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Bollywood DANCE

A new crop of choreographers is leading the film industry on a merry dance

BY SOUMIK SEN

FROM WINNING A DANCE COMPETITION TO MAKING THE STARS DANCE FOR HIM HAS BEEN A LONG STEP FOR REMO

"And somewhere down the line, I wish to extend this vision and direct a film," she says (shades of Farah Khan?). "But more than that, I want to set up a platform for the people who work with me, so that they can do good work and not just churn out trash to make a living."

Creating a platform for serious dancers was something that was on Ashley Lobo's mind when he started Danceworx almost a decade ago. He went to Australia and came back armed with a degree in dance, and specialisation in jazz. His recent work for the title track of *Dhoom* is a big, big hit, especially in the English version of the same song in which he made Thai sensation Tata Young sizzle and seduce Abhishek

Bachchan, Uday Chopra and John Abraham. "When I first heard the song", he says, "I knew it had to be international and better than anything else that one had seen in the past." Lobo was already working on another film *Socha Na Tha*, the launch vehicle for Abhay Deol, brother of Sunny and Bobby Deol. "However, *Dhoom* got released first and I've been bombarded with calls from the film industry," he says.

Based in New Delhi, Lobo is busy shuttling between his city and Mumbai for film shoots and meetings with directors who want him to choreograph songs for them. "Two big banners have approached me and I'm definitely doing their

work, but I don't want to divulge any details yet," he says. "But watch out, because I'm having fun with my kind of dance," he tells us.

Like him and unlike Merchant, Remo doesn't belong to a family of choreographers. While Merchant's grandfather Heeralalji and uncles Tarun Kumar and Chinniprakash are dance directors, Remo came to Mumbai from Jamnagar in Gujarat in 1993 to learn dancing. "After I saw the opportunities here, I never went back," he says. Eleven years later, he is dazzling the silver screen with item numbers from *Kaante* to *Popcorn Khao Mast Ho Jao* and looks back at the good old days when he was part of a five-member dance group — Superbrats — which helped him win an all India dance competition in Thane a decade ago. "Ahmad Khan picked me up from there, and I went on to assist him on a paltry Rs 5,000 salary for Ram Gopal Varma's *Rangeela*," he says.

From then on, films started happening and eventually the first solo break came in the form of a music video — Sonu Nigam's pop album *Deewana*. The first film break happened with *Dil Pe Mat Le Yaar* and, soon after,

Tum Bin and *Aankhen* happened. "The title song shot for the introductory credit titles featuring Mr Bachchan is my favourite song," he gushes. And soon enough, he followed it with Sanjay Gupta's *Kaante*, and "Ishq Samander" ensured that he was in the big league.

Remo, busy on the sets of *Waqf*, *Shabd*, *Lucky* and *Raakh*, feels that the individual meticulous attention paid to dancers' clothes and make-up, is what defines class in any music video. A big Michael Jackson and Saroj Khan fan, Remo hopes to start his dance academy in another two years, and dreams of getting a break as a director for a musical. Till then, with Merchant and Lobo for company, he's happy to have the stars dance to his steps. **B**

(WITH ABHILASHA OJHA)