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Dana Levy shows  
how to track trends

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Metro Interview:  
Pooja Kumar

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metro

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Phelps  
shows  
he's only  
human



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NUMBER

**\$2.4M** How much "Fahrenheit 9/11" made during its opening weekend at the British box office, a record for a documentary. **AP**

LATINA TALES

"Yo Soy Latina," a play that explores the stories of six bilingual and bi-cultural women, opens on Off-Broadway 7:30 p.m. today at the Pantheon Theater, 303 W. 4th St. Tickets, \$15 to \$30. **METRO**

QUOTED

**"I just hope he stays the same, but there will be much more of him."**

Matt LeBlanc on his "Friends" character, Joey.

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# From Bollywood to Hollywood

## U.S.-born Indian actress brings her dreams to mainstream America

METRO INTERVIEW

A native of St. Louis, Pooja Kumar studied acting and classical Indian dance, but put off her Bollywood dreams for a law career. Still, she couldn't shake her passion for the performing arts. So, after her coronation as Miss India USA in 1995, and a stint as a VJ on Indian channel Zee TV, Kumar began chasing her dream and soon landed lead roles in numerous Bollywood feature films. Today, Kumar is the face of "Bombay Dreams" and the star of the new movie "Flavors."

**Metro:** Your image is on all the posters for "Bombay Dreams." How does it feel to walk around the city and see yourself on all of the billboards?

**Pooja Kumar:** It's a really crazy feeling. Someone recommended me to the producers of the show for the advertisement. I met with the director of the photo shoot, and the next I thing I knew, it was a done deal. My father came to visit me a couple months ago, and we were in Times Square when he saw the billboard for the first time. He stood there for a bit, and finally said, "I didn't know you were made up that way." Dad's ... always trying to be diplomatic!

**M:** "Flavors" is totally different from your typical Bollywood Indian movie. How so?



ACTRESS POOJA KUMAR is making her Hollywood debut in "Flavors."

**PK:** Most Bollywood movies are full of the overly dramatic, big costume, big song and dance number routine, which is what makes a Bollywood film unique. "Flavors" is more of a typical feature film that deals with six different people with six different lives here in the U.S. and in India. You don't know it at the beginning, but you see how their lives become intertwined as the story is told. This movie really deals with issues that Indians go through in this country, but issues that are current and not stereotypical.

**M:** Let's talk about your character. She is head-

strong, independent, juggling a career while trying to facilitate a long distance relationship. How close is this character to you?

**PK:** Rachna [my character] is a chemical engineer trying to get her PhD. In that sense, I think we are alike because we both are working toward a longterm goal. My father is also an engineer, so in some way I felt like I could relate to my character on that level. Engineers are also very linear thinkers, they tend to see things in black and white. That's definitely not me.

**M:** With "Bombay

Dreams," "Monsoon Wedding," and bhangra so popular, are American audiences truly embracing South Asian culture?

**PK:** Yes, I do feel like Americans are starting to turn a particular interest to South Asia, especially with movies like "Monsoon Wedding" and the musical "Bombay Dreams." I'm happy to be a part of it all and help people learn more about where I am from. I see it as an adventure. And it's only going to get bigger.

**M:** Do you feel that Indian actresses must take on a

certain stereotype to be considered appealing?

**PK:** I don't think it's about molding to a stereotype with Indian actresses. One thing that I find I am seeing more is that actress are breaking the mold and taking on more versatile roles. Once you embrace that, and you have a great director, I feel that you can play almost anything, from a shrinking violet to a strong-minded powerful woman. Also, it really depends on your director to show you range. If you are working with someone that really pushes you, you tend to break molds more quickly.

**M:** Do you think we are going to see more Bollywood actors in mainstream movies?

**PK:** Oh definitely. It's already happening with actors like Om Puri, Padma Lakshmi, and Ranjit Choudhary. If you think about it compared to 10 years ago, that is huge, and I think it's just going to increase in the next 10 years. I also think that a lot of people are going to be going to India to make movies. The scenery is beautiful, and the capability is there with all of the studios in Hyderabad and Bangalore. "Flavors" opens Friday in New York, New Jersey and Long Island.

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TV TONIGHT

NYPD 24/7



The controversial episode reveals the name of a witness connected to the 2003 murder of Hunter College student Ramona Moore.

9 p.m. on ABC

THE ROSWELL CRASH: STARTLING NEW EVIDENCE

Bryant Gumbel shines light on a groundbreaking investigation into the mysterious UFO incident in New Mexico. Note to Bryant: Catering to alien enthusiasts on the SCIFI channel is not a good way to revive a journalism career.

11 p.m. on SCIFI

THE CHAPPELLE SHOW



A spoof on "Making the Band" with appearances by Q-Tip and Wyclef. Snoop Dogg is the musical guest.

10 p.m. on Comedy Central

SIX FEET UNDER

David's ex-fiancee reappears searching for