



'Brummie' Malala proud of city's portrait tribute

TEENAGE education campaigner Malala Yousafzai said she was a "proud Brummie" at the unveiling of a portrait in Birmingham.

The Noble Peace Prize-winner has made the city her home since receiving treatment there after she was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman in 2012.

Artist Nasser Azam revealed his 9ft 10in high oil painting of Yousafzai at the University of Birmingham on Monday

(30). During the unveiling, Yousafzai said she was "very grateful" for the support she had received from the city.

"In terms of buildings you may not see a lot, but in terms of people, their love, their hearts, their passion; there's a lot of things," she said. "Other than the cold weather, I love this place, I am proud to be called a Brummie".

Azam, who took almost a year to produce the painting of the schoolgirl, said

meeting her was "inspirational and an extreme honour". "I have tried to provide an image of Malala I felt captures a sense of our shared origins, but also present how she has become an ambassador for human rights, and a face that is recognised the world over," he said.

The painting will be added to London's National Portrait Gallery's public archive, and digitally displayed at the Library of Birmingham.

Govinda told to say sorry

A COURT in India has advised Bollywood actor Govinda to apologise to a person who lodged a complaint accusing the industry veteran of slapping him in 2008.

"You are a big hero, show your big heart," a bench headed by Justice TS Thakur said, while suggesting the actor to settle the dispute with complainant Santosh Rai.

Rai has appealed against the Bombay High Court's decision quashing his complaint against Govinda, saying there was no material against the actor to show criminal intimidation. The court watched the video clip of the incident on a mobile phone and suggested the actor should apologise to Rai.

"We enjoy your films, but cannot tolerate you slapping somebody," it said.

Ronson makes Delhi debut

RENOWNED UK musician-DJ Mark Ronson mixed hit Punjabi number *Mundian To Bach Ke* with his chart-topping song *Uptown Funk* during his maiden performance in New Delhi.

The 40-year-old Grammy-winning producer enthralled the jam-packed audience with his tunes on day one of the sixth edition of Bacardi NH7 Weekender at the mela ground in Dwarka.

Seeing the enthusiastic crowd, Ronson said: "My name is Mark Ronson. This is my first time in Delhi. You guys are awesome. Please put your hands up and sing with me."

Pop star dropped from Eurovision

GERMANY'S Xavier Naidoo has been withdrawn from the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest following criticism that the lyrics of his song are anti-Semitic and homophobic.

Naidoo, of Indian and African heritage, has sold millions of albums in Germany but songs such as 2012's *Wo Sind (Where Are)* have been widely criticised.

Anti-racism groups complained after his selection for the Stockholm contest.

Public broadcaster ARD executive Thomas Schreiber said: "It was clear his nomination would polarise opinions, but we were surprised about the negative response."

"The ongoing discussion about Naidoo could harm the image of the contest."

It's Got To Be Phaldut

EX-EASTENDERS STAR SHARMA TEAMS UP WITH STEVE MCFADDEN FOR COMEDY



SPOT OF BOTHER: Phaldut Sharma in *I Gotta Be Me*

by IMRAN CHOUDHURY

ACTOR Phaldut Sharma has joined forces with *EastEnders* star Steve McFadden in a new comedy web series.

I Gotta Be Me is a semi-autobiographical take on the life of struggling soap actor Paul Shah, played by Sharma – who was also a real life soap actor in *EastEnders* as Masood Ahmed's brother AJ.

The ten-part show started last month and follows Shah as he travels to Cyprus to perform in a *Rat Pack* tribute show.

Sharma, who left *EastEnders* in 2014, asked his former co-star McFadden, best known for his long-running role as Phil Mitchell, to narrate the series.

"Steve was very casual and cool," Sharma told *Eastern Eye*. "He spoke to me and just said: 'What is it? Send it through and

let me have a look at it'. He said: 'If I like it I'll do it for you, and if I don't like it, I'll do it for you', which was really sweet of him.

"He loved it after seeing it. It's very gracious of him to be giving his time because he's a very busy man."

Sharma revealed that he had a life-long passion for legendary dancer and singer Sammy Davis Jr, and played him on the West End stage in *Rat Pack Confidential* in 2003.

"This web series sort of found me in particular. I done *Rat Pack Confidential* in the West End, then a number of these tribute shows called me up after to play Sammy Davis Jr."

"I paid it no heed for a while, then got interested years back. So I decided to go and do one in 2010. I fell into a world that really caught my imagination."

During his time as a tribute act, he built up strong relationships with the other actors who were more than happy for him to record them for the web series, Sharma explained.

"The whole thing is off the cuff, there's no second take. It's basically watching and waiting. There's some bits that are me by myself, but generally what you're seeing is 95 per cent one take."

When Sharma was cast in *EastEnders* in 2012, he decided to use his new-found fame in the web series.

"I was going to have a certain recognition in the time when we were going to be out in Cyprus filming *I Gotta Be Me* via the expat community, so we decided to play around with that idea and created the daytime fictional soap, *Faraaway Close*, where I play a cab driver," he said.

The theme of the web series, Sharma says, is community.

"It's about people working together. What you find is after some time, people tend to fall in love with the (tribute act) world and people are doing what they are doing for their supper and seem to get things done."

Director Steven Bloomer said: "Clearly some elements are fictional, but other moments are far less clear – even to us. When you put a camera on them, everyone becomes a bit of a performer."

Sharma has previously starred in the hit blockbuster film *Gravity*, and TV series *Cuffs* and *The Office*.

The next episode of *I Gotta Be Me* is available on Friday (4).

■ For more information, go to www.igottabeme.net



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