR,

CALLED L. O. V. E."

Spice Up Your Life

To consolidate our new-found ethnic insurrection, the Lafayette Street Crunch, under the tutelage of instructor Sarina Jain, has launched a Masala Bhangra aerobic workout. Bhangra is high-tempo, Indian pop music that fuses traditional instrumentation with contemporary pop beats to create a screeching, teen-friendly din heard in clubs from Delhi to Detroit, Agra to Astoria.

Masala Bhangra fuses standard aerobic moves like jumping jacks and knee-ups with hip-swiveling, hand-clapping, foot-stomping choreography — all set to the infectious beat of an Indian dhol (a two-sided drum), tablas (conga-esque drums), flutes and synthesized music. The combination sets off an exotic, new kind of calorie-burning cultural dance experience. Just don't wander down your local curry house afterwards...

After delivering this in a suitably urban fashion — or as urban as a white Englishman can get — the director wasn't overly impressed. Via a megaphone, and he was all of three feet away, he bleated "Give me a shrug on the last 'e' of 'Love', please. Be quizzical, thoughtful."

I confess I was struggling with my character: a rapping techie in a futuristic hospital that surgically deals with matters of the heart hardly inspired empathy. But I tried. I shrugged, eyebrow-raised and forehead-furrowed for all my worth. Fifteen takes, an increasingly irascible director and a lungful of dry ice later, I departed unsure whether my burgeoning film career would be stymied before I'd received so much as an end credit.

But six years later, sitting next to a Madrasi on a plane, I told my strange tale. "Oh my God," she beamed. "You mean *Kaadil Desam*? It was massive!" Armed with the name, I tracked down my film — as it turned out, a Malay version of Amazon eventually came up with the goods. And there I was. Thinner, yes. Brilliant, maybe not. But on celluloid forever more.

One at a time please, ladies, one at a time...

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Premiere Issue



Masala
Dance & Fitness Inc.