

## Interview with Ishy Din

Ischy Din, writer of *Snookered* talks about how the play came to be written and also his plans for the future.

### What inspired *Snookered*? Is it autobiographical at all?

There are certainly parts of it that are autobiographical, I think that to make any character honest and real one needs to put one's own experiences, both emotional and physical, into them but then you also have to make the piece dramatic so once the characters were in place I had to find a journey for each character that would heighten the drama.

Because it's a world that I know really well finding inspiration for character and story was pretty straight forward and I'd always wanted to write something about working class northern British Asian men.

### *Snookered* emerged after you took part in the Tamasha Developing Artists new writing course – tell us about your journey to *Snookered*.

Luckily for me a number of things happened around the same time, of course firstly I was on the Tamasha writing course in London, not knowing many people meant that on an evening I would return to my backpackers hostel and out of sheer boredom I'd write short scenes which were usually set in a pub/bar (my hostel was above a pub in Camden) – that's when really the idea came to me about writing something about some friends playing pool and getting drunk.

The playwright Philip Osment who was a tutor on the course set us a writing exercise where two characters had to use a word from a list he had put up on the board in each line of dialogue they spoke, if I remember correctly one of the words was "black" and somewhere in the list was the word "dignified", it was at the time of the Barack Obama's campaign for the Democratic nomination, I chose to write a scene where two guys argue about whether Barack is a Muslim or not, this really cemented the idea of who my characters would be and what their world view was.

I mentioned my thoughts to Sudha Bhuchar, Tamasha's Co-Artist Director and she suggested that I read *Christmas* by Simon Stephens, for anybody that hasn't read it, early on in the play one of the characters uses some really profane language. Having experienced very little theatre I believed that the same constraints applied as those in television as to what your characters could say. After reading *Christmas* I realised that actually I could have my characters say whatever they wanted as well.

I then re-wrote some scenes where I imagined how my mates would talk if they were in a pub getting drunk and playing pool, we work-shopped a scene and it received a really positive reaction.

At the end of the course Tamasha asked me to write a full length script of the idea and I returned North and started to write, after the first draft Tamasha decided to develop the script further and I was introduced to the lovely Lin Coghlan, together with Sudha and the three of us set about shaping what *Snookered* is today.



Muzz Khan in *Snookered*

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With discussion and questioning of the characters, the story and the structure Lin and Sudha cajoled me into digging deeper into all the elements of *Snookered*. I think that there were three full re-writes and the about six versions of the last scene.

I'd come down to London, have a meeting and return energized and ready to go, that usually lasted until I logged on and then I'd think F\*\$K! how am I going to do this? But somehow with Tamasha's support we managed to come up with a piece that I feel all of us can be proud of.

### **Why do you write?**

A friend of mine Steve Chambers once told me that there are only really three moments in writing, the first is when you get the gig, the second when you finish the 1st draft and the 3rd when somebody performs it. I totally agree.

A majority of my time is spent staring at a blank page, chain smoking and thinking why the hell am I doing this? And I think it's because the stages before and after the chain smoking insomnia are incredible. The process of developing an idea that's come from perhaps something you have read, or seen or heard or just something that's popped into your head into something that's fully formed, with characters, and back story and a plot, a beginning, a middle and an end is a complete buzz.

Working with actors and directors is another reason for writing, I've realised that it's a collaborative process and being open to other ideas and insights adds to what you are trying to do and that process is something I really enjoy.

### **Who inspires you?**

Homer Simpson!

### **Do you have any advice budding writers?**

Learn your craft, (I'm doing this at the moment and I'm assured it never ends), read as much as you can about creative writing, (I found *The Crafty Art of Playwriting* by Alan Ayckbourn one of the more practical guides).

Try to attend as many courses, workshops and seminars that you can. Free ones are the best!!

You never know when somebody will tell you something that may not necessarily be true but is really useful. And be prepared for rejection, at least 50% of the gigs I've went for have ended up in me being rejected.

### **What does the future hold for Ishy Din? What else are you working on now? Tell us about future projects!**

I'm so glad you asked that question! Hahaha. Well... I'm just about to start writing the 1st draft of my next play *Approaching Empty* for Tamasha, hopefully the second in a trilogy I'm writing for the company.

I've just been announced the Pearson Writer in Residence at the Royal Exchange, Manchester which is really exciting, it starts in the New Year and I'll be working closely with them in developing a new play and learning my craft throughout next year.



Ischy Din

I'm at the early planning stages of a radio play that I'm developing with Clive Brill at Pacificus Productions

And I'll be working with Tees Valley Arts on a project with young people up here in Middlesbrough.  
At some point in the future I'd love to try and write something for TV and perhaps a movie but at the moment I just want to get my 3rd moment and see *Snookered* being performed.

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*Snookered* opens at University Campus Oldham from 2 – 8 February. To book your tickets or for more information call 0161 624 2829 or visit [www.coliseum.org.uk](http://www.coliseum.org.uk)

For more information about Tamasha theatre company visit [www.tamasha.org.uk](http://www.tamasha.org.uk)

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