

Rani's 'Sex Change' Wows TIFF Crowd

BY PREETI THANDI



Photo courtesy: Ben Gini

Rani Mukherjee at the Dil bole... premiere at Albion Cinema

Amidst gushing fans chanting her name, Rani Mukherjee walks the red carpet in a rich purple Franco Ferrara gown. Her glowing skin is flawless and her ornate ear rings sway as she talks and turns her large smoky eyes to give her fans another look. She makes her way into the Roy Thompson Hall to introduce her latest film, Dil Bole Hadippa at a gala screening at the Toronto International Film Festival 2009 and ends up staying to watch

quite a bit of it.

Later she changed into a stylish black blouse, trousers and high heels at her hotel, she is still just as poised despite her rather short and hectic stay in Toronto. Her nervousness about the fate of the film is re-assured by the audience's reaction at the screening and she feels that her trip has been successful. She talks about her role in Dil Bole Hadippa and spends quite some time clarifying rumors about her marriage to the Weekly Voice. It is clear Rani has worked arduously at who and what she is today right from her svelte figure to her knockout performances.

Interview

What was it about the script that attracted you to Dil Bole Hadippa?

I think the very fact that it was an entertainer, something that my audience wanted me to do. Because they were saying that I am crying too much in my movies. They wanted to see me do comedy, wanted me to laugh and make them laugh. So this was one opportunity I was getting through the film to make my fans really happy. The other thing was that I was getting to play a man for the first time in my life. This was challenging to me as an actor and also to learn a sport as an adult. So all these three factors made me do the film.

What did you have to change about yourself to play a man?

Nothing, I just had to lose a little weight because I wanted to look like an athlete (that I am in the film) and tone my body so that I look like a cricketer and look really good.

Was there anything you had to give up, like any favourite foods?

No, I think it's how you balance your meals and depending on what kind of workout you are doing. Initially, when you want to lose weight yes, you have to give up on oily, fried and sweet food but later on you balance your meals out.

Do you like cricket? Was it difficult for you to play the game?

No, I didn't like cricket previously. I've never enjoyed the game as much as I do now. But through the filming process I really started enjoying playing the game because it is important to like what you are doing. If you are learning something and you don't put your heart into it, you won't reach anywhere. But I was really enjoying learning the game so I was picking up really fast. My coach was really happy with me and also complimented me that if I was not an actress I would be a cricketer. She thought that it came quite naturally to me. Now I really enjoy watching the game because I have kind of educated myself on cricket. It's a great game to play.

You've worked with a broad spectrum of directors, how was it like working with Anurag Singh, a newcomer?

I've always worked with newcomers. I've been working with all first time directors starting with Karan Johar, when he started off. I did his first movie, Kunal Kohli's first movie and Shaad's first movie. So I've worked with a lot of first time directors and it's always good to work with them because their energy is different, the way they approach their films is different. There is an emotional connect to people who start off with their first movie. They work on a film as if it's a make or break for them because everyone is very passionate about their first and there's a certain kind of magic that comes with a first film. I guess working with first time directors is always fun.

What was unique about working with Shahid Kapoor?

I won't say unique but what was nice about him was that he was as focused and sincere, as I expected him to be and that's what I admire about him. He is really good at his



job and that really helps a co-star because when you're working with somebody who is equally passionate and working towards making a good movie then everything seems very easy.

Was it difficult playing a Punjabi girl?

I think I've played so many Punjabi girls, if you've seen my filmography that this question basically is null and void.

The whole image of the Indian heroine has become westernized with actresses now going into action films...

No, action doesn't mean westernized when you have people like Rani of Jhansi in our history why do you connect action with western?

But if you were to look at films like Race or Chandni Chowk to China...

For me to do a film it has to be

something really exciting, it has to be something different.

But the kind of new look that is emerging, is it a problem for you?

Why should it be a problem?

Does it make it you work harder?

No, I don't think so. I think we have been working hard all of our lives. From the time I have come in my first movie, I have been working hard so there's nothing new in that.

You've been married off a couple of times in the media...

Not even a couple of times, about a hundred times.

So when do you actually plan to do it?

Not really in the near future, it's not even in my mind and it's quite ridiculous and obnoxious of people to think like that. I think, I can't decide whether they are doing a good thing or a bad thing because marriage

is a wonderful thing to happen to anybody. So I don't know whether it is a good rumor or a bad rumor. When you wish for somebody to get married, I think they are wishing someone well. I don't think they are wishing anybody badly. But unfortunately, when a person is not really getting married then I think it is a little harmful because people expect that you are getting married and it's not the truth. It kind of backfires at times because so many people are out there who believe all those rumors.

Would you say this is the most rewarding part of your career? Are you happy with where you are?

Absolutely! I am happy all the time.

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