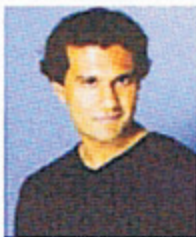


South Asian actors go Mainstream in Surrey

He is perhaps the most promising South Asian actor from Canada trying to make his way into Hollywood. And now Raahul Singh is setting up an acting studio in Surrey to train future actors and actresses. Born in Fiji, brought up in Edmonton and trained as a professional actor in Vancouver, Raahul Singh is now trying to pass on what he has learnt to others. "I chose Surrey/Delta because I lived here when I was in acting school. I feel the community has the potential to be a vibrant entertainment centre", Singh said. He trained in Vancouver with Mel Tuck at the Gastown Actors Studio and has been acting professionally in North America for a decade. Now based in Surrey, Singh is motivated to help develop a strong local entertainment industry that reflects the Lower Mainland's diversity and multicultural talent potential. So came into being Mainstream Actors Studio, Surrey's first professional South Asian-owned and operated acting school. The first of a planned series of actors' workshops for adults and children will take place at the Surrey Arts Centre in May 2008. Given by Singh and another member of Mainstream's teaching team, Agam Darshi, the two-day intensive workshop will be an introduction to the craft of acting and offer participants the basic tools to get started as professional actors. Singh will be giving the two-day adults' workshop, while Darshi will be

giving the one-day children's workshop. In the adults' workshop, participants will take away a better understanding of the film and television industry and of how to get an agent; how to audition, and what the process is like; how to interpret a typical script, and how to work with other actors in a scene. Parents are welcome to sit in at the children's workshop, a fun and lively session that will help photogenic youngsters discover their performing potential and encourage shyer children to open up and become more confident. Singh plans to offer other similar workshops throughout the summer, in Surrey and Burnaby. Raahul was born in Vunavalevu in Nadi, Fiji, and grew up in Alberta, influenced both by Hollywood and Indian cinema. After completing a degree in Marketing, Raahul moved to British Columbia and enrolled at the Gastown Actors Studio in Vancouver, training with Mel Tuck: "I was the only East Indian in the school, and they cast me in roles like Oberon, Achilles, and John Proctor on stage." By 2001 Raahul had landed a host of Vancouver film and TV roles when he was flown to Los Angeles to screen test for the lead in the



feature film *The Guru*, with Heather Graham and Marisa Tomei. Raahul was runner-up for the lead in *The Guru*, and was cast in a supporting role. Raahul has since landed the leading role in four independent films including the Toronto-filmed *Bolly Double*, which won the "People's Choice Award" at the Real World Film festival while in Toronto. Raahul studied at the Equity Showcase Theatre and at Second City. "As a professional actor you have to constantly update your skills, as you would in any career." Since returning to Vancouver in 2007 Raahul has founded his own production company,

Rtiger Productions, and has garnered numerous film and TV credits, including the Jerry Bruckheimer-produced CBS pilot *The Eleventh Hour*. He even checked out the Bollywood scene by spending two months in Mumbai but found out quickly that unless one is related to or very closely connected to a producer, there are few to no breaks.

Others who will be teaching Agam Darshi is an exciting up-and-coming actress in the Vancouver film industry. Her very first audition landed her a recurring role on *Renegade Press Corp.*, as the "sexually confused" Hema. Since then Agam has earned a recurring role in the *L-Word (Showtime)*, a lead in *Zixx Level II* as the evil Jayda (USA Cartoon Network,



YTV), a supporting lead in the feature *Pink Ludoos*, CBC's *49th and Main*, and *Lifetime's Haunting on Sorority Row* alongside *Gossip Girl's* Leighton Meester.

Agam has just finished production on *Bollywood Beckona*, a film she wrote, produced and acted. Parm was born in Punjab, India and raised in London, England. He then moved to Canada where he studied Theatre at The University of Winnipeg. After completing his actor apprenticeship in Canada, Parm worked on the stage and as a stand up comedian across North America for ten years before landing his first feature film role.



ADVENTURES IN DINING

RESTAURANT CRITIC MARK LABA EATS FOOD AND CRITICIZES. WHAT A JOB.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2008

Express no flash in the pan

ASIAN FUSION: For a place this small and casual, it sure offers some spiffy plates

Review

Fuse Pan Asian Express

Where: 1078 Mainland St. (entrance around the corner on Helmcken), Vancouver
Payment/reservations: Major credit cards, 604-687-3873

Drinks: Soft drinks and Asian sodas.
Hours: Mon.-Fri., noon-8 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., noon-6 p.m.

You can light a fuse, change a fuse, blow a fuse, be confused, defuse a bomb or a situation, snuff a room with light or light a room with nuclear fusion, reuse the cold fusion theory or diffuse a kitchen with the aromatic influences of a provision of cooking, transmuting the senses with elaborate displays of drooping and chopping anticipation. Much like I saw Pluto do in an old Mickey Mouse cartoon when he didn't get any birthday cake.

It is the latter that concerns me here. Not Pluto but the chop-licking action, so I set out for this place that bills itself as Asian fusion in a flash, cooking to see and taste what exactly can be done with intricate and intriguing recipes after the hourglass has been tipped and the sands of time are running out, so to speak.

I decided to use Peaches, The Law and Texas Slim as a judging panel, three disparate sets of taste buds if there ever was one. If I could fuse these three food curmudgeons into one agreeable and perhaps even favourable opinion then this small eatery would've accomplished nothing short of a miracle, or at least convinced an old codger like me that there is some ray of hope in the food-fusion racket.

It's a small joint, as sparse as a Zen monk's mind — when he's got the spiritual pedal to the metal and has the orn going full throttle — with a few simple black tables and some stool and counter seating and three colour field panels on the wall that read serenely, tranquility and harmony, or something to that effect. I'm not sure — I was falling asleep.

We put the kitchen into overdrive with our order, determined to get as good an overview as possible as if we were human satellites. Beginning with



Dawn Dawson (left) serves spinach salad and hand-rolled cilantro-pork dumplings. Christina Doo (right) holds black-eyed Shanghai and sweet-Thai chicken bites. JASON PAVNE — THE PROVINCE

hand-rolled three-onion cakes (\$3). They looked as unassuming as a chartered accountant on holiday in Bangkok but pack a lot of punch into their fatty baked bodies with scallions, red onion and shallots.

Essentially everything got laid out at once and this is how it all played out. The curry cilantro skewers with chicken breast dressed in Manchao curry (\$8) is excellent, albeit the price may be a little steep for two skewers, but the ginger rice is very nice. Pork dumplings (\$6) with pork, panko and veggies, the trinitariate of pan-Asian cooking, was a great success with a wonderful dumpling wrapping.

Texas Slim, a real meat-and-potatoes man, was excited by the honey-hoisin braised short-rib selection (\$12), marinated and braised for as long as Fidel Castro has been in power it seems. Succulent, satisfying and a worthy finish to the business end of a high-walage cattle prod.

The Black Eyed Shanghai sounds like an old film noir movie, with double-dealings and nefarious undertakings in an alleyway opium den, but turned out to be delicious thick Shanghai noodles with

boik choy, shitake mushrooms and red pepper finished with a garlic-black bean sauce (\$8).

The black sheep of the bunch was not a sheep, but a porker. Asian-style spaghetti and meatballs (\$8) was OK, the meatballs a little off-putting initially with their pale pork complexion. But after the first bite with an echo of cilantro in these warm-hearted pig-sniffing orbs, I was won over. The spaghetti and tomato sauce especially seemed as timid as Chief Boyardee up against a Sicilian brick wall by local mafioso after not coming clean on a gambling debt.

Still I'm amazed that such a small and casual — to the point of drooping in in your bathrobe wouldn't seem unusual — joint like this is turning out some spiffy plates that wouldn't seem out of line at more monkey-suit establishments. It's a quick fix, no doubt about that, so don't get gussied up, but your stomach will leave feeling like a million bucks.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

Wok-fried that'll make you tongue-tied.

RATINGS: Food: **B+** Service: **A-** Atmosphere: **B+**