

Multifaceted actor Tom Alter to receive Padma Shri

In a career spanning about three decades, Bollywood actor, sports writer and novelist Tom Alter has played a variety of characters both in real life and reel life. The multifaceted actor is now all set to receive the Padma Shri Award for his distinguished contribution in the field of art.

Fondly called the 'true blue Englishman on screen', Alter recently left stage buffs in a thrall in Oman with his solo play on the life, times and scholarship of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad.

The 57 year-old actor of American origin has his fingers in many pies - theatre, television, films, sports and literature. However, he is most prominently known for his work in the Hindi film industry.

Born in 1950, Alter, the son of an American missionary, is a native of Mussoorie who spent his early years between Landour and Mumbai, where he now lives. Alter began his career with cameo roles in films like Satyajit Ray's 'Shatranj Ke khiladi' in 1977 and played Lord Mountbatten in the movie on Sardar Patel in 1993.

The versatile actor, who last appeared in low budget blockbuster film 'Bheja Fry', forayed into big-time acting with 'Laila Majnu'. For years he got to play English characters, till filmmakers like Raj Kapoor in 'Ram Teri Ganga Maili', Mukul Anand in 'Sultanat' and Vidhu Vinod Chopra in 'Parinda' created Indian characters for him.

His other celebrated works include 'Charas', 'Parvarish', 'Des Pardes', 'Kranti', 'Gandhi' and 'Khoon Bhari Maang', to name a few.

Uniquely talented for his fluency in Hindi, Urdu and knowledge of the country's culture, he has worked with noted filmmakers like Satyajit Ray in 'Shatranj Ke Khiladi' and Ismail Merchant in 'Sardar', the 1993 film biography of Indian leader Sardar Patel, which focused on the events surrounding the partition and independence of India.

The seasoned actor endeared himself to thousands of television serial buffs with his act in 'Bharat Ek Khoj', 'Junoon' and 'Betaal Pachisi'.

In 1996 he appeared in the Assamese-language film 'Adajya', and in 2007 acted in the theatrical reproduction of William Dalrymple's 'City of Djinnns' alongside Zohra Sehgal.

Tom Alter's first cousin Stephen Alter, also born and raised in India, is a notable author and teacher.

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