

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**COMEDIAN KUMAIL NANJIANI TALKS FINDING HIS DARKER SIDE FOR HULU'S *WELCOME TO CHIPPENDALES* IN *EMMY* MAGAZINE**

(LOS ANGELES — Nov. 17, 2022) — Actor/writer/producer Kumail Nanjiani brings to life the dramatic story of Chippendales founder Somen Banerjee in Hulu's *Welcome to Chippendales*, debuting Nov. 22. Nanjiani and the talented team behind the eight-episode limited series talk with *emmy* about exploring the scandalous story of the world's most famous male striptease group and the man who made it happen. The award-winning official publication of the Television Academy is on newsstands Nov. 21.

In the summer of 2017, Emmy-nominated writer/producer Robert Siegel brought a script centering on the controversial founder of Chippendales—Indian immigrant, Somen “Steve” Banerjee—to Nanjiani; but the actor wasn't ready to leave his comedy comfort zone. However, when Siegel turned it into a limited series with a more fleshed-out portrait of Banerjee years later, Nanjiani was intrigued. “I knew I had to do it, [but] I was intimidated and scared,” says Nanjiani. “The character has such a dark side to him, and he only got darker as the story progressed.”

Once Nanjiani signed on as star and executive producer, Siegel's project sped into action, and the supporting cast came together. Emmy-winner Murray Bartlett, who plays choreographer/director Nick De Noia, says, “I was so excited to play Nick because he was this extraordinary character and a visionary in a lot of ways.” Annaleigh Ashford, playing the accountant who marries Banerjee, was equally as excited. “I always knew the saga would make for an incredible series,” she says, “so when this team of magic makers asked me to join the party, I couldn't have been more thrilled.”

Set against the backdrop of 1980s Los Angeles, the series begins with Banerjee's evolution from a mild-mannered gas station clerk to the founder of the first Chippendales. In “**Date with Destiny**,” Siegel and Nanjiani tell *emmy* how this iconic story came to life. Executive producer and co-showrunner Jenni Konner says, “I grew up in LA—how did I miss this? I remember being completely shocked that the story even existed.” And what a story it turned out to be.

Nanjiani embraced the complete character. Konner says, “It was astonishing to witness. His whole body changed. He was tracking Steve more than we did, which was incredibly helpful with creating that story.” It wasn't easy, though. Nanjiani recalls struggling physically and emotionally. He even described the transformation as more difficult than when he played a Marvel superhero in *Eternals*.

At first, the money rolled in, and Chippendales became massively famous with theater groups appearing worldwide. But the party came to a dramatic end for its founder. "Steve thought he could come over here and have wealth and success if he worked hard enough," says Siegel. "Then he learned that this country comes with its own class structure built on color. It's not as simple as saying the American Dream is a lie, but what happened to him is fascinating."

Even for those who know the story of Banerjee well, the series has something to offer. Konner says, "We really tried to make the story as fresh as possible because you're still going to see a whole world of tension and drama and musical numbers." Nanjiani adds, "[Banerjee] had a lot of pain inside, and he was never able to deal with that pain. Ultimately, this show is a tragedy." But, unlike Banerjee, Nanjiani stops to appreciate what he has accomplished and is very grateful. "For Rob to trust me on this and to work with these people, means so much to me. I'm very proud."

Additional feature highlights from the new issue include:

- In "**Flipping the Script**," *emmy* details how this year's FIFA World Cup will be unlike ever before, hosted by the Persian Gulf nation of Qatar and taking place during the winter holidays instead of summer. Fox Sports talks with *emmy* about rethinking every aspect of production.
- Fans prepare to say goodbye to characters they met in 1999 as *The Best Man: The Final Chapters* drops on Peacock Dec. 22. In "**Love Lessons**," creator Malcolm D. Lee talks with *emmy* about his desire to tell a universal story and be just as forward-leaning as the first film was years ago.
- In "**The Go-Between**," showrunner and Pulitzer-nominated playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins talks with *emmy* about adapting Octavia E. Butler's acclaimed 1979 novel *Kindred*, about a present-day Black woman time traveling to the era of slavery. All eight episodes of the FX series will be available Dec. 13 on Hulu.

About *emmy*

Emmy, the official publication of the Television Academy, goes behind the scenes of the industry for a unique insider's view. It showcases the scope of television and profiles the people who make TV happen, from the stars of top shows to the pros behind the cameras, covering programming trends and technological advances. Honored consistently for excellence, *emmy* is a six-time Maggie Award winner as Best Trade Publication in Communications or the Arts and has collected 52 Maggies from the Western Publishing Association. *Emmy* is published 12 times per year and is available on selected newsstands and at TelevisionAcademy.com for single print and digital copies as well as subscriptions.

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