

Lisa Ray is back in India for 'Stella'

After her critically acclaimed performance in 'Water', which was shot in Sri Lanka, the controversial lesbian film 'I Can't Think Straight' and action thriller 'Kill, Kill Faster', actress Lisa Ray is back in India for a comedy titled 'Stella'.

The chosen location is Delhi where the film began its hush-hush shooting in a start-to-finish stretch. Deepa Mehta is co-directing 'Stella' with her brother Dilip.

'I've flown down from Toronto to be my brother's assistant,' Mehta joked.

Lisa's inability to speak Hindi was one of the reasons why she made no headway in Bollywood and returned to her home base in Canada.

This is Lisa's comeback to India after the steamy 'Kasoor' in 2001, where she shared more than just screen space with her co-star Aftab Shivdasani. Lisa's lines were dubbed by Divya Dutta in 'Kasoor'.

Many eyebrows were raised when Deepa Mehta cast the sophisticated model-turned-actress as a simple minimalist woe-widow in 'Water'. Lisa did brave through her poetic Hindi dialogues in the film nominated for the Oscars. But her lines had to be eventually dubbed.

'In fact,' Mehta said, 'Stella' is my third film with Lisa. She did the light and frothy 'Bollywood Hollywood' for me with Rahul Khanna in 2002.'

'I know people thought I had gone mad when I cast her in 'Water'. But Lisa got tremendous acclaim in the world press. In 'Stella' she is perfectly cast as a 32-year-old Indo-Canadian in Delhi. So she's a natural choice for the part,' Mehta told IANS.

Lisa's co-stars in 'Stella' are the Canadian TV phenomenon Scott Speedman and NRI Punjabi theatre actor Vajendra (Rocky), who makes his screen debut as Preity Zinta's husband in Deepa Mehta's Punjabi film 'Heaven On Earth'.

Interestingly, in the West, they think she's Satyajit Ray's daughter. Lisa is only too happy to be imbued with literary antecedents. After all she wants to be a novelist, but for now the actress will have to be content being an actress.

Although Lisa has so far featured in pivotal parts in all her films, she doesn't play the main protagonist in 'Stella'. The title role is played by Seema Biswas.

'Stella' is a bilingual in Hindi and English. Will Lisa be able to dub her own dialogues in Hindi? Or would we hear her character speak in two different voices for the two versions?

Subhash K. Jha (© IANS / India eNews)