

# Creations Both for Gallery and Home

by Lamis Hossain

PRIMITIVE and sophisticated elements forge a unique alliance in Syed Shahadat Hossain's world. The creations on display at his 2nd solo exhibition of studio ceramics at La Galerie from the 12-17th December, seemed fresh from the archaeology dig of an ancient village. Stone slabs with coarse edges, vases, sturdy plates, and pre-glassed pots, represent the raw side. Yet the faint impressions on stone, the precise etchings, and the varied texture and shape, add refinement to Hossain's work.

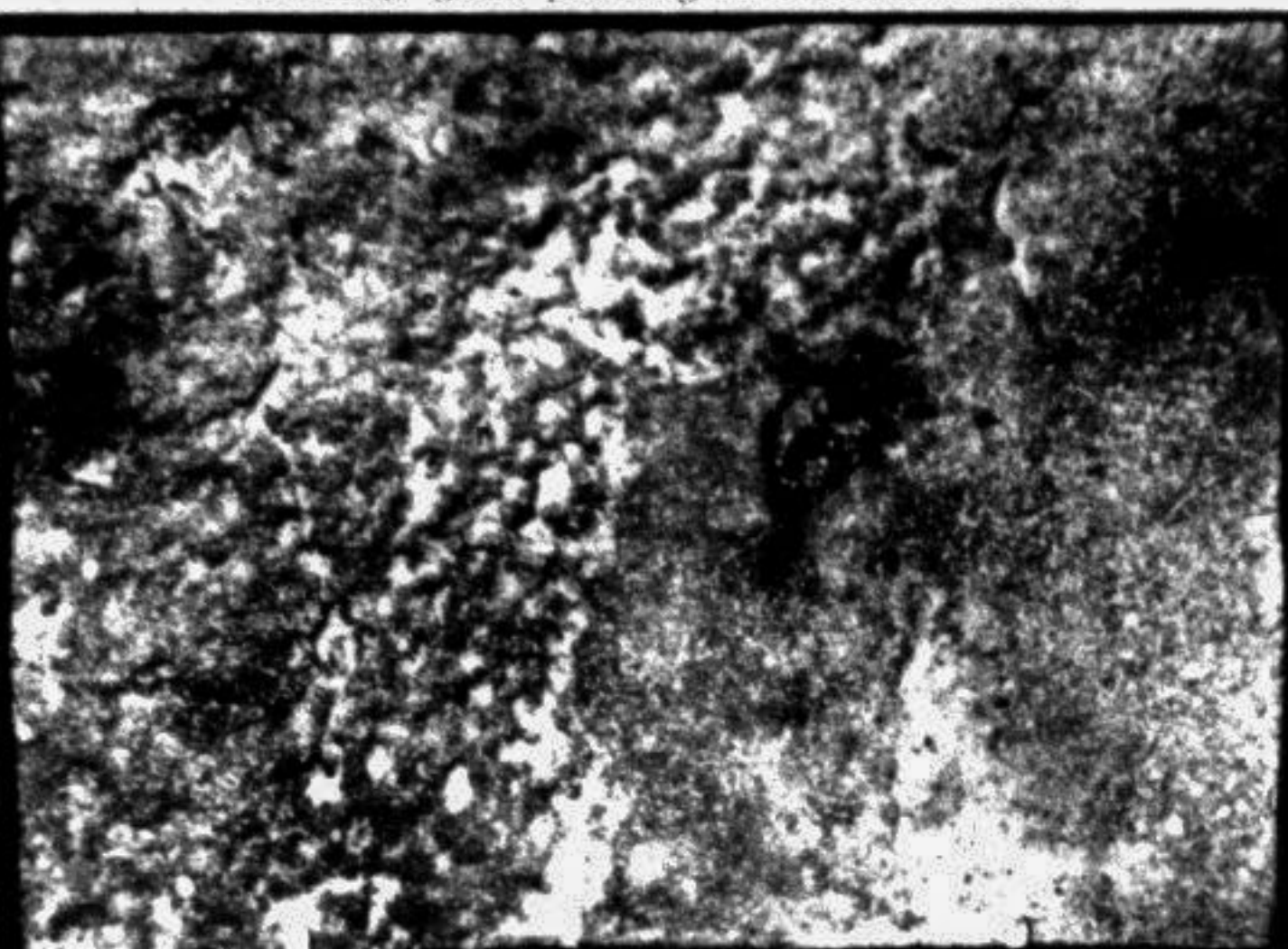
The 28-year old artist is a graduate of the Institute of Fine Arts in Dhaka. He holds a BTEC from England and participated in an artist-in-residence course in Japan last year. Hossain held his first solo painting exhibition in 1986 and his first solo ceramic exhibition two years ago at La Galerie.

Texture is the focal point in Hossain's glaze paintings on stone slabs mysteriously entitled 'Awaiting'. Creases, dimples, shadows and sparse engravings on stone evoke abstract images. Although two of the stone slabs have identical names and size, they evoke different emotions. One of the pieces leaves a grainy but un-ruffled surface in a corner balanced out by circular ripples on the other. It seems as if the calm area of the slab is about to be overcome by the impending waves. The other piece has more jagged edges. The few smooth surfaces are overshadowed by sandbar like creases. It could anything from a sea beach after high tide, the footprints of a bird, or the tracks of your mind.

Among the most beautiful of Hossain's pieces is a vase. Most



'Awaiting' glaze painting on slab stone ware



of the vase is unassuming and left unpainted, but an eruption of jade glazing spills onto one of the sides. Hossain manages to achieve harmony between the opulent and the

rudimentary in a piece that might have otherwise seemed irritatingly incomplete. Apart from the vase, there were two other eye-catching displays at the exhibition. One

is a sculpture, yet again entitled 'Awaiting'. A small bird-like creature appears perched on a basin resting on a rectangular slab. Is the creature, if it is indeed a bird, about to take off or take a sip of water? Nothing is clearly spelled out, except the overwhelming prettiness of the scene.

Another conspicuous creation is one called 'Family'. Earthy stripes line an ash blue background. Peeking out from under the strokes are a few faces outlined in black. The faces seem identical.

Hossain's stone ware plates rely less on texture and more on careful and clear strokes of colour. It is not the use of many hues but the balance achieved with so few which is noteworthy. There are no bright, garish colours here, but only whispers of cream, beige, ash blue, dark brown and black.

There are also numerous pots among Hossain's creations. At first glance, they all appear very similar. Many of them are roundish, and seemingly bloated with their contents. Vitality, and fertility are images that spring to mind. The pots are distinguished only by their earthy, reddish or black colours, and their different textures. Some of them look like beehives while others like termite hills.

Shahadat Hossain's work reveals an immense amount of maturity for a young artist. His creations are set apart by their balance and rhythm achieved through the restrained use of colour, varied texture, precise etchings and careful strokes. Hossain creates the kind of pieces that are not only remarkable in a gallery, but would look very much at ease in any home.

# It's Seeing while Reading a Drama Series

## BOOK REVIEW

Shankita Padajatra by Mansurul Aziz

Published by Iqbal Ahmed 17 Dhanmondi, Road-2, Dhaka Pp 159 Price Tk 100/-

THERE is an old story of how the Cathedral of Chartres was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Then thousands of people came from all points of the compass, like a giant procession of ants, and together they began to rebuild the cathedral on its old site. They worked until the building was completed. All — master builders, artists, labourers, clowns, noblemen, priests together. But they all remained anonymous and no one knows to this day who built the cathedral of Chartres.

So it is with films or telefilms. The structure of the novel or the story of the bare plot is broken down and rebuilt by many, not the least of whom is the original author.

Shankita Padajatra is based on the original tele-script of the telefilm and the dialogue cutting continuity of the final TV version. Mansurul Aziz, a senior police officer by profession, is also a writer, designer — he designed the Memorial at Rajarbagh Police Lines for the martyrs of Liberation War — and a photographer, besides answering to the general term of an aesthete.

Today, the 'individual' has become the highest form and

the greatest bane of artistic creation. The smallest wound or pain of the ego is examined under microscope as if it were of eternal importance. The artist considers his isolation, his subjectivity, his individualism almost as a job. This finally gathers in one large pen, where one stands and one pleads about loneliness without listening to one another.

Ingmar Bergman, once asked about his intention with his film, gave the answer: 'I try to tell the truth about the human condition, the truth as I see it.'

Mansurul Aziz has tried to do the same for the human condition in Bangladesh, with rapid shifts between the rural and the urban environment.



His storytelling technique is otherwise conventional but he does provide insights into the social milieu now prevailing.

Mansurul Aziz has attempted to re-create reality in a visual form, in the script style.

Life is not simple, not is it always intelligible, and even the science of history is unable to express it in its entirety. Mansurul has tried to capture what he can through the camera eye. But what about the rest? What about what happens

beyond the limits of its field of vision? The author's task will then be to reduce, to select, to interpret.

There is one fact which cannot be ignored that the camera like any other equipment needs to be programmed. In fact it can operate from a number of different standpoints — a descriptive one, an ethnically evaluating one, an explanatory and commenting one, a sympathetic and an anti-pathetic one.

In 'Shankita Padajatra' the author has literally and figuratively transformed himself into a programmed camera. He improvises and intuitively from place and people and atmosphere. There are inconsistencies and mediocrities in his piecing together of events, which he has confessed are tied together through convenience of narration. Yet as troubling and haunting his drama, I have been always seeing the events through his camera eye. This is first in Bangladesh — a story told in script form. However, I await the novel on the film. It may even improve the flavour.

Reviewed by

Mahbub Hussain Khan

## Good for the Children

### BOOK REVIEW

Tiger — a Collection of Short Stories for Children by Nazmatul Alam.

Published by Mahbub Prakashani, Chittagong. Pages-48 Price-Tk 30.00.

Nazmatul Alam's 'Tiger', a collection of six short stories for children is a recent addition to our juvenile literature.

'Tabu' is the story of the growth of intimacy between an elephant and a little child.

'Khune Harin' (the killer deer) is the story of a deer which being interfered while eating in a vegetable garden became furious and caused the tragic death of a little boy.

'Kala Ar Dhola' (black and white) is about the faithfulness and dutifulness of two geese.

'Itu's Ashukh' (Itu's illness) is the story of a little girl who got upset, being ill just before



the heat of her school sports. But the tale of a benevolent girl broadened her mind and aroused a humanitarian attitude in her.

'Loadshedding' is a short thrilling story.

'Tiger' is a story on the intimacy between man and his pet animal.

The stories are easily readable and interesting for children.

Reviewed by Md Mahbub Hassan

## Tiryak Drama Festival '94

by Our Correspondent

FROM December 23 to December 25 a drama festival will be housed in Chittagong Muslim Hall organised by Tiryak Natya Dal of the port city. This is an annual event in the cultural arena of Chittagong.

The drama festival will include colourful processions, seminars on drama, workshops, lectures, an exhibition on drama, open discussions, street plays and stage performances. Leading drama personalities, intellectuals and the pioneering theatre groups of the country will participate in this festival.

On the day of inauguration on December 23, the organisers and participants will bring out a colourful procession at 4:30 pm. At 5:00 pm eminent drama personality Mamunur Rashid will deliver his speech as the special guest which will be followed by the official inauguration of the programme by Ali Anwar, founder-member Tiryak Natya Dal. At 6:30 pm an adaptation from J.M. Synge's 'Riders to the Sea', 'Samudra Pipasha', directed by Ahmed Iqbal Haider will be staged by

the Tiryak Natya Dal.

On December 24, Tiryak Natya Dal will stage a play, 'Smriti Ekattar' at 4:30 pm. Kathak Natya Sampradaya will perform a drama named 'Utsah' and Nandika will perform yet another play 'Shadhinatar Shrangam'. At 6:30 pm Tiryak Natya Dal will stage 'Madhusudan Dutta's 'Buro Shaliker Ghare Bou'. The play will be directed by Ahmed Iqbal Haider.

On December 25, Uchcharon Natya Sampradaya will perform 'Borno Chor' by Montaz Uddin Ahmed. This play will be directed by Shamim Ahmed. Mancha Mukut will stage 'Lekha Pora Korey Je' and Chhoti Theatre will perform 'Doo Phirey Shey Aronny'. At 6:30 pm Tiryak Natya Dal will perform 'Venice Shaudagar', an adaptation from William Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice'.

This year's drama festival will be devoted to the memories of two of the lately deceased drama activists of Tiryak Natya Dal namely Qamrul Islam and Kabir Ahmed. Both of them died this year.

## Electronic Media

Continued from page 11

aged to eschew a possible catastrophe by conceding to the demands of the SSC examinees. Would it be far fetching if one held the electronic media responsible for such kind of violent outburst? After all, there are the brawny show-biz stars, who despite all odds, meet their goal with muscles and arms. The silver screen stars projected on our tamed recreational boxes have almost become idols for our younger generation.

They walk, talk or even eat like their dream men or women. And it is here the consequence is most severe. We face a sudden leap of the children toward a different time, place and custom.

The blend of opposite customs in not always a happy one; particularly if one does not have a strong identity of

one's own, one is sure to get lost in the crowd.

Only Ravi Sankar can perhaps play with George Harrison and remain Ravi Sankar. It is not bad to be aware of the different cultures that surround us but it is sure not good to be carried away with alien cultures or systems. Interestingly, television has both the time and potentiality to murder and create the conscience of our younger generation. And if rightly maneuvered, television can become a strong tool to mould the consciousness of our youngsters. Our children can trace back to the time in which we used to take pride in — our glorious past — and from there they can build up a future on their own.

For that, however, we will need some visionary man and not the contracted computers. And to develop our vision and imagination, why not we restore our belief in the 'granny of the moon'.

# Swan Song for Peking Opera?

A palace eunuch had built the Jixiang Theatre to show his beloved Peking Opera 89 years ago. But these days there is feverish construction going on where the theatre once stood, and soon shoppers will fill a Hong Kong-developed mall where male actors once sang love songs to each other.

In an unsuccessful effort to save the theatre, more than 50 Peking Opera actors, directors and critics signed a petition against the move earlier this year. But the clink of money drowned out the appeal as municipal authorities razed one of the few remaining venues for the 200-year-old art form.

'The Peking Opera is our national treasure,' said Yuan Shihai, a Chinese stage star of 70 years who signed the appeal. 'We must do what we can to save it.'

Peking Opera, China's most famous art form, is fighting for its life against the onslaught of Hong Kong and Hollywood films, television and videos brought on by rapid economic change and which now more popular among young Chinese.

The government as well as opera performers and lovers have launched a crusade to save the art form as opera troupes struggle to stay in operation, theatres are changed into discos and karaokees and opera actors and teachers are drawn away from the stage by businesses or higher-paying jobs.

Peking Opera, which was banned during Japan's occupation of China during World War

*The two centuries-old Peking Opera is declining in popularity as young Chinese flock to movie theatres and discos, but the art form is fighting hard to survive. Rajiv Chandra of Inter Press Service reports from Beijing.*

II and also during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, combines acrobatics, singing and dance to recreate stories from China's rich history and literary heritage.

'Young people in China don't understand China's history and don't have the commitment to Peking Opera as there once was,' says opera performer Ma Mingjun, who also teaches the rudiments of the art to aspiring young actors. He adds that Peking Opera is not as popular because performance standards are declining.

Ironically, Peking Opera has recently received a lot of free publicity in the West due to the success of two award-winning movies, the Chinese-made 'Farewell, My Concubine' and 'M. Butterfly' starring British actor Jeremy Irons.

To revive interest in the Opera, the government is sponsoring a festival to be held in Beijing in December to observe the birthday centennials of master actors Mei Lanfang and Zhou Xinfang.

This fall, opera karaoke competitions have been sponsored in Chinese cities as well as among Chinese communities in the United States, Japan, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and Singapore to discover the best talents. Finalists

will perform in the Chinese capital at the year-end gala.

Opera companies, meanwhile, are increasingly accepting amateurs to join their performances as a means to attract contributions from businessmen and companies within China and from overseas Chinese who visit the mainland.

With foreign tourists a major source of support for opera performances, some troupes are even adapting folklore and stories from other countries' historical heritage for presentation in the Peking Opera format in China.

The so-called revolutionary operas from the days of the Cultural Revolution have also been revived to appeal to some sections of the Chinese public who resist the new economic freedoms in China and feel some nostalgia for the period when all aspects of life were totally dictated by the government.

But the Peking Opera faces an uphill struggle to survive, says Chinese theatre insiders. Up until the 1950s, the Opera was the major source of entertainment in Beijing, where it had thrived under the Qing Dynasty rulers and the best actors performed before the imperial court in the Forbidden City.

Now, the dozens of opera houses in Beijing before 1949 have shrunk to only a handful as Chinese tradition gives way to new modern tastes among Chinese youth. A planned new theatre, promised by the government, is stalled for lack of funds.

Chinese performers and directors say they must breathe new life into the art form by developing new young performers even though the number of school for nurturing new talent is decreasing under new financial pressures and an end of the government subsidies of the past.

Wu Shen, a 12-year-old from Hunan province in central China, was introduced to Peking Opera by his parents and was sent to Beijing after he was determined to be particularly talented.

'My friends offered me congratulations when they heard I was coming to Beijing and had been admitted to a god school to study opera,' says the young Wu. 'But my friends know only a very little about opera.'

Still, Ma, the performer and teacher, predicts that Peking Opera will endure despite its fading popularity and refuses to believe it is near singing its swan song.

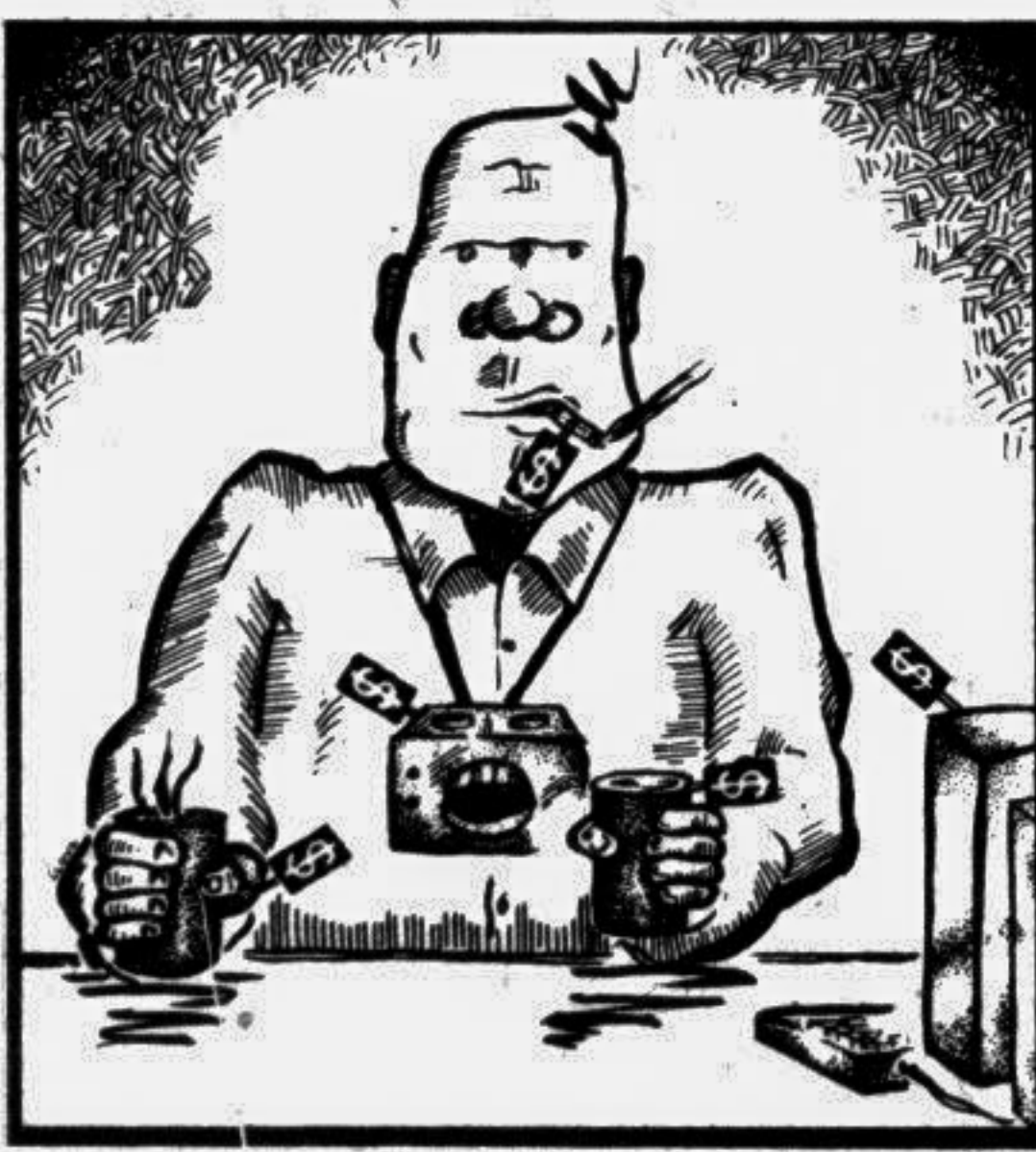
'I don't think it will die because this is unique to China,' he says. 'It still has certain appeal to audiences.'

'It is like drinking tea,' Ma muses. 'Those who don't like it will never drink. And those who have tasted and become addicted, will go on drinking.'

## Visitors Flock for a Taste of the Real Thing

To mark the naming of Coca-Cola as the most valuable brand-name in the world, a Gemini News Service correspondent heads for Atlanta to test-taste the world's stickiest museum.

Teresa Mazzitelli writes from Atlanta



STICKING to the floor with each step, the feet confirm what the mind already knows: this is the museum that Coke built.

The senses, too, are under assault: from the sickly sweet odour, to the incessant effervescence; from the 185 country flags where Coke lives, to the rabid consumerism; and from the cries of delighted children to the belching of thirsty consumers (it is free with a admission).

From taste buds to good taste, the Coca-Cola museum, opened in 1990, is the taste test to end all taste tests.

The feet suffer most through the post-modernist temple to the world's most recognisable trademark — in

July the US magazine Financial World ranked Coca-Cola No. 1 in its league table of the most valuable brand names in the world. It put the value of the name at \$ 36 billion.

Fighting a sticky floor — not bigger but more vexing than gravity pull — the feet squeak their embattled way through this shiny, spotlessly clean museum. But the feet detect what the eyes cannot.

Moving through 1930s soda fountains, a century of advertising, a lifetime of television commercials, taste rooms for American flavours, taste rooms for international flavours not available in the United States, the feet stick with you.

The StereoSurround cinema is mercifully carpeted. But

the information from the Every Day of Your Life movie is not muffled: Coca-Cola products inject \$ 50 billion into the world economy yearly; almost half the soft drinks consumed on the planet, including Fanta and Sprite, belong to the Coke company.

At Coke headquarters, in a concrete box building in mid town Atlanta, they prepare for the huge audience of the 1996 Olympics. But already the World of Coca-Cola museum — part amusement park, part American myth — attracts one million visitors a year.

History and secrecy add more bubbles to the tale. The only written copy of the secret Coke formula, consisting of seven ingredients and known

as 7x, reveals the guide, sits in a trust company vault near headquarters.

To ensure secrecy, Coca-Cola follows a strict process: a trio mixes one portion of the syrup, a second trio mixes another portion, and a seventh man blends it.

The ingredients of 7x were a mystery even to Robert W. Woodruff, the legendary leader credited with turning the lowly cola into an international metaphor of success.

Impossible? 'Why would you want to know something that people would kill for?' asks the guide. To guarantee its lucrative future, these seven people never travel together. Never? 'That's what they told me in training,' she says.

TERESA MAZZITELLI is a Canadian journalist.

## The Humble Chip

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To the ethnic minority the huge fast food market, a British entrepreneur, Rodger Varley, launched a his Nine Spice Diner outlets three years ago in London. They are styled on the US fast food format of brightly designed and lit premises and standardised menus that offer a choice of curries, tandoori chickens and kebabs served within four minutes, at half the price of the traditional Indian restaurants.

The expansion in the ethnic foods industry in Britain began in the 1950s, when enterprising Asian immigrants opened curry parlours, first for their own people in the community, then for the public, providing employment to thousands of people.

communities, who constitute 5% of the British population, the growing popularity of their foods is viewed as one of the most positive contributions to multicultural development in Britain.

West Indian and African foods, which are available in the fresh foods shops and in a few restaurants in areas of high concentration of black people such as London, Bristol and Birmingham, are also gaining recognition, albeit slowly.

However, the FFIS's Ms McWilliams did put her finger on the chips in her comment on the resilience of this traditional British dish. 'The important thing with chips,' she said, 'is that they are up-to-date with the way people eat or serve meals and keep abreast with our lifestyle.'

The writer is LPS Special Correspondent

## Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

IT Could Happen To You is an old fashioned romantic comedy which revolves around three very different characters. Nicolas Cage plays Charlie a New York police. Bridget Fonda is a struggling waitress named Yvonne and Cage's wife Muriel.

Charlie is an exemplary policeman who is satisfied in making an honest dollar to the dismay of wife Muriel who is fed up living in an impoverished area of New York. She tells her husband to buy a ticket for the 64 million dollar state lottery. Yvonne, who's entire life has been a shambles, is now struggling to make ends meet.

An accidental meeting between Charlie and Yvonne changes their lives forever.

Charlie tells Yvonne that if he wins he will split his earnings.

And surely, he does hit the jackpot, and offers half of the four million dollars which she accepts.

When Charlie tells his wife what he has done she goes through the roof but he calms her down showing that her generosity will make her an instant celebrity.

For a time all is well, Yvonne takes over the coffee shop. Muriel is enjoying her newfound spending power. Even so, Charlie is still good old Charlie.

However, he soon discovers he has developed strong feelings for Yvonne and she vice-versa for Charlie.

Even when Muriel learns of their affair and takes everything

away the bond between them becomes even stronger.

In keeping with the film it has a fancy-tale ending.

Now for a complete change of pace for my next film.

T-Force stands for Terminal Force, an elite anti-terrorist unit.

The unique thing about them is that they are cyborgs (half human, half robot) who are able to endure unbelievable stress.

After a hostage situation goes horribly wrong the mayor (Erin Gray) orders the scrapping of the team.

The decision is vehemently opposed by their creator. You may recognise him from the TV serial Six Million Dollar Man.

Despite all his pleading he loses out when the matter is put to a vote.

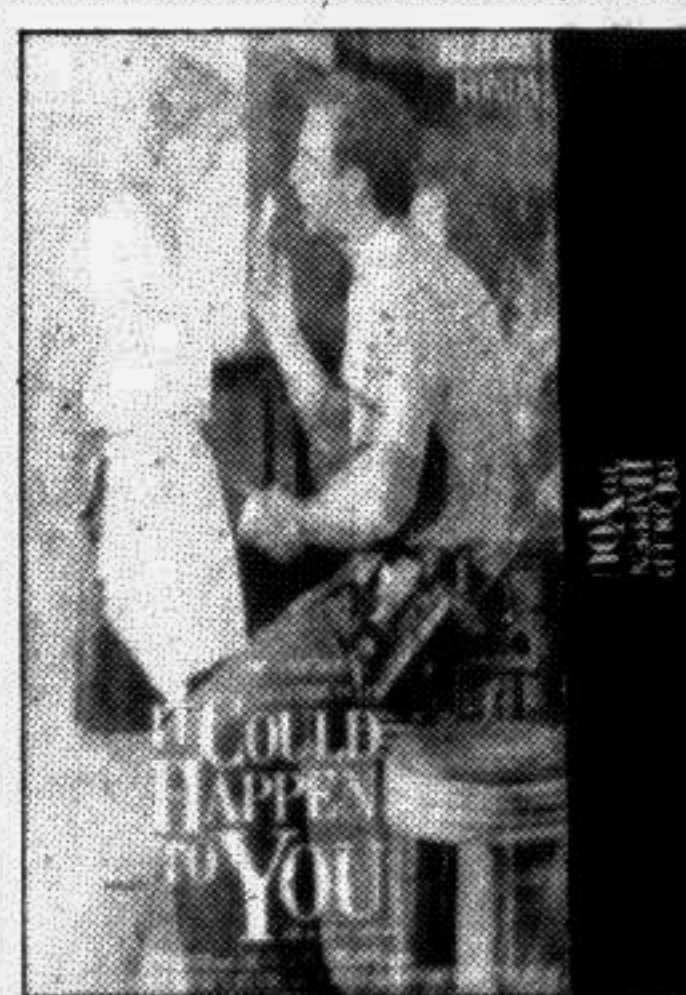
When he tries to explain the facts the T-Force as expected don't take the news lightly and so he becomes the first victim of their wrath. Next they plan to eliminate the mayor.

In the meantime, she hires trouble-shooter Jack Scalia to investigate if the scientist's murder was in anyway connected to the rescue mission to save the ambassador.

To help Scalia he enlists the help of one member of T-Force.

Together they track down the rogue robots and put them out of commission.

If it's action you looking for then this is the thing for you. Don't mind if this film resembles Van Damme's Universal Soldier.



NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Night Caller	(Thriller)	Gary Busey/Peter Fonda/Fred Williamson
2. A Perfect Stranger	(Drama)	Robert Ulrich/Stacy Haidok
3. Project Metal Beast	(Sci-Fi)	Kim Dalaney/Barry Bostwick
4. Sword Of Honour	(Action)	Sophia Crawford
5. Professional	(Act/Thriller)	
6. Doomsday Gun	(Thriller)	
7. Dirty Money	(Thriller)	
8. Paris France	(Rom/Thriller)	
9. The Secret Garden	(Cartoon)	
10. The Little Hero Of	(Kung Fu)	Shaolin Temple Returns

Source: Film Fair Video and other clubs.