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2cover

By Zoe Popham

STIRRED NEVER SHAKEN

Photographer: Bigs Vacharasith
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Often called an ‘English-speaking Tony Jaa’, Gof Akara is receiving rave reviews for his lead performance in *Muay Thai Chaiya* – the Thai boxing blockbuster that was snapped up by at least 30 countries before its official release.

With previous roles in the likes of Thai erotic horror *Mae Bia*, supernatural thriller *Necromancer*, Singaporean soap opera *Tiramisu*, bilingual English/Thai short *My Talking Dic* and many more, Gof has made a name for himself as the man who refuses to be type-cast.

2magazine sits down with the handsome 32-year-old star and finds out just what makes him tick.





Dark grey one-button peak lapel blazer, black cotton button-down shirt, charcoal wool trousers and slim black silk tie, all by Dior Homme available at Club21
Seamaster Planet Ocean 'Casino Royale' watch by Omega

2: So Gof, how are you feeling about the success of your latest film *Muay Thai Chaiya*?

I'm excited. Really excited! It was probably one of the hardest roles I've ever played, so the positive feedback I received meant a lot to me. For a start, I had to undergo months of grueling training well before the shoot even started. And as my character, Piak, is from the Southern Thai provinces, I had to make sure I got the dialect just right. Believe me, it is not the easiest to master!

2: How does it compare to the previous leading roles you've played in major films (*Mae Bia*, *Necromancer*, *Saving Private Tootsie* etc.)?

That's a tough one to answer as I take all my roles very seriously. I purposefully choose ones that are as different from each other as possible. Obviously becoming 'Piak' was more physically demanding than the others because I had to learn a lot of extra skills for this film... but then again, I love a good challenge!

2: You've played so many kinds of characters over the years. What's your dream role at this moment?

Right now my dream would be to play a role like Tom Hanks had in *Forrest Gump* or Dustin Hoffman had in *Rainman*; a part where I have to totally change myself and can spend the time to research and really 'be' the character. You may have noticed that I like playing people who are as different from me as possible. So maybe a cross-dressing character like in *Tootsie*?

2: Any directors or actors you dream of working with?

Oh loads! For the Directors, it would have to be Spielberg, Scorsese, Tarantino, and for the actors, Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino, and Dustin Hoffman of course. I would love to meet any of these guys! It's a philosophy of mine to try to learn from the best, and they really are.

2: What's your own advice for aspiring young actors?

I would tell them to always uphold a certain level of integrity, and to keep improving and learning. Most importantly – never be scared to challenge yourself.

2: What's something that people don't know about you?

Well, I suppose I never really talk about my teenage years in interviews. I had a really tough time growing up in the States – sent over when I was 12 and going to school in a New York suburb. All I'll say is there was a lot of bullying. I couldn't speak a word of English and I was the only Asian kid in the class.



Grey wool dress with metal details by Chloé
Black patent heels by Jimmy Choo
Metallic bracelet stylist's own



Plunging red sheath by Alexander McQueen, available at Club21
Black leather purse and patent heels by Jimmy Choo
Flat circular ring with purple rhinestones from the Friends collection by Tippy & Matthew

On him: Black leather zipper jacket and blue denims by Z Zegna
Black and white polka dot cotton button-down shirt by Louis Vuitton
Black patent belt by CK
XXL Riviera Automatic Chronograph watch by Baume & Mercier

On her: Plunging red sheath by Alexander McQueen available at Club21
Black leather purse and patent heels by Jimmy Choo
Flat circular ring with purple rhinestones from the Friends collection by Tippy & Matthew

2: So what was the first English sentence you learnt at school?

On my first day I came home and asked my Aunt what "F**k off Chink" meant. After all, it was the only sentence I'd heard the other students say to me all day.

2: Sounds nasty. Why didn't you tell your family?

I didn't want them to worry and I really thought I'd be able to deal with it myself. I like to try to take care of problems myself, a personality trait I've kept until today. In hindsight though, those experiences shaped me. I had to grow up fast.

2: Do you think being bullied had any link to your desire to act?

Being bullied made me learn to adapt myself easily. One reason I love acting is because it gives me the chance to be someone else – this probably has something to do with my experiences in my early teens.

2: So were you a wild teenager?

By the time I was in high school, I was a bleach-haired, gothic-punk skateboarder. I hated school





On him: Grey one-button velvet jacket
and grey striped cotton shirt by Z Zegna
Black tuxedo trousers by Paul Smith

On her: Orange strapless frock by Chloé
Navy blue heels with metal
chain detail by Jimmy Choo
Balls bracelet from the
Friends collection by Tippy & Matthew



On him: Grey one-button suit by Alexander McQueen
available at Club21
White cotton button-down shirt by Givenchy
Silk striped tie by Boss Black
Black leather boots stylist's own

On her: Orange strapless frock by Chloé
Flat circular rhinestone necklace from the Friends
collection by Tippy & Matthew



so I was always skipping class to go to the park to smoke and drink with my friends. Looking back, I had a lot of fun, but I don't think I took any plans about my future seriously.

2: What changed?

I was about 17 and had – yet again – failed my exams when I got the option of enrolling in a non-traditional college. It placed students into real jobs as a final resort and it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me.

2: Why's that? Where did they place you?

My first placement was as an intern at Penthouse magazine! I had to go into Manhattan every day and file the old magazines. Of course I sometimes 'accidentally' borrowed a few copies! There are a lot of reasons I'll never forget that internship, but mainly because it was my first taste of responsibility. After, I became more focused about what I wanted in life – it was definitely a turning point.

2: You must've been really upset when the internship was over!

Of course! But fortunately others followed and most were in the arts; I learnt to develop negatives in a photo lab, and then I worked behind the scenes at a commercial photography studio. I suppose it took some time to realize that I truly loved the arts and wanted to develop a career in that direction. Those internships made me realize I wanted to have a job I'd love and work hard to sustain.

“I did the rebellion, the sex and the drifting in my teens.”

2: Is that why you went back to acting?

Yes, I think that was a big factor. Although I had done some acting as a child in Thailand, it was only when I returned to Bangkok in my early twenties that I took it seriously as a career. When I got the role of *Mae Bia*, I knew that I didn't want to screw it up!

2: What made you take roles outside of Thailand, like with the Singaporean soap opera *Tiramisu*?

I wanted people to know I was able to act in English as most Thai audiences weren't aware of the fact that I'd spent a large part of my life abroad. I didn't want to limit my options as an actor and the opportunity to play the lead in a new soap opera came up. I jumped at the chance to show the English speaking audience what I was capable of, you never know who is watching!

2: Is there anything else in the pipeline right now?

A short film I was in called *My Talking Dic* is screening at the international film festivals at the moment. The title actually refers to a Talking Dictionary, nothing rude! In terms of acting, I thought it would be good for me to try a short film and also not let myself get spoilt on big budget productions. I liked the script because it's about a couple from two different cultures and shows how difficult the dynamics in a relationship like that can be.

2: So how about your own relationship? Anything to report?

As you may have heard, I'm very tight-lipped about my personal life! I feel like I give everything I can when I work so I need to keep one part of my life private. All I'll say is that I lead a pretty quiet life because I hardly have any time to do anything but work! I find meditation really helps because I have a lot on my mind – it's a great way to relax.

2: Don't you think you sound a bit boring?

People always say that about me and it really annoys me. Just because I don't drink or smoke doesn't mean I'm boring; I did the rebellion, the sex and the drifting in my teens. I don't see what's boring about finding the career you love and taking it seriously. A lot of people dream of doing the things I'm doing. And believe me, I'm not taking it for granted!

Grey one-button suit by Alexander McQueen available at Club21
White cotton button-down shirt by Givenchy
Silk striped tie by Boss Black
Black leather boots stylist's own
Black Mercedes-Benz SLK55 AMG

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