

RIFCO THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCE BILAL KHAN TO MAKE HIS STAGE DEBUT IN UK TOUR OF WORLD PREMIERE OF GURPREET KAUR BHATTI'S DISHOOM!

Rifco Theatre Company, Watford Palace Theatre and Oldham Coliseum Theatre presents
The world première production

DISHOOM!

By **Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti**

Wednesday 12 September – Saturday 27 October

Press night: **Tuesday 18 September**

Director **Pravesh Kumar**; Set Designer: **Neil Irish**; Choreographer and costumer designer: **Andy Kumar**; Lighting Designer: **Rory Beaton**; Composer: **Arun Ghosh**; Sound Designer: **Chris Murray**

Rifco Theatre Company, in a co-production with **Watford Palace Theatre** and **Oldham Coliseum Theatre**, today announces the UK tour of the world première production of **Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti's *Dishoom!***. Artistic Director **Pravesh Kumar** directs, and, after working with Rifco Theatre Company over the last year, 17-year-old **Bilal Khan** makes his professional stage debut in the lead role of Simon.

Opening at Watford Palace Theatre on **Tuesday 18 September**, with previews from Wednesday 12, it will then tour to Queens Theatre Hornchurch, Oldham Coliseum Theatre, Warwick Arts Centre before concluding its run at Derby Theatre on Saturday 27 October.

Featuring songs from the smash hit Bollywood film *Sholay*, this comedy drama follows Simon and his friends as they find their inner superhero and set out to change the world together.

Pravesh Kumar said today “Gurpreet's funny, heart-warming and political new play shines a spotlight on attitudes to disability in the South Asian community, something we really need to talk about. I am thrilled to be working with Bilal Khan who will be making his debut in a leading role on our main stage tour. 2018 is an important moment for the UK and this story, set in 1978, with the rise of the right and attitudes to difference on the up. A bleak reminder of history on repeat.”

Bilal Khan added, “I can't wait to start my first professional acting journey with this leading British Asian theatre company. Pravesh and the team have been really supportive throughout this opportunity from assistance with my touring needs to professional development workshops. I am honoured to be involved with this brilliant piece of new writing.”

Summer 1978, Simon and his friends should be looking forward to leaving school, but the National Front are on the streets, Simon's Bibi is ashamed of him and his Dad spends his life hiding in the pub.

When Simon's cousin Baljit comes to stay, she introduces him to the Bollywood classic, *Sholay*. Inspired by the film's dynamic duo, Jai and Veeru, Simon and Baljit find their inner superheroes and set out to change their world forever.

Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti has written extensively for stage, screen and radio. Her first play *Behsharam (Shameless)* broke box office records at Soho Theatre and the Birmingham Rep. *Behzti (Dishonour)* was sensationally closed after protests at the Birmingham Rep in December 2004. *Behzti* won the

Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the play was then translated into French and did sell-out tours in France and Belgium. *Behud (Beyond Belief)* was co-produced by Soho Theatre and Coventry Belgrade and shortlisted for the John Whiting Award. *Khandan* had a sell-out run at the Birmingham Rep before transferring to the Royal Court. Recent credits include *Elephant*, Birmingham Rep; *Fourteen*, Watford Palace Theatre; the feature film *Everywhere and Nowhere*; *Dci Stone*, Radio 4; *Londonee*, Rich Mix; *Dead Meat*, Channel 4 and *An Enemy of The People* (BBC World Service). She is a Creative Associate at Watford Palace Theatre and a member of the writing team of *The Archers*. Her first collection of plays, *Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti: PLAYS ONE*, is published by Oberon Books.

Bilal Khan plays Simon and this marks his professional stage debut. Khan himself was born with cerebral palsy and will be taking on the role of a young man with a disability who is struggling to find his place in the world around him.

Artistic Director of Rifco **Pravesh Kumar** directs *Dishoom*. He started the company in 1999 to make a different kind of theatre for a community that could not see themselves represented on English stages. His theatrical directorial debut was in 1999 with a UK tour of *Bollywood - Yet Another Love Story*, which opened to packed houses at The Riverside Studios, Hammersmith. He has gone on to achieve critical acclaim for Rifco's productions: *Pyar Actually*, *Miss Meena & the Masala Queens*, *Laila The Musical*, *Britain's Got Bhangra*, *Happy Birthday Sunita*, *It Ain't All Bollywood*, *There's Something About Simmy*, *Airport 2000*, *Meri Christmas*, *Where's My Desi Soulmate?*, *The Deranged Marriage* and *Break The Floorboards*. His first short film, *Gods On Mountains* was shot entirely on location in the Himalayas and was nominated for the Satyajit Ray Short Film Award in 2009. He was Associate Director on the musical *Wah! Wah! Girls*, which opened in the West End as part of World Stages. He also writes and directs *Mummyji Presents*, a live theatre variety digital show, which was originally commissioned by The Space, a collaboration between the BBC and Arts Council England. Pravesh is currently writing a new main stage musical and leads on the Rifco Associate programme.

www.rifcotheatre.com
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#Dishoom

Dishoom!

Listings

Watford Palace Theatre

Wednesday 12 September – 22 September

Press Night: Tuesday 18 September 7.30pm

watfordpalacetheatre.co.uk

01923 225671

Queens Theatre Hornchurch

Tuesday 25 September – Saturday 29 September

01708 443333

www.queens-theatre.co.uk

Oldham Coliseum Theatre

Tuesday 2 October – Saturday 13 October

www.coliseum.org.uk

0161 624 2829

Warwick Arts Centre

Tuesday 16 October – Saturday 20 October

www.warwickartscentre.co.uk

024 7652 4524

Derby Theatre

Tuesday 23 October – Saturday 27 October

01332 59 39 39

www.derbytheatre.co.uk

For further information please contact:

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NOTES TO EDITORS

RIFCO THEATRE COMPANY

Artistic Director, Pravesh Kumar founded Rifco Theatre Company in 1999 in Slough and since 2011, Rifco has been Resident Company at Watford Palace Theatre.

Rifco develops and produces new plays and musicals, touring nationally to some of the UK's most prestigious regional theatres. We present theatre of scale and spectacle that is authentic, topical, thought-provoking, rich and entertaining which celebrates and reflects contemporary British Asian experiences, culture and society.

Our success lies in understanding our audience. A vital part of creating new work is through listening and working alongside British Asian communities. Kumar's work is 'homegrown' and he believes in gently challenging perceptions and warmly reflecting the communities he knows.

We are committed to diversifying the kind of work seen in our British theatres. We do this by commissioning British Asian playwrights and working with as many diverse actors, designers, directors that we can find. We also provide opportunities for British Asian talent to develop their ideas and careers through our Rifco Associates and Rifco Studio strands.

WATFORD PALACE THEATRE

Watford Palace Theatre is a 21st century producing theatre, making new work across the art forms of theatre, dance, outdoor arts and digital, and developing audiences, artists and communities through exciting opportunities to participate. In 2015 it won the UK Theatre award for Promotion of Diversity.

Watford Palace Theatre commissions and produces plays from a range of new and established writers. Recent premieres include; *Poppy + George* by Diane Samuels, *Coming Up* by Neil D'Souza, *Jefferson's Garden* by Timberlake Wertenbaker; *Love Me Do* by Laurence Marks and *Maurice Gran*; *An Intervention* by Mike Bartlett (in co-production with Paines Plough); *Shiver* by Daniel Kanaber; the Ideal World season of three new plays - *Perfect Match* by Gary Owen, *Virgin* by E.V.Crowe (in co-production with nabokov), *Override* by Stacey Gregg; *Jumpers for Goalposts* by Tom Wells (in co-production with Paines Plough and Hull Truck Theatre); *Our Brother David* by Anthony Clark; *Our Father* by Charlotte Keatley; and *Family Business* by Julian Mitchell.

Creative Associates are central to Watford Palace Theatre's vision these include Resident Companies Rifco and Tiata Fahodzi; Mahogany Opera Group: Scamp Theatre; Kate Flatt; Shona Morris; Charlotte Keatley; Gary Owen; Alice Birch and Timberlake Wertenbaker.

OLDHAM COLISEUM THEATRE

The Oldham Coliseum Theatre is a cultural and educational charity that works with over 150,000 individuals per year.

The Coliseum has a rich history in Greater Manchester dating back to 1885. It provides a wide variety of distinctive theatre performances and participatory activities for people from all communities in Oldham, Greater Manchester and beyond. It creates eight original productions each year, of which up to half are newly-commissioned work, which are presented at the Coliseum and on tour. Intrinsic to the town's on-going regeneration, the theatre works with its local communities and young people to develop creative programmes to facilitate learning, engagement and community cohesion.

The Coliseum is actively engaged with Oldham Council and Arts Council England to deliver a new theatre in the town by 2020.