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Filmmaker Ryan Singh wants to come home

By **Telesha Ramnarine** - March 4, 2018



Ryan Singh.

– Wishes to create opportunities for local industry

GUYANESE award-winning producer and director Ryan Singh, who has had the good fortune of migrating to Canada to pursue his dream of filmmaking, is now exploring ideas of returning to Guyana to help those in the local fraternity.

Singh, 40, was born and raised in New Amsterdam, Berbice, and was about 16 years old when he left the country to pursue his dreams. Having spent some 24 years in the filmmaking industry- 10 professionally- he wants to come back and help with capacity building in the local industry.



Ryan Singh and Director David Sudz Sutherland at a conference in Toronto.

Son of local poet, writer and producer Leon Saul, Singh attended Trinity Street Primary and New Amsterdam Multilateral Secondary and completed university studies in Canada.

Now the father of five-year-old twins, Ava and Sebastian, Singh started off his career on his father's stage when he was just about six years old and was invited up to recite a poem.

Today a filmmaker, director, producer, actor, and director of photography, Singh is already in contact with some local figures in the acting industry and hopes to 'start the ball rolling' on his next visit here sometime this year. "I want to come and help out wherever I can and to help spearhead capacity building," Singh told the Pepperpot Magazine during

an online interview.

His last visit to Guyana was in 2003 when he was a volunteer communications coordinator with the Volunteer Youth Corps. "The last time I went to Guyana, it was then I realised what a rich and diverse culture I came from. But I noticed there was a lack of opportunities for people to create their stories visually and tell it to the world. But the world needs these stories, so if I can empower one person to create, it would make a huge difference for the entire country," Singh said.

Singh's first plays, 'Zenrick and Cleopatra' and 'Asylum Wedding' were both written and directed by his high school teacher, now prominent New York attorney, Vivian Williams. Although going to Canada did not immediately offer Singh the opportunities he had sought as a young man in Guyana, he eventually succeeded in producing theatre with the help of his dad following his graduation at university.

He would eventually press on to make award-winning documentaries and short films while acting in major productions.

His father, Leon Saul, told the Pepperpot Magazine in an invited comment that he is very proud of his son, his firstborn; and described him as a "chip off the old block."



Ryan Singh is the eldest son of Leon Saul.

Saul said his son has fulfilled his dream of filmmaking which he did not have an opportunity to do, and that they have collaborated on a number of successful projects.

THE BREADWINNER

Singh has worked as an actor on 'Downsizing' and was the behind-the-scenes videographer on 'The Breadwinner' (Nominated for one Golden Globe, six Canadian Screen Awards, and a bevvv of Annie Awards).

He has also been a producer on Rasta: A Soul's Journey (2011), Housekeeping, IRL: The Series (2016) (TV show and Web Series), Fried Bakes and Dumplings (2014), Mom (2013), Graffiti Alley (2016) and The Black Experience Project Report (2017). He directed Mom, Fried Bakes and Dumplings and Graffiti Alley.



A scene from 'Mr. Crab' with Vian Persad.

Apart from being behind the scenes, Singh has also acted in 'Conduct Unbecoming' directed by Sidney Furie, '11 Blocks' that was co-directed by Matthew Bennett and Sasha Moric and 'Mr. Crab' that was directed by Faisal Lutchmedial.

"While I've had several great acting experiences, one of the most memorable was working with Alexander Payne who directed 'Downsizing.' His approach to working with people was amazingly collaborative and inviting," Singh expressed, adding, "Equally as impactful was working closely with Nora Twomey, the director for 'The Breadwinner'. She is a strong and very specific director, yet she runs her set with humility and love. Each person working with her feel present."

In 'The Breadwinner', produced by Angelina Jolie, Singh worked as a videographer capturing the actors as they voiced their performances. The footage was then used to add to the visual animation developed for each character as they tell the story of a young girl who must become a boy to feed her family in war-torn Afghanistan.

Among his upcoming projects are two feature-length documentaries, one being a chronicle following Spoken Word Artist, Dwayne Morgan, on his first voyage to continental Africa by way of South Africa. The project also features the impact the trip has on him, his art and his perception of the country; what Nelson Mandela was to the world through stories; and the history Dwayne learns along the way.

His other documentary, *Ray of Hope*, is another travel documentary where he accompanies former Member of Parliament for Scarborough Rouge River, Rathika Sitsabaiesan to Sri Lanka. "On the trip, we find ourselves under siege, in hiding and avoiding being arrested by Sri Lankan government operatives. It's an amazing tale of one woman's strength to overcome a threatening ordeal. Both films are slated to be completed this year," said Singh.

On stage, through his company 'Ryan Singh Enterprises', he has produced and performed in more than eight stage productions including, "For Better...For Worse," "Make Love, Not War," "Fools in Love," "Curse of Ham," "Sweet, Sweet Karaila," and "Sex, Relationships and Sometimes...Love."

He was the 'Best Documentary under 40 Minutes' Winner for 'Mom' at the Caribbean Tales International Film Festival CTIFF 2013; and winner of the 'Audience Choice Awards' for 'Fried Bakes and Dumplings' Greater August Town Film Festival GATFFEST 2016, in Jamaica.

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