

Only Ash was offered 'Pink Panther 2': casting director

Refuting rumours about other Bollywood actors being offered a role in 'Pink Panther 2', its casting director Ilene Starger said they only considered Aishwarya Rai.

'Most emphatically, we did not offer the role to anyone other than Aishwarya! Aishwarya was, when I first read the script, the actress I envisioned for the role,' Starger told IANS from Los Angeles in an e-mail interview.

Aishwarya shot for a day with Steve Martin and Andy Garcia in Paris Aug 20 for the film by Harold Zwart.

'Her intelligence, grace, beauty and sophistication are just what the role requires. And, of course, she has a touch of mystery too. She fits in wonderfully with our fantastic ensemble cast, and all of us involved with the film are thrilled to work with her.'

Rumours had it that Celina Jaitley was offered the role first but rejected it. Also, Hrithik Roshan was asked to play detective Clouseau's assistant Vincent in part two of the comedy, but he too turned it down.

However, Aishwarya's international manager Simone Sheffield dismisses the reports.

Sheffield said: 'Negotiations went on for a month to secure Aishwarya and her dates. The script is absolutely wonderful and the wardrobe is great.'

'The film's costume designer Joe Aulisi has chosen some really hot items from Dolce and Gabbana. If any one of the actresses mentioned had really been offered this A-level role in such a big-budget international film, they would have jumped to join it and not have passed on the opportunity as they state, believe me.'

'What I love about Aishwarya is that she just calmly continues along the path she has chosen, does her work, lives her life and never has a bad word to say about anyone.'

Sheffield also has a lot to say about the actresses' absence at the unveiling of her statue at Times Square and for the promotion of her latest international film 'The Last Legion'.

'I see this trend happening more and more in the media with events falsely confirming Aishwarya's attendance to boost sales and media attention. For one, Aishwarya was never confirmed to appear at the unveiling in New York City, nor did we confirm she was appearing on the late night talk show and a morning news programme during her brief visit to Los Angeles.'

'She did, however, confirm she was appearing at India Splendor celebrating the 60th anniversary of India's Independence. When Aishwarya confirms an appearance, it is confirmed and she will without fail attend and always has.'

'As for the promotions for 'The Last Legion', it is up to the producers and distributors of the film to make such arrangements and in this case numerous phone interviews with the international media took place over the past two months. There was nothing else requested of Aishwarya prior to the

film's US release.'

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