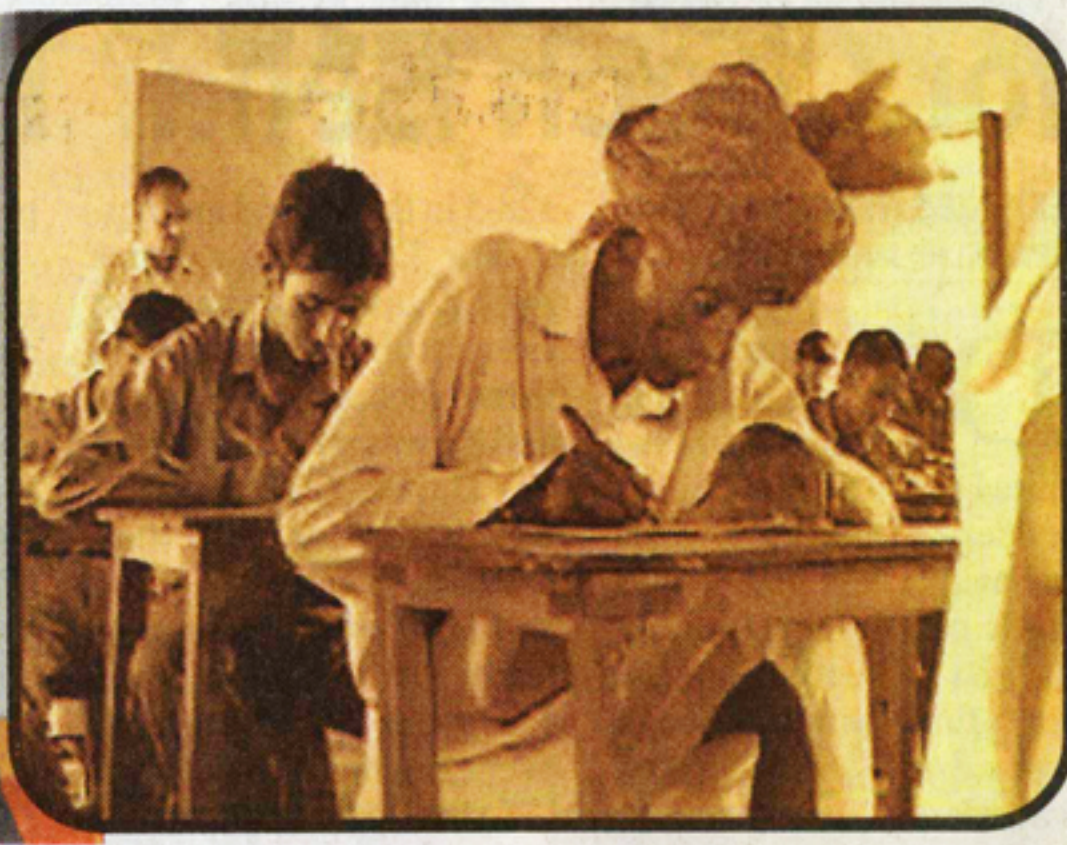


PAROMITA CHAKRABARTI

“**A**N award certainly makes a difference. It redeems your credentials, and makes life a little easier,” admits documentary film-maker Neeraj Bhasin, who won the first prize at the fourth Commonwealth Vision Awards 2004 in London for his film *Never Give Up*. The documentary is based on a real life story of a Rajasthani man's quest for education, despite repeated failures. The Commonwealth Vision Awards has been instituted by the Royal Commonwealth Society for commemorating excellence in short documentary films made in the Commonwealth.

This was not Bhasin's first brush with fame. In 2002 the 31-year-old Delhiite won the most commended award at the same award ceremony for his film *Touch The Sky*. However, the turning point in his short career, says Bhasin, has been his film *My Friend Su*, which he made in 2000. “I saw an ad in *Cinemaya* where Shekhar Kapur's Digital Talkies was looking for digital film projects. I sent in a couple of suggestions, and *My Friend Su* got selected,” he recalls. The one hour documentary film went on to win



Left: Bhasin; Above: A still from the documentary film *Never Give Up*

Niche Item

Commonwealth Vision Award winner Neeraj Bhasin is now planning a movie on the life of Anglo-Indians in India

awards at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival in Japan and the International Film Festival in Mumbai in 2001 and 2002 respectively. Armed

with a degree in Fine Arts from the Shankar Academy of Arts in 1996, and a course in Mass Communication from Shri Aurobindo Institute of Mass Communication, Bhasin says Bollywood is not his cup of tea. “It works on a commer-

cial formula, and it's difficult to better the Johars and the Chopras,” he says. Besides, he thinks that it's the perfect time to experiment with short films and digital ones, with the European market opening up to its potential. “The medium's changing now. It's all about how you can play with technology and the story,” he says.

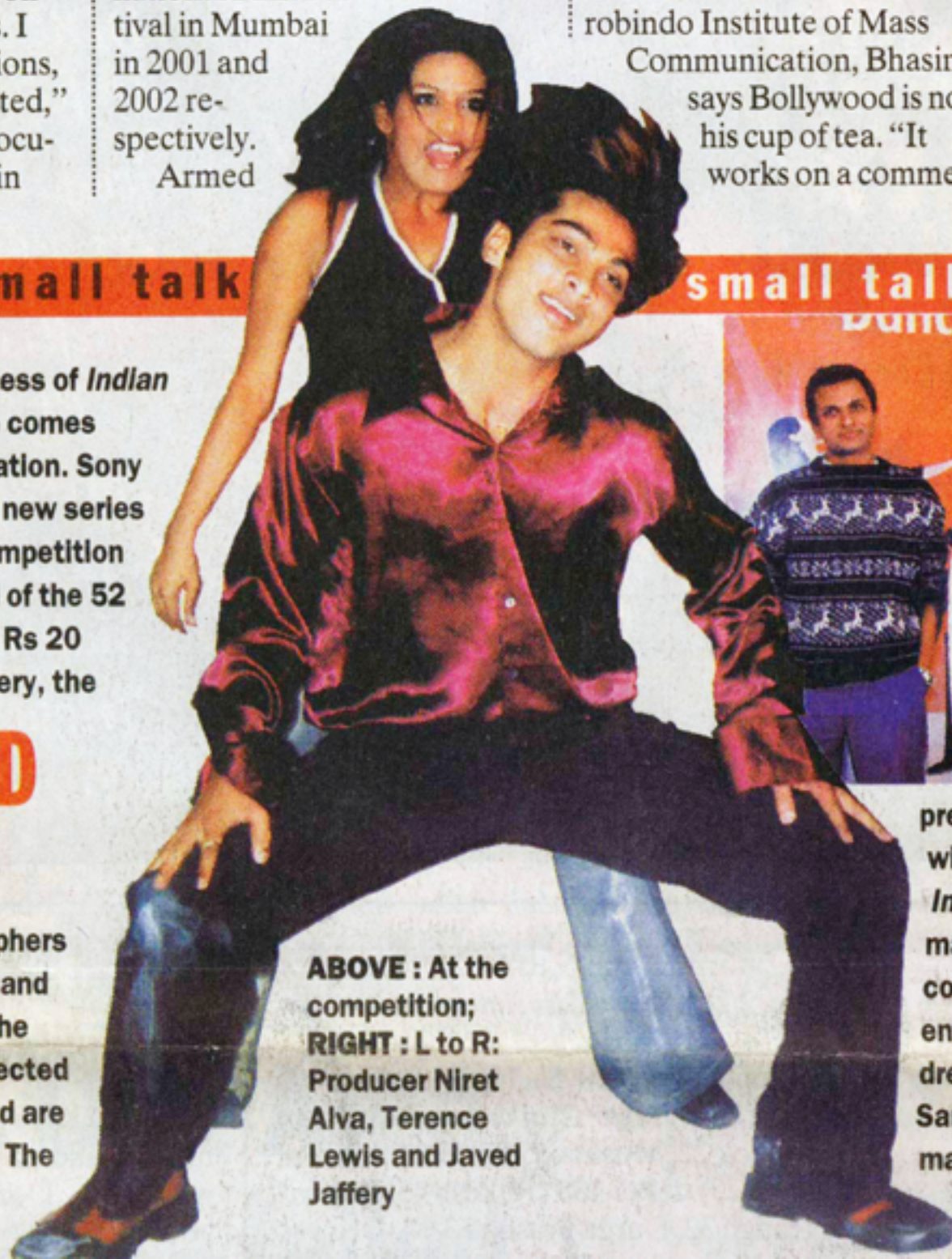
Bhasin is currently scripting his new film. “It's on the life of Anglo-Indians in India. It's a period film, meant for a niche audience,” he says.

small talk small talk

AFTER the success of *Indian Idol* here comes another show to rock the nation. Sony Entertainment Television's new series *Dance Dance* is a dance competition with the winners at the end of the 52 weeks taking home a hefty Rs 20 lakhs. Hosted by Javed Jaffery, the

YOU SHOULD BE DANCIN'

Judges included choreographers Saroj Khan, Terence Lewis and Vaibhavi Merchant, while the participants have been selected from across the country and are mostly semi-professionals. The pumping music and short performance gave one a



ABOVE : At the competition;
RIGHT : L to R:
Producer Niret Alva, Terence Lewis and Javed Jaffery

small talk small talk small

pretty good idea of what the actual show will look like. So is this just a remake of *Indian Idol* or yet another show meant to make the TRPs go up. “It is a dance competition for couples with a focus on entertaining the crowd,” said Javed dressed in shiny red shirt and black pants. Saroj Khan and Vaibhavi Merchant didn't make it for the show but Terence Lewis made up for that, handling all the questions with aplomb.