

CHINWAG WITH...

SAAD KHAN



This Bangalore-based filmmaker (his feature film *Station* is awaiting release) is the founder of Centerstage, a new wave media movement. He has now come up with a show called *The Improv*, where actors perform impromptu shows to situations given by the audience.

The concept behind *The Improv*...

The Improv is short form for improvisation, which according to us is a spontaneous betterment of an already existing action. In the case of our show, we don't have a script. We have rounds conceptualised by my creative partner Siddhanth K S and I. Six actors on stage perform to situations and scenes given on the spot by the audience. I believe acting is reacting. I love when performers are natural and interactive, not forced and indicative. Keeping this as a driving force, the concept wasn't far away from me. I was lucky to find actors like stand-up comedian Kenneth Sebastian, theatre actor Naveen Kumar, model-actor Vibhinta Verma, and teacher Richa Kapoor among others.

VARIETY

Must have been hugely challenging?

Yes. The challenge before we started was to find the same creative madness we had in performers. The Improv demands extreme madness with no inhibitions absolutely. We wanted performers with these qualities. That was our challenge, and with every passing show it sometimes still is.

Were you ever floundered by the audience's test?

Haha! So far, there hasn't been a single such situation. But once we were challenged when somebody threw us a topic, 'Two teenagers awkwardly make out for the first time'. The comedy in this came out with the actors getting awkward and we were glad that it didn't go into a provocative direction.

How do you rehearse for a show that thrives on improvisation?

We train to become impermeable to randomness with respect to situations, topics, scenes, and ideas. A lot of research is involved and our actors have done brilliantly so far. Well, I can't disclose the kind of training we undertake. It's a 'spiritual' secret. In our rehearsals, we practise a lot, but since it's improvisation, the fun of it lies in not knowing. The pulse and energy for us is the shock value once we finish a show and see our performances on video and collectively react saying - Did we just do all of that?

In such a format, what does the director do?

We just chill actually with a cigar and a cold coffee. As a director and host, I make sure that the actors are always having fun and enjoying the process.

— Khushali P Madhwani

(Improv will be live at Opus on Oct 5)